

14. Developing a Church Leadership Team – Part 2

In our last topic, we saw that it is possible to develop a godly leadership team in every church. We saw that when people first become Christians, they are not qualified to be a part of the leadership team. Instead, there is a process of development that helps unqualified people become qualified. Today, we are going to look at the Biblical principles that will help develop such a team in each church. The process of developing godly leadership begins before a person even becomes a Christian. However, that is not what happens in every church. It did happen in Thessalonica, but it did not happen in Corinth. We will see why in our topic today.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10, we read, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *even* Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

In verse five, we see that Paul, Silas, and Timothy provided an example of what it meant to depend on the Holy Spirit. Verse six gives us a key that shows why that example was so effective. There, we see that the Christians in Thessalonica learned to follow the Lord by following the Lord’s people. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were examples. As the people followed them, they learned how to follow the Lord, by example. In turn, the Christians in Thessalonica became an example to all who heard about their faith. This was the result of true repentance. The Thessalonians turned to God from idols in order to serve the living and true God as they waited for Christ to come.

If we want to see a godly leadership team develop in a church, we must help people understand the meaning of both repentance and faith before they even place their trust in Christ. True repentance will cause people to turn to God from idols. It will also give them a desire to serve the living and true God.

In addition, every new Christian needs a spiritual parent. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9, we read, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.” In these verses, we see that Paul, Silas, and Timothy provided the care of a nursing mother. They shared their lives with the Christians in Thessalonica.

Then, 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 says, “You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted,

and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” In these verses, we see that Paul, Silas, and Timothy provided the example of a godly father. They also helped the Christians to focus on a walk that was worthy of God.

In 1 Corinthians 4:14-17, we see that Paul and Timothy also provided the care of a nursing mother and the example of a godly father to the Corinthians. Those verses say, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”

However, the Corinthians also received a very different focus on how they could grow as Christians. It tells us that they had many instructors. The word translated “instructors” is used two other times in the New Testament. Those two uses are found in Galatians 3:24-25, where we read: “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” An instructor or tutor was one who raised a child by the law, with severe punishment for breaking the rules. The law only shows when we have done wrong, but it will never help us to do what is right. The Corinthians had many tutors, but few loving parents.

It is easy to tell people to follow certain rules if they want to grow spiritually. It requires a totally different attitude to become a spiritual parent. In 1 Corinthians 4:16, we see that Paul urged the Corinthians to follow him. Remember, the Thessalonians had followed Paul, Silas, and Timothy. This is the difference between telling people what to do and showing people how to live. An effective spiritual parent will show people how to live, instead of telling people what to do.

That was also how Christ developed the disciples. He invited them to follow Him. In Matthew 4:19, Christ told some fishermen, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Then, in Matthew 9:9, He told Matthew, “Follow Me.” The disciples started out as unqualified men. In Luke 5:8, we read, “When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’” Luke 5:10b tells us the response of Christ to Peter’s admission of his own sinfulness, “And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.’”

Later, Peter failed and denied Christ three times. Peter thought he was such a failure that he could never be used by the Lord, and so, he returned to fishing for fish in John 21. However, Christ spoke to Peter three times to restore him. John 21:15-17 says, “So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’ He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, *son* of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you

love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’” In love, Christ helped Peter to refocus after his failure. Just a few weeks later, he preached on the Day of Pentecost.

Many developing leaders may also deny Christ in various ways. We can either disqualify them with harsh discipline, or we can work to help them become qualified by helping them to focus on the love and forgiveness of Christ for them. This is the attitude of a spiritual parent. If you are already a spiritual leader, this might be a good time to ask yourself the following questions:

- Who are the spiritual children I spend time with on a regular basis in order to help them become qualified for spiritual leadership?
- What am I showing them, by my example, that they can imitate?
- What areas do each of these spiritual children need help in, in order to become a qualified spiritual leader?
- As a leader, am I helping to make sure that every new Christian has a spiritual parent?

If you do not yet have any spiritual children, you might ask yourself the following questions:

- ◆ Do I need to rearrange some of my priorities so I can spend more time observing and learning from one or more mature Christians?
- ◆ Have I asked a mature Christian if I could spend time with him or her to help me become qualified for spiritual leadership in the areas where I am unqualified?
- ◆ Do I regularly spend time with other mature Christians so I can learn, from their example, how to develop godly character?
- ◆ Have I become a part of a ministry team, so I can learn, from their example, how to serve the Lord?

Developing a godly church leadership team will only be accomplished as mature Christians make it a priority in their lives to spend time with potential leaders in order to help them grow and mature in their spiritual lives. As a part of this process, the mature Christians need to: help the potential leaders develop in their knowledge and obedience to the Word of God, help the potential leaders grow in godly character, and help the potential leaders develop ministry skills. May the Lord richly bless you as you help potential leaders develop in these areas.