

15. Developing a Church Leadership Team – Part 3

In our last topic, we talked about the need for loving spiritual parents to help new Christians grow and mature. Every new Christian needs a spiritual parent for healthy spiritual growth. Many times, I have talked to Christians who said they did not start to grow in their spiritual lives for ten or more years. Then, I asked them what helped them start growing after all of those years. Almost without exception, the person mentioned how a mature Christian started spending time with him to help him in his spiritual growth.

I have also asked many people who are leaders in churches the question, “Who are your spiritual children?” The most common answer is, “What do you mean?” Then, I rephrase the question, “Are there one or more new or weak Christians you spend time regularly with to help them in their spiritual growth?” I find that a very small percentage of people, who have been Christians for a long time, can name spiritual children who they spend time with regularly to help them in their spiritual growth. This is one reason for the shortage of spiritual leadership in many churches.

A second reason for the shortage of spiritual leadership is the way we try to develop spiritual leadership. In the time of the New Testament, there were two basic forms of instruction. The Greeks told people what to do. The Jews showed people what to do. Today, most of the educational systems in the world have adopted the Greek form of instruction. As a result, most churches have also followed the Greek form of instruction. People become Christians, and they are told what to do or avoid doing, but they are not being shown how to live.

Christ used a very different form of training to develop the disciples. Just as we need spiritual parents to help new Christians grow and mature, we also need a very different form of training for those who are maturing, in order to equip them for spiritual leadership. During the first year of Christ’s ministry, He invited people to just spend time with Him. John 1:38-39 says, “Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, ‘What do you seek?’ They said to Him, ‘Rabbi’ (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), ‘where are You staying?’ He said to them, ‘Come and see.’ They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).” During this period, Christ was inviting people to “Come and See” and observe Him as He ministered.

Some of those who spent time with Christ eventually became the Twelve. However, during the first year, there were many more who spent time with Him. Christ would invite those people to go with Him as He traveled to different places. Chapters two through four of John show that people spent time with Christ in a variety of situations. During this first year, they were expected to do nothing but observe. Throughout this time, Christ led by love. He was preaching, teaching, healing, and casting out demons, while the group of followers observed. During this period, those followers placed their trust in Christ.

After various followers had been following Christ for about a year, Christ began to invite some of them to a higher level of commitment. In Mark 1:17, we read, “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’” At this point, the disciples were being invited

to “Come and Grow”. Now, in addition to observing, they also began to participate. Mark 1:38-39 says, “But He said to them, ‘Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.’ And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” Notice that Christ said, “let US”. During this second year, the disciples became involved as participants in the ministry of Christ.

Mark 3:13-15 says, “And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.” This is actually the third call of Christ to His disciples. This came after they had known Christ for about twenty-one months. This was the call to “Come and Serve”. Luke 6:12 tells us that Christ chose the twelve from a larger group of disciples. One of the things we notice is that Christ chose the Twelve. He did not ask for volunteers. We also see that He chose them for three reasons:

- He chose them that they might be with Him.
- He chose them that He might send them out to preach.
- He chose them to have power to heal and to cast out demons.

The first reason is the most important as it relates to the development of leadership. Since Christ was developing the Twelve for leadership, He chose to spend even more time with them. This is the key difference between the Greek model of education and the Hebrew model of training. Instead of telling the Twelve what to do, Christ chose to show them how to live and serve. During this period, Christ had to deal with many wrong attitudes in the lives of the Twelve.

In Luke 9:46-48, He had to show them by His example the importance of humility. In Luke 9:49-50, He had to show them the importance of accepting the ministry of others. Then, in Luke 9:51-56, He had to deal with their desire to get even. These teaching opportunities would have never happened in a classroom. Instead, they happened in the normal activities of daily life.

During this period, Christ also had the disciples begin to minister while He observed and encouraged. He sent out the Twelve. Later, He sent out the seventy which would have included the Twelve. Matthew 10:5-15 shows that Christ gave very specific instructions when He sent out the Twelve. Luke 10:1-12 shows that He also gave specific instructions to the seventy. However, Christ also taught them another very important principle of leadership as He sent them out. He sent them out in teams of two rather than sending anyone alone. One of the important things Christ wanted to do was help them learn to work as a team.

Mark 6:30-31 tells us that the Twelve gave a report of what they had done and taught. Luke 10:17-20 tells us that the seventy also gave a report when they returned. As Christ listened, He was able to rejoice with them for what had happened. He also knew what things needed to be taught over the following months. In fact, Christ spent even more time with the Twelve as the time of His death approached: showing them how to live, what to say, and what to do. Christ made investing in the development of the leadership team the top priority of the second half of His ministry. The night before His crucifixion, Christ was able to say, in John 17:4, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” Christ knew that the disciples

were equipped to carry on the ministry when He returned to heaven.

We see that Christ had a very specific process for developing the disciples. It included the following steps:

- I do while you observe
- I do while you participate
- You minister as teams while I observe and encourage
- We minister together as a team
- I send you out as the Father sent me (John 20:21; Acts 1:8)

One of the reasons for the growing shortage of spiritual leadership today is the fact that few present leaders are making leadership development a high priority in their ministry. As a result, few leaders are investing several hours each week to take potential leaders with them. This is how potential leaders are taught to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit. This is how potential leaders can be shown godly character, learn how to apply the Word of God to a wide variety of situations, and develop ministry skills so the Lord can work through their lives.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, we read, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Then, Acts 20:20 shows how Paul trained Timothy and many others. That verse says, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.” Paul said that he had showed developing leaders how to minister publicly and he had showed them how to minister from house to house. As a result, these men had become the spiritual leadership team of the church at Ephesus.

We will impact not only the present generation, but also the next generation as we take potential leaders with us and show them how to live and how to minister to others by our example. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example for others to follow.