

17. Helping Potential Team Leaders Become Effective in Follow-Up

In our last topic, we talked about helping potential team leaders become effective in evangelism. Today, we will be talking about how to help these potential team leaders become effective in follow-up. Through the years, many people have become Christians and then had no one to help them grow. As a result, some Christians have spent many years struggling with little or no spiritual growth in their lives. That is not what Christ desires. Instead, the desire of Christ is for every Christian to grow to maturity. In order for that to happen, potential team leaders need to learn to become effective in follow-up, so they can help their team become effective in follow-up.

In Acts 2:41-42, we read, “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In one day, the church began, and suddenly grew from one hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15) to three thousand one hundred and twenty as three thousand new Christians were added. In addition, Acts 2:46-47 says, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” From these verses, we see that the Lord continued to add people to the church daily. How did the early church help all of those new Christians begin healthy growth?

In Acts 2:42, we see that the early church immediately began to gather Christians in smaller groups. Verse 46 tells us that these smaller groups met both in the temple and from house to house. This gives us one of the keys to help new Christians begin to grow. According to Acts 1:15, there were already one hundred and twenty disciples. This was the leadership team to help these new Christians grow. In order to understand how one hundred and twenty disciples could help three thousand new Christians begin healthy growth, we need to look at the definition of a disciple.

The definition of a disciple is given to us in Matthew 13:52, where we read: “Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure *things* new and old.’” The word that is translated “instructed” here is the same word that is used in Matthew 28:19, where we are commanded to make disciples. In that verse, we see that a disciple:

- is a householder – the head of a spiritual household
- has a treasure – the treasure is the Word of God
- is able to bring out of the treasure things that are new – has a learner’s attitude so that he or she is continuing to learn new things from the Word of God
- is able to bring out of the treasure things that are old – is able to teach the basics of Christianity from the Word of God

There were one hundred and twenty disciples and three thousand new believers. That meant that there were twenty-five new believers for every disciple. Since the definition of a disciple includes the fact that each disciple has become the head of a spiritual household, the Lord suddenly provided a spiritual household of twenty-five new believers for each of those disciples. How could each

disciple help so many new believers begin healthy spiritual growth? That was the question the early church faced. It probably meant that each disciple suddenly was responsible for two or three groups of eight to twelve new believers.

Acts 2:42 shows how the hundred and twenty disciples began to help all of these new believers grow. That verse says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” As the new believers gathered in smaller groups, led by the one hundred and twenty, we see that they focused on four things:

- the apostles’ doctrine (Bible study) – now given to us in the New Testament
- fellowship
- breaking of bread
- prayers

Acts 2:42 shows us that these smaller groups were meeting both in the temple and from house to house. In the temple, the believers gathered together to: observe the daily times of prayer (Luke 1:21; Acts 3:1), praise God together (Acts 2:47), and share the Gospel with others (Acts 2:47, 5:42). As they gathered in their homes, they were doing the four things mentioned in Acts 2:42. In addition, we see that those things happened daily, not just once a week. As we look at the things that were happening in the early church, it helps us to understand how we help potential team leaders become effective in follow-up.

First, we want to help each potential team leader learn to lead a Bible study. Notice that we did not say study a book about the Bible, but rather, lead a Bible study. An effective Bible study will help people do three things:

- ♦ grow in their knowledge of the passage being studied
- ♦ gain understanding of the meaning of the passage
- ♦ learn what lessons can be applied from that passage to their daily lives and help them to begin putting those things into practice

We want to help each potential team leader learn to use the who, what, where, when, why, and how questions: (examples)

- Who was this book, or this group of verses, originally written to?
- What do these verses teach that the Christians were to do or obey?
- Where were the Christians supposed to do those things?
- When were the Christians supposed to do those things?
- Why were the Christians supposed to do those things?
- How can we apply those things to our lives today?

Second, we want to help each potential team leader learn to develop a shared life (fellowship) within the group. This happens as we learn to apply the thirty-one positive one anothers in our relationships within the Bible study group (accept one another, bear one another’s burdens, love one another, etc.). Many times, it helps to discuss one of the one anothers each time the group meets for Bible study, and then focus on putting that particular one into practice until the next Bible study. Over a period of months, the group will learn all thirty-one and begin to learn to practice them in their relationships with one another.

Third, we want to help each potential team leader learn to lead the group in the breaking of bread. In Acts 2:46, we see that the early team leaders were breaking bread from house to house. According to Acts 2:46, the early church Bible study and fellowship times often included both communion and a shared meal. This provides an excellent opportunity for the new Christians to get their questions, about the death and resurrection of Christ and the meaning of communion, answered. This can also be a very effective time for evangelism, as you will often have family members or friends who are not yet Christians sit in on the Bible study. As a Bible study leader explains the meaning of the death and resurrection, and the meaning of communion, these family members or friends have the Gospel clearly explained to them and can be given an opportunity to repent of their sin and place their trust in Christ.

Fourth, we want to help each potential team leader learn to lead group prayer times. This provides an opportunity for the people in the Bible study to learn to pray for one another. It also is an ideal time to pray for relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances that are not yet Christians. This helps the group to develop a focus on others in prayer and not just their own needs. This is also a time when a leader can emphasize prayer for guidance and wisdom.

In addition to helping potential team leaders learn to lead group Bible studies, we also want to help them learn to become effective spiritual parents. 1 Corinthians 4:15-16 tells us that the lack of spiritual parents was one of the great weaknesses of the church at Corinth. Those verses say, “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.” A spiritual parent is a person who spends time individually with one particular person to provide a godly example (1 Corinthians 4:16), to answer specific questions (Acts 18:26), to provide the tender care of a nursing mother (1 Thessalonians 2:7-9), and to encourage the newer Christian to a worthy walk (1 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

As a potential team leader learns to lead a group Bible study for new Christians, and become a spiritual parent to those new Christians, he will also be learning how to train the team he or she leads to become effective at helping new Christians grow. That will multiply his ministry both with the team he leads as well as with other new Christians as he helps them grow. May the Lord richly bless you as you help potential team leaders learn to become effective in follow-up.