

18. Helping Potential Team Leaders Become Effective in Helping Others Mature

In our last two topics, we have focused on helping potential team leaders become effective in evangelism and follow-up. Today, we will look at the topic of how to help potential team leaders help Christians grow and mature. Scripture talks about various levels of spiritual maturity: the new born babe – 1 Peter 2:2; the child not able to speak clearly (toddler) – 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, 13:11; Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 5:11-14; the spiritual child – 1 John 2:12-14; the spiritual young man – 1 John 2:12-14; the spiritual parent – 1 John 2:12-14; 1 Corinthians 4:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

There is a very real comparison between physical growth and spiritual growth. The things that were the focus of a person at various levels of maturity in his physical life will be the same things that are the focus of a person at that level of spiritual maturity. In order to help a developing spiritual leader become effective in helping others mature, that developing leader has to be able to understand the level a person is at in his or her spiritual maturity. He also needs to understand what is needed to help the person grow to the next level of spiritual maturity. We could use a key word or phrase to help us understand where a person is at in their spiritual development:

- ◆ spiritual new born babe – food
- ◆ spiritual toddler – my needs, my problems
- ◆ spiritual child – growth
- ◆ spiritual young man or woman – service
- ◆ spiritual parent – care of spiritual children

First, the greatest needs of a new Christian are a spiritual parent and spiritual food to help him grow. 1 Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” In this verse, we see that the new Christian needs the milk of the word in order to experience healthy growth. However, the new Christian does not know what is milk and what is more like meat. As a result, the new Christian needs a spiritual parent who will help him get the right spiritual food. If we do not help the developing spiritual leader learn how to help a new Christian begin to get the right spiritual food, the devil will often bring someone from a false cult who will be very willing to provide the new Christian with the wrong spiritual food.

1 Peter 2:2 says that the new Christian needs the pure milk of the word. The book of 1 John uses the phrase “Little children” many times throughout the book, because it is a book that has spiritual milk for the new Christian. I personally tell a new Christian that the book of 1 John has a little over one hundred verses and can be read in about twenty to thirty minutes. I encourage the new Christian to read the entire book of 1 John every day for a month. Then, I meet with the new Christian several times during that month to explain the verses he is reading. At the same time, I encourage the new Christian to begin praying for the salvation of relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and other acquaintances who are not Christians.

The following month, I tell the new Christian that the book of 1 Thessalonians was written to people who had only been Christians for a very short time. I tell him that 1 Thessalonians has less than one hundred verses and encourage him to read that book every day for a month. For a faster

reader, 1 and 2 Thessalonians only have a hundred and thirty-six verses combined, so some are able to read both books every day for a month. I also meet with the new Christian several times during the month to explain the verses he is reading. I will also encourage him to begin asking the “who”, “what”, “where”, “when”, “why,” and “how” questions that were mentioned in the topic, “Helping Potential Team Leaders Become Effective in Follow-Up”.

Second, we also want to help the developing spiritual leader learn to help those who are spiritual toddlers. Just like the physical child that is one or two years old, a spiritual toddler is very self-centered and thinks primarily of his needs and problems. The tragedy is that there are many people who have been Christians for twenty or thirty years and still only think about their needs and problems, because they have never matured beyond the toddler stage. This is usually due to the fact that they never had a spiritual parent who took the responsibility to help them grow. If you read each of the verses mentioned in paragraph one about the spiritual toddler, you will see that everything they say about the spiritual toddler is negative.

One of the key things to help spiritual toddlers begin to grow is to help them get into a small group Bible study. This gives them a place where the Bible study leader can help them learn to find answers to their questions from the Bible. It is also a place where they can begin to learn to relate to other Christians in a small group. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, we see that there was envy, strife, and divisions among the new Christians. A small group Bible study provides a place where Christians can learn and apply Biblical principles to resolve their conflicts.

In 1 Corinthians 13:11, we see that the spiritual toddler speaks, understands, and thinks like a toddler. A small group Bible study provides a place to gain knowledge, then gain understanding and learn how to apply Biblical principles to daily life. A sermon or lecture will usually only provide knowledge, while a Bible study discussion provides opportunities to grow in understanding and obedience to the Word of God. Ephesians 4:14 says that the spiritual toddler is tossed about by every wind of doctrine and is easily deceived by false teachers. A small group Bible study provides opportunities to learn what the Bible teaches and why it is important to grow in our understanding, so we are no longer deceived by false teachings.

Hebrews 5:11-14 points out the worst thing about a spiritual toddler. In that passage, we see that a person can be a Christian for many years and still be a spiritual toddler. Such a person has become dull of hearing. He has been a Christian long enough that he should be able to teach others, but instead he still needs the milk of the Word because he has not grown. Such a person is unskillful in the word of righteousness. This is usually the result of hearing the Word of God but never learning how to understand and apply it to daily living. A small group Bible study provides a place where people can ask questions and learn how to apply the Word of God to the situations they face in their daily lives.

Third, we want to help the developing spiritual leader learn to help those who are spiritual children. We said that the characteristic of a spiritual child is a desire for growth. 2 Peter 3:18 tells us that Christians need to grow in two different ways. That verse says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.”

Growing Christian Leaders Series – Developing Team Leadership 18. “Helping Potential Team Leaders Become Effective in Helping Others Mature”

Updated October 2025

Copyright © 2001, Duane L. Anderson, American Indian Bible Institute; 2022, DLA, Serve and Equip

Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This resource is available from and distributed free of charge by Serve and Equip <https://sveq.org>

ANY REPRODUCTION OF MATERIAL FOR RESALE OR PROFIT IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED

Here, we see that we want to help the growing Christian grow in spiritual maturity and also grow in their understanding of Christ. It is very easy for people to know about Christ, yet never get to know Christ personally. 1 John 2:12-13 shows that spiritual children know that their sins are forgiven and have also gotten to know the Father. In John 14:9, Christ told Philip that if he knew Christ, he also knew the Father.

Fourth, we want to help the developing spiritual leader learn to help spiritual young men in their spiritual growth. In Acts 5:6 and 10, we see that the physical young men were known for their service. A developing leader will help spiritual young men grow and mature by taking them with him and showing them how to grow in their service for the Lord. Paul told the elders in Ephesus how he had helped them develop when they were spiritual young men. Acts 20:20 says, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.” In this verse, we see that Paul had helped them learn how to minister by taking them along with him as he ministered both publicly and from house to house. As spiritual young men, they had been shown how to share the Gospel publicly. They had also been shown how to share the Gospel from house to house.

Fifth, we want to help the developing spiritual leader learn to help Christians become mature Christians who are now spiritual parents to others. The basic requirement of a spiritual parent is that the person has to have one or more spiritual children. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, Paul points out that he, Silas, and Timothy had shown them the care of a nursing mother and provided them with the example of a godly father. In 1 Corinthians 4:15-16, Paul said that the reason the church at Corinth was having so many problems was due to the lack of spiritual parents. 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.” Paul shows that the ministry of a spiritual parent is to spend much time with new Christians and invite them to imitate him.

It is a great privilege to help developing team leaders become effective at helping other Christians grow to spiritual maturity. As the verses mentioned in the previous paragraph show, this happens as godly spiritual leaders invite others to imitate their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you spend time with developing spiritual leaders, so they can learn to be effective as they imitate you.