

4. Helping a Team Leader Begin to Equip

In Ephesians 4:11-13, we have seen that Christ gave various equipping gifts to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. We have seen that the apostles and the prophets are the foundation of the church – Ephesians 2:20.

- the apostles gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ – Acts 1:21-22
- the prophets gave us the written Word of God – 2 Peter 1:19-21

We have also seen the work of the:

- evangelist – is to equip the saints to share the Gospel
- pastor – is to equip the saints to minister to one another
- teacher – is to equip the saints to teach and effectively apply the Word of God

Many times, a developing leader has not even thought about the fact he might have an equipping gift. Instead, he is looking for opportunities to serve the Lord. However, often a developing team leader will have one of these gifts. The initial ministry of the team will often be focused around the equipping gift of this team leader. If he has the gift of evangelist, the ministry team will probably be a team that focuses on reaching out to those who are not yet Christians. If he has the gift of pastor, the ministry team will probably be a team that focuses on ministering to the needs of Christians. If he has the gift of teacher, the ministry team will probably be a team that focuses on helping people learn to understand and apply the Word of God in their daily lives.

Although a developing team leader does not recognize Christ has given him an equipping gift, he may still be using that gift. This is especially true if he builds a team to minister with him. The interesting thing is that he is beginning to equip the team by showing them how to minister as he takes them with him. At the same time, he is learning from the other members of the team. Through the years, many Christians have received a certain amount of training in this way without ever realizing it. At the same time, the developing leader did not even realize he was training others for ministry.

However, the Lord will be able to use developing leaders in even greater ways as they recognize and use the equipping gift the Lord has given them. In 1 Timothy 4:4, we read, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” Timothy had his gift recognized by the other leaders of the church. Then, in 2 Timothy 4:5 we read, “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” Although Timothy knew what his gift was, Paul reminded him to do the work of an evangelist and use his equipping gift to equip others.

We see two things from these verses. First, the equipping gift of a developing leader will be recognized by other spiritual leaders. Second, once a leader has had his gift recognized, he is not to neglect the exercise of that gift. Instead, he is to carry out that ministry by equipping others in that area of ministry. This implies that a leader is to make sure he is intentionally equipping others for ministry. This is one reason it is so important to minister as a team. This is also one of the great differences between the early church and the church today.

In Acts 8:1 and 4, we read, “Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles...⁴Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” Although the Christians were all scattered, that only increased the spread of the Word of God, because every Christian had been equipped to share the Word of God. Today, most churches would die if they were scattered, because most Christians have not been equipped to share the Word of God.

This leads us to the question: How do we help a developing team leader begin to intentionally equip others? The question is the same whether we are a leader of a ministry in an established church (for example: a Sunday school superintendent), the leader of a team that is planting a church, or a leader of some other ministry. The Lord has placed the developing leader in that ministry to develop the ministry of the team, and he has been given an equipping gift to do that. That does not mean he will have all of the equipping gifts. Rather, it means that he will use his equipping gift to develop others, and, at the same time, will learn from them as they minister together.

Paul gave some specific advice to Timothy to help him begin to intentionally equip others. 2 Timothy 2:2 says, “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.” In this verse, we see that Paul told Timothy to do three things to intentionally begin to equip other leaders. Timothy was told to:

- commit to others the things that Paul had taught him
- commit those things to faithful men
- equip those men to pass on those things to others

First, Timothy was to teach what he had been taught by Paul. One of the things we help developing leaders learn to do is pass on what they have been taught. Paul said that Timothy had learned these things among many witnesses. Timothy had heard Paul teach these things in many different situations, because they had spent much time together. These things were taught in the presence of many other witnesses (the other team members who had been with them such as Silas, Luke, and many others).

Second, Timothy was to commit these things to faithful men. Here, we see that as he developed leadership teams in the various areas where Paul sent him, he was to focus on developing those who had become faithful men. One of the things a developing leader needs to learn is how to recognize those who are faithful. Otherwise, he will spend much time trying to develop people and then find that he had made little or no progress, because he chose to try to develop people who were not faithful.

Third, Timothy was to help those faithful men begin to develop a team to serve with them in the ministry the Lord had given them. Those faithful men were to become equipped to pass the things they had learned on to others, so the process could continue to a next generation. Here, we see that a developing leader needs to be shown how to effectively develop reproducing disciples, who can pass on what they have learned to a next generation of spiritual leaders.

This means that a team leader must begin to realize that a big part of his ministry is to begin intentionally developing others. This understanding does not develop automatically. Paul demonstrated, in 2 Timothy 2:2, that he knew the importance of reminding Timothy that intentionally developing others was a key part of his ministry as a leader. In the same way, we need to realize that an important part of our ministry is to continue to remind developing leaders of the need to build a team to minister with them, and then show them how to develop that team. In this way, the Lord will be able to greatly multiply their ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing team leaders learn to intentionally begin to equip others for ministry.