

7. Developing Team Relationships

In Mark 3:13, we see that Christ chose the twelve to be with Him. Then, in Mark 3:31-35, we learn that a very significant change had happened in the relationship of Christ to the disciples. Those verses say, “Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, ‘Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You.’ But He answered them, saying, ‘Who is My mother, or My brothers?’ And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, ‘Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.’”

In these verses, we see that Christ had expanded His family. The twelve had now become His spiritual family, and Christ had the same relationship to them that He had with His physical mother, brothers, and sisters. This did not mean that Christ forgot His physical family. Instead, Christ continued to show a great concern for His physical family. We see that Christ provided for the care of His physical mother, even as He hung on the cross. In John 19:26-27, we read, “When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother!’ And from that hour that disciple took her to his own *home*.” Here, Christ entrusted one of the twelve to be responsible for the physical care of His mother.

What we do see, in Mark 3:31-35, is the new relationship the disciples had with Christ. Christ said that the disciples now had the same relationship to Him that His own family had to Him. In fact, Christ said that, “...whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.” Over the next two and a half years, Christ demonstrated what that new relationship should be like. In the same way, as we develop team leaders, we want to help them develop a similar relationship with the team the Lord has entrusted to them. The team leader also wants the team members to develop a similar relationship with one another.

One of the key responsibilities of a team leader is helping the various members of the team build the kind of relationships with one another that Christ helped the disciples build with one another. A Sunday school superintendent wants to build this kind of relationship between the teachers and other workers. A pastor wants to build this kind of relationship among the members of the board and staff. A church planter wants to build similar relationships between the members of the church planting team. The same principle applies to every other team leader.

As John came to the final years of his life, he looked back and wrote about some of the things he had learned from Christ that are a key in building team relationships. First, John talked about how he and the other disciples had the opportunity to really get to know Christ. 1 John 1:1 says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.” John said the disciples learned about Christ in four ways:

- they heard Christ
- they saw Christ with their eyes

- they really studied and observed Christ carefully
- they were invited to touch the nail prints in His hands and feel the place where the spear entered His side

In this verse, John makes it very clear that the disciples had the opportunity to spend a lot of time with Christ and really get to know Him personally. However, something was also happening in their relationship to one another as well. As John looked back about sixty years, he said, “WE heard, WE saw, WE studied and observed, WE handled.” In 2 Peter 1:16-18, Peter also uses the word “we” four times as he looked back to their time with Christ. The disciples had spent time with Christ and had also built a spiritual family relationship with one another.

In 1 John 1:3, we see that John also wanted to have that same relationship with other Christians. That verse says, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Here, John points out one of the essential things needed to develop a healthy spiritual family relationship. We must have fellowship with Christ and the Father as the foundation for our fellowship with one another. A team leader focuses on helping the team members build their relationship with Christ.

1 John 1:7 gives us another key essential to develop a healthy spiritual family relationship. That verse says, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” In this verse, we see that a key for a team to have fellowship with one another is to walk in the light. The result of walking in the light is that the blood of Christ is continually cleansing us from sin.

As we go back to the book of Acts, we see that one of the key things the disciples did to continue to develop this spiritual family relationship was to pray with one another and for one another. Acts 1:14 says, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.” Here, we see that the disciples were praying with one another. Later, Acts 3:1 says, “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*.” Here, we see that Peter and John were going together to a time of prayer.

They also had times of prayer for one another. Acts 4:23-24a says, “And being let go, they went to their own *companions* and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, You *are* God...’” Acts 12:5 says, “Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.” An effective team leader will take time with the team to pray with one another and for one another. In this way, each team member is learning the importance of praying for the other members on the team.

Team members also learn to develop relationships with one another as they minister together. Acts 11:12 says, “Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house.” Peter had learned, from Christ, to

take others with him as he ministered. Here, we see six men from Joppa went to the house of Cornelius in Caesarea with Peter. This verse in Acts also shows that these six men later traveled with Peter to Jerusalem.

Another example of teams ministering together is found in the same chapter. Persecution had caused the church to scatter from Jerusalem. However, the believers had been shown, both by Christ and later the apostles, to minister together as teams. As a result, Acts 11:19-21 says, “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.”

In these verses, we see that the persecuted Christians traveled together and then began ministering as a team. The result of this ministry, as a team, was that they encouraged each other to begin reaching out to people of other cultures. Instead of persecution, isolating the disciples, or stopping their ministry, it caused them to minister to one another and learn to minister to other cultures in the process. The result was that a great number turned to the Lord. An effective team leader will help the team learn to minister to one another in times of opposition so they can together continue to minister the Gospel to others.

In these passages, we see several keys for developing the relationship of the team to one another:

- ◆ We help the team realize that they have entered into a new relationship that is a spiritual family relationship
- ◆ We help the team members learn to think “we” instead of “me”
- ◆ We help the team members learn to maintain their fellowship with the Father and with the Son
- ◆ We help the team members walk in the light so that there is a continual cleansing of sin, both in their relationship with the Lord and in their relationship with each other
- ◆ We have regular times of prayer with the team, so they learn to pray with one another and for one another
- ◆ We show the team members, by example, the importance of ministering as a team
- ◆ We show the team members, by example, how to minister to one another as a team in times of persecution
- ◆ We show the team members, by example, how to reach out to other cultures as a team

The Lord causes teams to multiply their effectiveness as they learn to minister to one another. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing team leaders learn to help team members develop their relationship with one another.