

9. Helping the Team Leader Develop Unity of Purpose

As Christians, we are all called to do one thing. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” This is one of the things that make ministry teams totally different from any team that develops in the world. Whether a team is a team of ushers in a church, a team of teachers in a Sunday school, or a team working together to plant a new church, the team is to glorify God in all it does.

In order to glorify God as a team, we need to have a unity of purpose. Before Christ returned to heaven, He gave every Christian a purpose for life. That purpose is given to us in Matthew 28:19-20. There we read, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*’ Amen.” Whether a team has as its primary ministry: teaching Sunday school classes, providing ushering for a church, leading the women’s ministry of the church, or is an outreach team focused on visiting those who are not yet Christians, we are still given the same purpose. We are to **Make Disciples**.

One of the key responsibilities of a team leader is regularly helping the team refocus on the purpose Christ has given all Christians, especially each team of Christians. This means that the team leader must have the purpose clearly defined in his or her own mind, so the team leader can regularly help the team focus on that purpose. That means that we need to help every developing leader learn to understand, and be able to clearly explain, the commission given by Christ.

In Matthew 28:19-20, we have one command and three participles that tell us how to carry out that command. The command is: **Make Disciples**. The three participles are: going, baptizing, and teaching. Let’s look at each of these things to see how we can help a developing leader learn to clearly explain, and provide an example of, each of these things.

We have the command to **Make Disciples**. The word “disciple” means *a learner or one who follows a leader’s teachings*. This means that every developing leader needs to know how to help each team member develop a learner’s attitude. We help a developing leader learn how to develop a learner’s attitude in others in several ways. The most important way is by his own example. Others will follow his example. If the team leader is regularly sharing new lessons he has just learned from Scripture with the team, the team will see the importance of learning new lessons from Scripture.

A team leader also develops a learner’s attitude by regularly asking questions of the team. Christ gave us a perfect example by His example. He was continually asking questions of the disciples. A leader of a team of ushers could regularly ask questions of the team like: “How do we follow the example of Christ in the way that we serve those we usher?” “What are some ways that we can be an encouragement to people as we serve them?” “How can our lives reflect the love of Christ in our service?” Questions like these cause the ushers to realize that they are serving Christ, and that this service will be reflected both by their attitudes and their actions.

A team leader develops a learner's attitude by having regular times when the team shares the Word together and prays together. As the team discusses Scriptural principles that apply to their particular ministry, they are learning to be more like Christ in the way they serve. As they pray together, for one another and for their ministry, they are learning ways they can most effectively serve one another as well as those they minister to as a team.

The first participle is going. We could translate the first phrase of the verse, As you are going, Make Disciples. Every spiritual team must have a vision bigger than themselves if they are going to be an effective team that is making disciples. One of the dangers that faces every spiritual team is the danger of becoming self-centered. In a church, the ushers are often the first ones to begin to notice when a family is missing, because most people usually try to sit in the same area of the church. This is an opportunity for the ushers to reach out by a call, e-mail, or visit to let the family know they were missed. This involves going or reaching out to encourage others.

Going is also the way we reach new people for Christ. If a church waits for people to come to church to hear about Christ, most people will never hear. Instead, every team in a church should see their team as a part of the outreach of the church. Most members of the team are probably working in some kind of job where they meet people who are not Christians. Many of the team members have relatives, friends, neighbors, or other acquaintances who are not Christians. The members of the team can work together to reach out to their non-Christian relatives, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and other acquaintances.

The second participle is baptizing. There are eight different kinds of baptism in the New Testament. The one thing they all have in common is identification with something. Baptism is the way a person identifies himself as a Christian. In many cases, this is also the way a person identifies himself with a local church. This is another key area where a team can work together much more effectively than one person. If you lead a friend to Christ, help that person become acquainted with your team members as quickly as possible. Many times, you can invite the new Christian, and part of the team members, to a social event in your home so the new Christian develops some friendships with other Christians. This way, when the new Christian comes to church, he will immediately see several people he knows.

The third participle is teaching. In Matthew 28:20, we see that we are to teach people to observe all that Christ has commanded. The word that is translated "observe" means *to keep or obey*. Here, we see that making disciples involves showing people how to obey all that Christ has commanded. Notice that we are not told to just tell people something. Instead, we are to show them how to obey all that Christ has commanded. This can best be shown by a team, since many of Christ's commands involve our relationships with one another.

One command that is repeated fifteen times is the command to love one another. In John 13:34-35, Christ said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." As you notice, this is not a suggestion, but a command. In addition, it also has a description of the kind of love required. Christ commands us to love one another as He loves

us. A new Christian will only learn to love others, as Christ loves him, when a team or group of Christians shows that love to him. As you can see, this requires a team to help the new Christian grow and mature.

In the New Testament, there are thirty-one “one anothers” we are commanded to practice. A part of making disciples is helping Christians learn to practice these one anothers in their relationships with one another. (A manual written to help a new Christian understand and apply the one anothers is “New Life in the Family of Christ” available at www.sveq.org.) This is why it is so important for a team leader to be an example that the other team members can follow. Only as they see the team leader put the one anothers into practice will they learn to make them a part of their lives, both in their relationships with one another on the team and in their relationships with other Christians.

One of the things, that is a key in helping a developing team leader learn how to help the team develop unity of purpose, is helping him understand that the team will probably develop a unity of purpose in direct relationship to his example. If he provides an example of obedience to Christ in the way he leads the team, the team will also begin to focus on obedience to Christ, not just knowledge. Unity is best taught by example. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing team leaders learn to help the team develop a unity of purpose.