

Developing Effective Church Organization

**Growing Christian Leaders Series
Manual 16**

by

Duane L. Anderson

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Growing Christian Leaders Series

This series of manuals is the result of a series of weekly e-mail topics that have been prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. They originally started out as a one page topic that gradually grew to the point where most topics are about three pages in length.

This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

Mark 10:43-45 says, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." In these verses Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate in this world before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Success produces rewards until we die but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, "So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life." I Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The Growing Christian Leaders Series is designed to make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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1.

Developing Structure to Help New Christians Grow – Part I

When Christ chose the twelve disciples, Mark 3:13-14 says, “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” The very first reason why Christ chose the disciples was so that they might be with Him. Then in John 20:21 Christ said to the disciples, “So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” In the period between those two statements of Christ, we see that the thinking and attitudes of the disciples had been transformed by being with Christ. As a result, the disciples had been shown how to transform the thinking and attitudes of others by spending time with them.

In Acts 1:14-15 we read, “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said.” Here we see the group that Christ was going to use to develop the church included about 120 disciples. A disciple is defined 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.” A person who has been instructed (has become a disciple) is defined as the head of spiritual household (has a spiritual family), one that has a treasure (the Word of God) is able to bring out of that treasure new things (a learner’s attitude) and bring out of that treasure things that are old (teach the basics of Christianity).

When the church began on the Day of Pentecost, we see that the church immediately grew from 120 to 3,120. Acts 2:41 says, “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.” Suddenly the church faced a real challenge, how could 120 disciples help 3,000 new Christians grow? The 120 disciples suddenly had to become exactly what Matthew 13:52 defines a disciple to be. Each one had to become the head of a spiritual family. With 3,000 new Christians this meant that each of the 120 disciples had to take the responsibility to help 25 new believers grow in their understanding of Christ and His teachings. How did that happen?

Acts 2:42 tells us that the church immediately began doing four things when the church grew from 120 disciples to 3,120 believers. That verse says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” The apostles’ doctrine was the things that the disciples had been taught by Christ. That would be the teachings that we now have in the New Testament. However, a key thing to notice is that the teaching of the apostles’ doctrine was combined with three other things.

We see that the apostles’ doctrine was combined with fellowship. The word “fellowship” speaks of a small group doing things together so that they can share their lives together. We are not told whether these were all adults or if half of them were children and young people. If they were all adults, each disciple probably led two groups of about a dozen to help them in their early spiritual growth. If they were half children and young people, that would mean each disciple had about 12 adults and their children. As a result, each of the 120 disciples were able to follow the example of

Christ and lead either one or two groups of about 12 adults in their spiritual growth to help their thinking and attitudes become transformed.

The fact that this is what the early church did is further indicated by Acts 2:46. That verse 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.” In this verse we see that the early Christians met both in the temple and also house to house. When they met in the temple Acts 5:12 says, “And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.” We see that the Christians met in Solomon's Porch when they gathered in the temple.

The Court of the Gentiles was the large court surrounding the temple. This court was about 1200 feet in length and about 800 feet in width. Around the outside edge of this entire court was a large covered porch about 45 feet in width and supported by 1500 pillars. A Jewish teacher would sit next to one of these pillars and a small group of people would gather around that teacher to hear him teach. In Acts 22:3 Paul said, “I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.” Gamaliel taught Paul and a few others for a period of years near one of these pillars.

The eastern side of the Court of the Gentiles was the area known as Solomon's Porch. That meant it was a covered area more than 1200 feet long by 45 feet wide with a roof that was held up by more than 400 pillars. Many Jews came to the temple each morning and each evening for the hour of prayer. Acts 3:1 says, “Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.” Acts 3:11 says that the lame man that was healed in Acts 3:2-10 immediately went to Solomon's Porch. Acts 3:11 says, “Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.” The times of morning and evening prayer provided two times each day when small groups of believers could get together into the temple for prayer, fellowship and the discussion of the apostle's teaching together near one of these pillars.

However, Acts 2:46 also 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.” Here we see that these small groups also got together in homes where it would be possible to break bread together. In the early church the breaking of bread included a communion service as a part of a meal so it provided a real time of fellowship as well. The early believers immediately began meeting in homes so that they could eat meals together and have communion along with Bible study, fellowship and prayer. As a result of the combination of these prayer times, the study of the apostles' doctrine and fellowship along with the meeting in homes for these purposes plus breaking bread the early believers were spending a lot of time together just as Christ had spent a lot of time with His disciples. These small groups were becoming spiritual families with a tremendous concern for one another.

However, these meetings of spiritual families in homes also produced another result. Many times a physical household would also include members of extended families. As a result, extended family members that were not Christians were having the opportunity to see how spiritual families

functioned. Acts 2:47 tells the result. That verse says, “Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Curious people would ask their questions of a small group gathered in Solomon’s porch. Curious family and extended family members had the same opportunities as the believers shared in homes. The result was that there were people becoming believers every day either in the temple or in the homes.

Christ had shown the disciples the basic structure for helping people have their lives transformed as they discussed their questions with Christ. The structure was very simple. Get together in small groups where people can discuss the teachings of Christ, enjoy fellowship, pray together and share meals and communion together. It was something that all the believers could do in their own homes. The 120 had become disciples that were equipped to lead such discussions because Christ had answered their questions and shown them His love.

The word “disciples” is not used between Acts 1:16 and Acts 5:42. However, Acts 6:1 begins, “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.” Then Acts 6:7 adds, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” There is a six or seven year period between Acts 1 and Acts 6 so we see that it took the early church time to develop more disciples that were able to lead spiritual families.

However, the multiplication of disciples (heads of spiritual households or small group leaders) made it possible for the church to begin to spread and multiply. When persecution came, Acts 8:4 says, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” Here we see that the growing Christians were equipped to share the Word of God wherever they were scattered. Acts 9:31 gives the results when it says, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” Here we see that when disciples multiply that the result is that churches multiply.

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 has one command, “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.” That command is to Make Disciples. May the Lord richly bless you and give your life an eternal impact as you help people become disciples that can lead small group Bible studies.

2.

Developing Structure to Help New Christians Grow – Part II

In our last topic we saw that the disciples had been shown how to develop the basic structure to help new Christians grow. Christ had chosen the twelve to be with Him so that their thoughts and attitudes could be transformed by the love of Christ and the things that He taught them. As the disciples spent time with Christ, they saw that He loved them and they learned what He taught them. As Christ approached His death, He gave them a new commandment. John 13:34-35 says, “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.”

We saw in our last topic that a disciple is one that has become the head of a spiritual household. A head of a spiritual household is a Christian that is leading a small group of Christians where they are learning to become like Christ because they are being shown how to love and they are learning the things that Christ taught. Since it takes time for new Christians to develop and become the head of a spiritual family, this is why it is so important that new churches are started with teams. Notice how Paul helped new Christians grow as he and those with him started churches.

In I Thessalonians 1:1 we read, “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Then in I Thessalonians 2:7-12 we read, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

In these verses we see that Paul, Silas and Timothy worked as a team to help these new Christians grow. They provided three things to help these new Christians grow so that they would be equipped to lead small groups when Paul, Silas and Timothy moved on to other cities. Paul, Silas and Timothy provided the love of a nursing mother, the example of a godly father and shared the teachings of Christ so that these new Christians would be able to walk to please God. In I Thessalonians 1:5 Paul summarized their source of strength. That verse says, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.” They provided love and example and they taught in the power of the Holy Spirit. The following verses go on to tell how these things transformed the lives of the Thessalonians.

In I Thessalonians 1:6 we read, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” We see that the first key principle that Paul mentions that helped the Thessalonians learn to become leaders of others was that they

became followers of them and of the Lord. People learn to follow the Lord by following the Lord's people. Paul, Silas and Timothy took the new Christians with them as they ministered to others. As the new Christians went with the three, they were learning the Word so that they knew what to teach, they were watching the example of the three so that they knew how to teach and they were learning to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit. Those are the three things we teach potential small group leaders as we take them with us.

We see the results in the following verses. We see that the Thessalonian Christians became an example for others to follow. I Thessalonians 1:7 says, "so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe." In addition to becoming an example to the people in the city of Thessalonica, they actually became an example to people throughout the entire region of Macedonia (today that area is Northern Greece) and Achaia (today that area is southern Greece). The Thessalonians had learned by the example of Paul, Silas and Timothy and so they showed others by their example the transformation that Christ made in their lives.

The Thessalonians also learned what to share and how to share the teachings of Christ. I Thessalonians 1:8 says, "For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything." The Thessalonians were sharing the teachings of Christ wherever they went. Here we see why it is so important to take people with you and show them how to share the Word of God and not just tell them to share the Word. People learn to do what they have been shown how to do by example.

The Thessalonians were also showing the difference that Christ made in their lives. I Thessalonians 1:9-10 says, "For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." Here we see the impact of a changed life. People everywhere were talking about the fact that the Christians had turned to God. They spoke of the fact that they had also turned from idols. Then they talked about the fact that the Christians from Thessalonica were serving the living and true God and they were waiting for Christ to return. Here we see the powerful impact of example.

One of the key things in the development of a church is when the people of the area begin talking and saying positive things about the people that are becoming Christians because of the changes that are happening in their lives. Although the Jewish religious leaders were very upset about the ministry of the early believers in Jerusalem, they admitted that everyone was talking about what was happening. Acts 5:28 reads, "Saying, 'Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!'" Everyone in Jerusalem was talking about the words and changes that were happening in the lives of the new believers.

The same thing had happened in Thessalonica. In the verses we mentioned above, we see that the people throughout the region were talking about the changes in the lives of those who had become Christians in Thessalonica. The people saw differences in their lives because the Christians were no longer worshiping idols. Instead of talking about the idols, they were talking about the true and living God. The fact that Paul, Silas and Timothy had spent much time with them had equipped

them to explain to others the changes that were happening in their lives. Even though Paul, Silas and Timothy had left, the new Christians were continuing to meet together and share together so that they could become better equipped to share what the Lord had done for them. Then they went out and shared that message wherever they went.

Paul gives some other keys to the development of the early Christians in Thessalonica in chapter five. I Thessalonians 5:11-13 says, “Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves.” In these verses we see that Paul, Silas and Timothy had helped the believers in Thessalonica develop a basic structure for growth. They had appointed leaders that were leading the church and taking the responsibility for oversight of the church.

First, we see that the Christians were getting together in small groups. Paul said he was thankful to hear that they were comforting and encouraging each other as they gathered together. They were also building up each other as they shared together the things that they had learned from Paul, Silas and Timothy. Many times in a group one person will remind the others in the group of some of the things that the others had forgotten. Then others will share what they remember and together they teach one another. This especially happens when small groups of Christians get together and discuss the things that they have learned. The Holy Spirit uses these discussions to teach new things to all that are involved.

Second, we see that leaders had been appointed that were leading these new Christians. Although these leaders were new Christians themselves, Paul and the team had shown them the basics for leading small groups of Christians to help them grow. We see that these new leaders were laboring among the other Christians. The word that is translated “labor” is another form of the word used in I Thessalonians 2:9 where Paul spoke of how he and the team had labored among the Thessalonians. Paul and the team had taken potential leaders with them and shown them how to labor among the new Christians to help them grow. As a result, these new leaders were also laboring among the other Christians to help them continue to grow. Paul encouraged the Christians to highly respect these new leaders and to also have peace among themselves.

New spiritual leaders grow quickly in their own spiritual lives as they help other Christians grow. The Lord will help you develop new leaders as you take growing Christians will you and show them how you help others grow. May the Lord richly bless you as you help Christians develop and become leaders of small groups of other Christians.

3.

Developing Structure to Meet Needs

In our last two topics we saw how the early church developed structure to help new Christians grow. Today we will see how the church began to develop structure to minister to those believers with needs. In Acts 2:44-45 we read, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” Here we see that the early Christians began to meet the needs of other believers very quickly.

The church at Jerusalem had started with Jews out of every nation that happened to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. Acts 2:5 says, “And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.” These Jews had come for the Feast of Pentecost and then most of them planned to return home soon after. As a result, they probably did not bring enough money to make it possible for them to stay several additional months or years. Some of these visitors from other nations were among those that became believers. This caused the other new believers to see an immediate need. They wanted to help these new believers stay longer so that they could learn more about Christ and how Christ transforms our lives.

The Jews had three feasts each year when they gathered at Jerusalem. Jews that lived in distant lands would save their money for many years so that that would be able to come at least once in their lives for the Passover and the Feast of Pentecost. Those who came long distances would usually stay for both feasts since they were only seven weeks apart. As a result, the Christians that lived in Jerusalem and the surrounding area began to sell their possessions and goods so that they could help provide food for these new believers from other areas. Some of these people were probably invited to stay with other believers for a period of time. This met one immediate need.

A second need developed as the church continued to grow. That was the need of the widows. The church began to help provide food for the needy older believing widows. People that knew the widows would help distribute this food. That need was also met as people even began to sell property to help provide needs. In Acts 4:34-37 we read, “Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

However, the day came when there was a need for more organization to continue to minister to all of the widows. Among those from other lands that were becoming believers, some would become widows as their husbands died while they were at Jerusalem. This meant that these were widows that had no family in Jerusalem. Acts 6:1 tells how these widows were affected, “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.” The Hellenists were Greek speaking Jews that came from other countries. Since they did not have families in Jerusalem, these Greek speaking widows were neglected when the food was distributed because they had no family members in Jerusalem.

As a result, the apostles realized that as the leaders of the church in Jerusalem they had to delegate the responsibility for distributing food to the Hellenist widows to someone else. As a result, Acts 6:2-6 says, “Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.” The apostles kept their priorities straight and delegated this responsibility to others.

Since these other men were going to be handling money, the apostles gave three qualifications for the men who would have this responsibility delegated to them. Some believe these were the first deacons. They were to be men of good reputation. They were to be full of the Holy Spirit. They were to be full of wisdom. One of the interesting things to notice since they were going to be meeting the needs of the Greek speaking widows is the fact that all seven of these names are Greek names. This is a key expansion in the leadership team of the church at Jerusalem. The church leadership team became multicultural. The church at Jerusalem now had leaders that had grown up among Gentile cultures as well as among those that had grown up among other Jews.

In Acts 8 the church in Jerusalem began to experience great persecution. Acts 8:1 says, “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.” Then Acts 8:4 adds, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” A key to notice here is that although the apostles remained in Jerusalem that all of the other believers knew how to share the Gospel with others as they were scattered. Then in the rest of chapters 8 and 9 we see that the apostles began to go to other areas to help other churches get established. This meant a need for more structure both in the church in Jerusalem and also in the churches being established.

Although the instructions about how the structure developed are not given in these chapters of Acts, we see that the structure was being developed. Acts 11:30 says, “This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” We see that the gift from the church at Antioch to the church at Jerusalem was given to the elders. This meant that the church at Jerusalem was now led by elders rather than the apostles. As the apostles were spending more and more of their time in other areas, elders had been appointed to lead the church at Jerusalem and in the other churches that were established throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria.

According to Acts 1:21-22 apostles were eyewitness of the resurrection of Christ, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” Since this group of leaders was part of the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20), it was necessary to develop elders from within every church to become the team of men that provided spiritual leadership for each local church.

As Paul traveled to Gentile cities to spread the Gospel, he also made certain that a basic structure was developed to lead the churches. Acts 13:52 says, "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." We see that Paul developed many disciples (small group Bible study leaders) in every city. Paul and Barnabas left these Bible study leaders to provide leadership to the Bible study groups but did not organize them as churches at this time. Acts 14:21 says, "And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch."

Then in Acts 14:22-23 we read, "Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.' So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." By the time Paul and Barnabas returned to these cities a few months later, some of these Bible study leaders had grown and matured and Paul and Barnabas were able to organize churches in each of the cities with their own elders to lead them. Later as these churches developed they could add any additional structure that they needed.

In Titus 1:5 we see that Paul did not remain in Crete long enough to organize the churches in each city. As a result, Paul left Titus in Crete to develop the disciples and help them mature and then equip them to become elders to lead the churches in each city. Titus 1:5 says, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you--." Paul knew that as the disciples matured that some would meet the qualifications to be elders and lead the churches. Paul expected this to happen in every city. If we are being obedient to the commands that are given to us in the New Testament, we should see the same thing happen today.

Once a group of people in any area become Christians, a top priority of the spiritual leaders is to help those people grow and become disciples (small group Bible study leaders). In our last topic we saw that Paul, Silas and Timothy provided the love of a nursing mother, the example of a godly father and shared the teachings of Christ so that these new Christians would be able to walk to please God so that they became disciples. Now in our topic today we have seen the early church leaders showed these small group leaders by example how to continue to mature and become the leadership teams of local churches. May the Lord richly bless you as you help others come to Christ, become disciples (small group Bible study leaders) and then show them how to become godly leaders that are equipped to become a part of the leadership team of a local church.

4.

Developing Qualified Leaders to Lead Churches

In our last topic we concluded by mentioning that Paul left Crete without staying long enough to develop elders to lead the church in each city. As a result, Paul left Titus in Crete to appoint elders to lead the churches in each city on that island. Titus 1:5 says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” Here we see that Paul was saying that there were potential elders in every city but those men needed further development so that they would become qualified for spiritual leadership. That was the responsibility that Paul gave Titus when he left him in Crete.

In Titus 1:6-9 Paul gives Titus a list of the qualifications that he was to use to guide him as he helped new Christians mature so that they became qualified for spiritual leadership. Titus 1:6-9 says, “if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” We might summarize this list by saying that Titus was to help potential leaders:

- Develop a respected life.
- Develop a healthy marriage.
- Develop a healthy family relationship.
- Become Christ centered and not self centered.
- Deal with former sinful habits.
- Learn to use their homes for ministry.
- Develop godly character.
- Learn to teach the Word of God.
- Learn to correct those who contradict.

Qualifications are given primarily to qualify people not to disqualify people. At the time a person becomes a new Christian, he usually meets few if any of these qualifications. Paul told Titus to appoint elders in every city that met these qualifications. Paul made it very clear that he felt that men would become qualified in every city if someone would help them develop and grow spiritually. Paul had not appointed those leaders because they still needed help to grow and mature to become qualified. That meant that the primary ministry of Titus was to help unqualified men grow and mature in their Christian lives so that they became qualified for spiritual leadership.

Today many churches have reversed the process. Instead of helping people mature and become qualified, churches have done one of two things. Some churches just ignore qualifications. Other churches go to the opposite extreme and use these qualifications to disqualify people instead of using them as a guide to help them know how to help people mature spiritually and become qualified for spiritual leadership. Either approach will make it difficult for churches to develop and become the churches that Christ wants them to be.

From time to time missionaries, church planters or pastors tell me that they have no men in their

group or church qualified for spiritual leadership. I ask them to make a list of each of the men in their group or church. Then we take the list and go through the list of men individual by individual. With each name, I ask the person to list the specific areas from the list above where that man is not qualified. In many cases the person will list two or three qualifications that the man does not meet. I may conclude with the man who has been a Christian for just a few weeks. Often the missionary, church planter or pastor will tell me that new Christian is not qualified in any of the areas listed by Titus. I say that is exactly the point. When we first became Christians, none of us were qualified but someone helped us grow and become qualified for spiritual leadership.

Then I ask the missionary, church planter or pastor to read Titus 1:5 to me. He reads the verse, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you." I then ask the question, "What does this verse say is your primary responsibility to each of the men on that list?" Sometimes it takes a while for the person to begin to realize that this verse teaches that his primary responsibility is to help each man become qualified for spiritual leadership in the one, two, three or more areas where he is not yet qualified.

With most I then read Mark 3:13-14, "And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach." Then I ask, "What was the first thing that Christ did to help the Twelve become qualified for spiritual leadership?" Even though it takes a while, these leaders finally realize that the first reason Christ chose the Twelve was so that they could be with Him.

Then I point out that at least five things happened as these men were with Christ. First, they were able to observe the character of Christ and as a result eleven of the twelve began to become more like Christ in their character. Second, they were able to observe His prayer life as He prayed to the Father and they learned how to build their relationship with the Father. Third, they were able to hear what He taught and see how to answer the questions that various people asked Christ. Fourth, they were able to see how He taught what He taught so that they were being shown how to teach. Fifth, they were being shown how to do the work that Christ would later commission them to do.

Later, in Matthew 28:19-20 Christ would commission them to: Make Disciples. The disciples knew how Christ had helped them to become disciples and so when the church began on the Day of Pentecost they immediately began doing the same things. Acts 2:42 says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." The 120 disciples mentioned in Acts 1:15 immediately began to meet in small groups with the new believers. First, this gave the new believers daily opportunities to observe the character of the disciples. Second, they were learning to pray as they observed the prayer life of the disciples and prayed together. Third, they were heard the apostles' doctrine (the teachings of Christ) and were getting their questions answered. Fourth, they were being shown how to teach the Word of God to others. Fifth, they were being shown how to do work that Christ has commissioned all Christians to do.

I then share with missionaries, church planters and pastors that say they have no leaders is that their first priority is to help leaders develop. I mention that this will only happen as they spend

time with their men either individually or in a small group to give them the opportunity to grow by observing the life of the person to whom I am talking. These times together need to focus on the four things mentioned in Acts 2:42, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

Christ's teachings

Fellowship

Eating together

Prayer

Second I ask, “What areas does this list of qualifications say you need to help the first man on the list grow in his spiritual life in order to become qualified?” Then I share with the person what book or books of the Bible will be the most helpful to study to help that person become qualified for spiritual leadership in the areas where that person is lacking. I then repeat this second question about each man that the person has listed. After going through the list of men, I ask the person to begin praying and asking the Lord to show Him which men to focus on to help them develop their spiritual leadership in the areas where they are not yet qualified.

One of the most common responses at this point is, “I don't have enough time to meet regularly with some of those men individually or in a small group.” At that point two key verses to examine together are Ephesians 5:16-17, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Here we see that the Lord wants us to make the best use of our time because we already know that it is the will of the Lord to **Make Disciples**. I point out that the real question is, “What are your priorities according to the Word of God?”

Sometimes it helps to suggest times when they can meet with one man or a small group of men – times like: lunch hour, before or after work, take a person or two with them as they minister, before or after a regular meeting of the church or other times that fit their local culture. Every person has the same number of hours in the week. That is why the key question is, “What are your priorities?” A key priority of every person that is already in spiritual leadership is to help one or more people become qualified for spiritual leadership.

The Lord wants to use each one of us to Make Disciples. As we are obedient to that command of Christ, we will help unqualified people develop and become qualified for spiritual leadership. The Lord will use our ministry of helping unqualified people become qualified to help build His church. May the Lord richly bless you as you help others grow spiritually and become qualified for spiritual leadership.

5.

Developing the Ministry of Each Christian – Part I

Ephesians 4:15-16 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” In these verses we see that it is the plan of God for every person that becomes a Christian to learn how to work effectively to do his or her share of the ministry.

In earlier topics we have talked about the fact that the early church met in small groups for four purposes. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” As the new believers grew in their spiritual lives, these small Bible study and fellowship groups provided a structure for every Christian to learn how to serve the Lord and become a functioning part of the body of Christ. Here is an example of why it is so important for every leader to become a servant leader so that he can serve others by helping them develop their ministry. This also shows why it is important to help every Christian become a part of a Bible study and fellowship group.

One of the primary ministries of every Bible study and fellowship group leader is to show each Christian in the group how to become a functioning part of the body of Christ. Some of those in the group will be growing rapidly in their spiritual lives while others in the group may be having more struggles. However, each person in that group has something to contribute to the other members. I Corinthians 12:22-23 says, “No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty.”

Paul is here making a comparison between our physical body and the body of Christ, the church. We do not see our internal organs like our heart or our lungs but they are very necessary to the function of our physical body. In the same way, some Christians will not have a public ministry that everyone can see but they are equally important to the church and they need to be developed for the ministry for which God has designed them because God has designed every Christian to have a ministry. I Corinthians 12:18 says, “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.” God has prepared every Christian to have an important ministry whether that ministry is seen or not.

These verses also tell us that the weaker parts of the body are just as necessary as the stronger parts of the body. The weaker parts of the body are to be developed along with the stronger parts. The stronger parts of the body are to help the weaker parts of the body learn to function effectively. I Corinthians 12:24-25 says, “But our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.” Here we see that all of the members of the body are to have the same concern for the development of others that they have for their own development.

In order for each person in the Bible study and fellowship group to have the same care and concern for others that they have for themselves, they must be growing in their relationship to one another. I Corinthians 12:26 says, "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it." Here we see that in many ways a group of Christians is like an extended family where everyone is greatly concerned for the rest of the family. They suffer together and they are to rejoice together.

Philippians 2:1-4 tells us the attitudes that we want to develop in the Bible study and fellowship groups to make it possible for this kind of a family concern to develop. Those verses say, "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

In these verses we see several things that are the result of healthy spiritual growth in Bible study and fellowship groups. The group:

- Becomes like-minded
- Loves one another
- Are of one accord
- Are of one mind
- Are concerned for the interests of the others

These attitudes do not happen automatically. First, to be like-minded means to think the same way. Romans 15:1-5 says, "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus." To become like-minded means that we learn to become other-centered rather than self-centered.

Second, we also want to help those in each Bible study and fellowship group learn to really love one another. Christ spent three and a half years working with the disciples to help them learn to function as a team. Then the night before His crucifixion He gave them a new commandment. John 13:34-35 says, "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." One of the goals of a Bible study and fellowship group is to help the group members learn to love one another as Christ loves them.

Third, we want to help each Bible study and fellowship group become of one accord. The word translated "one accord" means to be together in feelings, desires, passions and affections. This means that we want to help the group learn to really become united with attitudes and desires that cause them to help one another in their spiritual growth.

Fourth, we want to help each Bible study and fellowship group become of one mind. To be of one mind means to be in agreement because they have the same purpose in life. I Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Our purpose as Christians is to do all to the glory of God. As a Bible study and fellowship group grows in their relationship with the Lord and with one another, they will become more and more focused on bringing glory to God in all that they do.

Fifth, we want to help each Bible study and fellowship group learn to become concerned for the interests of others and not just their own interests. Philippians 2:3 tells us that this happens as Christians learn to set aside selfish ambition or conceit and replace it with a humble attitude that causes us to esteem others better than ourselves. This development of godly attitudes is the true evidence that the group is growing in their relationship with the Lord and with each other.

This also helps us to understand why it is important to develop a structure where each Christian can grow in their relationship to Christ and learn to minister to one another. The two verses that we used to start this topic, Ephesians 4:15-16, say that Christ is the head from whom the whole body is joined and knit together by what every joint supplies. The purpose of church structure is to provide a structure that will make it possible for the whole body to be joined and knit together so that every part will learn to supply what God has created each person to supply to the body.

Ephesians 4:16 says this is what makes it possible for each part to learn to do its share. Here we see that church structure is really for the purpose of helping every Christian to learn to function as an effective part of the body. This verse points out the fact that a healthy church will be a church where every single Christian is learning to serve the Lord and not just the dynamic people. This is a key because when every part is working effectively God says that it produces growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. One of the greatest things this reveals is the fact that the stronger parts are helping the weaker parts to grow in love.

One phrase that was used to describe the early church was, "See how they love one another." That was true because every Christian was learning to function as a part of the body. The stronger Christians were helping the weaker Christians learn to take root in the love of Christ. This was helping every Christian move from fear to love. As I John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." May the Lord richly bless you as you help others in your church really take root in the love of Christ.

6.

Developing the Ministry of Each Christian – Part II

In our last topic we said that church structure is really for the purpose of helping every Christian to learn to function as an effective part of the body. In far too many churches the work of the ministry is carried on by a very small group and the rest of the body has never learned to function. Christ wants every Christian to learn to function effectively so that each part can do its share. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In Matthew 28:19-20 we have what is known as our Great Commission. Those verses say, “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.” In these verses we have one command “Make Disciples” and three participles that tell us how to carry out that command: going, baptizing and teaching.

The various forms of the word disciple are used 274 times in the New Testament. However, the various forms of that word are never used after Acts 21:16. Since that is our Great Commission we certainly need to ask the question, “Why is the word “disciple” never used after Acts 21:16?” The reason disciple is never used after Acts 21:16 is very simple. The Jews had a good understanding of the word but the word meant nothing to the Gentiles. Let us see why we can say the Jews had a good understanding of the word.

Christ used the word disciple when he was warning the scribes and Pharisees of judgment. Matthew 23:15 says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” Here we see that the first thing the Pharisees did was win a proselyte (a Gentile) to Judaism. However, that was just the beginning. Once he had become a convert to Judaism we see that the process began to train him how to become a good Pharisee. The Pharisees took this convert along with them until he had developed the attitudes of a proud Pharisee. They took him along and showed him how to make other converts to Judaism from among the Gentiles. The result was that he became twice as much a son of hell as the Pharisees that were showing him how to be a good Pharisee.

Christ gave His definition of a disciple in Matthew 13:52. There 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 “instructed” is the same word as “Make Disciples” in Matthew 28:19-20. Here we see that a disciple:

- Has become the head of a spiritual household (able to lead a Bible study group).
- Has a treasure (the Word of God).
- Is about to bring out of that treasure things new (is continuing to grow).
- Is about to bring out of that treasure things old (teach the basics of Christianity).

The Hebrew system was to develop people by showing them how to become a disciple. The rest of the Roman Empire followed the Greek system where an instructor told people what to do. The

contrast is clearly seen in I Corinthians 4:15-16. 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.” An instructor was a slave who raised a child by severe discipline. The word is only used two other times in the New Testament in Galatians 3:24-25. There we see that the law was our schoolmaster (instructor) to bring us to God but after we came to God we were no longer under a schoolmaster.

In contrast to an instructor, Paul said that he (and the team with him) had become like a spiritual father to the Corinthians. In I Thessalonians 2:7-12 Paul, Silas and Timothy said that they had become like spiritual parents to the Christians in Thessalonica. They had provided the loving care of a nursing mother and the example of a godly father. The result was that the Thessalonians became examples to help others grow. I Thessalonians 1:7 says, “So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.” The Thessalonians had learned to lead others by their example instead of just telling them what to do. Throughout the Epistles the love and example of spiritual parents is the model because the Gentiles had no concept of the word “disciple”.

This brings us to the question, “How do we develop church structure so that new and growing Christians have loving examples to follow instead of instructors who just tell them what to do?” That question takes us right back to the day the church began. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” We have seen that from the day the church began that they gathered in small groups where they focused on: the apostles' doctrine (studying what became the New Testament) and fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers.

However, Acts 2:46 gives us a real key to how they helped these new converts become disciples. That verse 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.” The 120 disciples were going to the homes of the new believers and breaking bread with them. The 120 were doing this daily. The 120 were modeling both love and example because they were filled with gladness (exceeding joy). The 120 were modeling singleness of heart (unity). This time in homes also provided opportunities to show new believers how to share the Gospel with their extended families as the 120 provided an example of how to share the Gospel with the families. We know that sharing with family members was happening because they next verse says that the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

As small groups met in homes for Bible study, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer, the 120 were also able to demonstrate the new commandment of Christ. John 13:34-35 says, “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.” The 120 had seen Christ demonstrate His love to them. Now they were showing the new believers by their love how to love others.

Each person in each of the small groups was learning how to share the Gospel with others. The word “disciples” was not used between Acts 1:15 and Acts 6:1. That is a period of about six or seven years. Then in Acts 6:1 we read that the number of disciples multiplied. Acts 6:7 says

that the number of disciples multiplied greatly. Soon persecution came and Acts 8:1 says many of the Christians were scattered but that the apostles remained in Jerusalem. Acts 8:4 says, "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word." The difference between addition and multiplication is this. If you only develop the dynamic people you will only have addition. If you develop every Christian and show every Christian how to share the Gospel and then help new Christians begin to grow, you will have multiplication. (If you develop no one, a new church will never develop and an existing church will die.)

Acts 9:31 tells the results just a few years later. That verse says, "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied." In Acts 2 the believers multiplied. In Acts 6 the number who had become disciples multiplied. In Acts 9 the number of churches multiplied. The churches knew how to develop the structure that had developed in Jerusalem in Acts 2:42 and 2:46

By comparing Acts 2:41-47 with I Thessalonians 2:7-12 we see that Paul, Silas and Timothy did exactly the same things with the new believers in Thessalonica. However, they used the words that speak of the tender care of a nursing mother and the godly example of a loving father instead of using the word "disciple". Because they were a team that worked together, Paul, Silas and Timothy were each able to be leaders of several small groups of Christians.

We see how Paul, Silas and Timothy showed a gentle attitude of love in verses 7-9. They showed the care of a nursing mother. They showed their longing and concern out of a heart of love. They shared their lives. They shared their heart and passion. They treated the new Christians as beloved children. They worked hard and long including both day and night. They made sure they were not a burden to the new Christians.

We see how Paul, Silas and Timothy provided an example to follow in verses 10-12. They said that the Thessalonians had been witnesses and had seen their attitudes and actions. They provided examples of holy lives. They provided example of upright lives. They provided examples of blameless lives. They showed them how to be examples to others. They came alongside them to encourage and strengthen them. They provided comfort. They shared with them how to grow in their lives so that their lives would give a good report of what Christ had done to change their lives. They had been like fathers who were showing their children how to walk worthy of God.

As we compare these passages, we see that making disciples is spiritual parenting (or to put it the other way, spiritual parenting is how we make disciples). The early church developed a structure that made it possible for every new Christian to have a spiritual parent that would provide the love and the example needed to help each new Christian become a reproducing Christian. That is what the Lord has called each of us to do. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example to follow that demonstrates the love of Christ to new Christians.

7.

Developing the Attitude Shifts that are Needed to Develop Structure

In our last two topics we have seen how the early church developed the structure to develop reproducing Christians. However, there is another key that is important in the development of structure. That is a change in certain attitudes of those who are already leaders. That will be the focus of our topic today.

The first attitude that we need to understand is the way that we see people. As we look at people, do we see their problems or do we see their potential? A great illustration of this is found in John 4 where Christ ministered to the Samaritan woman. Ask yourself, "Did the disciples see the problems of the woman or did they, like Christ, see the potential of the woman?" John 4:27 says, "And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" Since they marveled at the fact that Christ would even talk with her, they certainly did not see her potential.

Although she had not even found out how to have living water yet (John 4:14-18), Christ saw her potential. Christ used that potential to transform a whole town. In just a short time, Christ had totally changed her priorities as she left her waterpot when she had originally come for water. He changed her attitudes since she wondered at first why He would even talk with her. He changed her thinking of worship from worship being a place where we worship to worshiping God in spirit and in truth. He introduced her to the fact that He is Christ. He changed her character. He equipped her to tell others how to find Christ. He saw many believe because of her witness. He saw many more believe after she introduced them to Christ.

How could Christ see the potential of a woman that had five husbands and was now living unmarried with a sixth? The answer to that is found in Ephesians 3:20-21. Those verses say, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Christ knew His power to change and transform that woman or any other person. We have to change our attitude so that we see that Christ is able to do:

- Exceedingly
- Abundantly
- Above all we can ask
- Above all we can understand or perceive with our mind
- Because it is His power that changes and transforms lives.

In order to see people as Christ sees people, we need to realize that every person with whom we share the Gospel may have the potential to be another Paul once the power of Christ begins to work in that person to change and transform him. If Christ could change a woman that much in one hour, how much can He change a person over a period of months and years? We need to see people as Christ saw people.

A second attitude that we need to understand is the way that we measure success. Do we measure success by numbers or do we measure success by transformed lives. This is illustrated for us so well by Christ in John 6. At the beginning of that chapter Christ fed the five thousand and they came back for more food the next day. Christ spent most of chapter six telling the people what it

cost to be His disciple. Many people quickly made a choice. John 6:66-68 says, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." In one chapter Christ went from 5000 to 12 and He said that one of the twelve had a devil.

Christ chose to measure success by transformed lives. As a result, although Christ did minister to the multitudes over the last 21 months of His public ministry, His focus was on the transformation of the twelve (minus one). Christ summarized that ministry as He prayed to the Father. The night before His crucifixion Christ prayed in John 17:4, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." Christ actually measured success in two ways. First, He had glorified the Father. Second, He had finished the work that the Father had given Him to do and that was to transform the lives of eleven men. Do you measure your success by numbers or by transformed lives?

A third attitude that we need to understand is the goal that Christ has for our ministry. Is our goal to have a ministry that the world calls successful or is our goal to equip others for the ministry to which Christ has called them? If our goal is to be successful, we will develop a structure that is centered around our personality. If our goal is to equip others for the ministry to which Christ has called them, we will develop a structure that gives each person the opportunity to develop their full potential for Christ. In Colossians 1:28 Paul said that his goal was to present every man complete in Christ. That verse says, "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The word that is translated "perfect" means full grown or mature. Paul made it his goal to help every Christian become a mature Christian. That should be our goal also.

Spiritual maturity involves three key areas: what we are, what we know and what we do. First is what we are or what we are becoming as far as our character is concerned. Paul explained his goal for every Christian in the area of character. I Thessalonians 3:12-13 says, "And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." In these verses we see that we are to grow so that we increase and abound in love. We grow and increase in love as we learn to take root in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7) and in the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19). As we grow and abound in love toward others we see that makes it possible for Christ to establish our hearts blameless in holiness before God when Christ comes for us. Godly character develops as we show people how to take root in the love of Christ.

Philippians 2:15 says, "That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." In this verse we see that growth in godly character helps us to become blameless and harmless so that we live without fault even though we live in a sinful world and among sinful people. The result of this godly character is that our lives shine as lights in the world. Paul made it his goal to help every Christian growth in godly character.

Second, we are to develop a structure to help every Christian become mature in their

knowledge of Christ and his Word. Growth in the knowledge of His Word happens as we grow in our knowledge of the Bible and learn how to apply it to our lives. Paul knew that Christ wanted him to help people become familiar with the whole Word of God. Acts 20:27 says, “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” Paul wanted them to become familiar with the whole Word of God because Paul knew that was necessary for each Christian to become mature.

Growth in the knowledge of Christ happens through fellowship with Christ and with other Christians. John wrote to explain this in the following verses. I John 1:3 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.” I John 1:7 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.” We grow in our fellowship with Christ as we walk in His light by sharing our lives with Him. That is why we must develop a structure so that those we lead can see how we develop our fellowship with Christ and with them.

Third we are to develop a structure that provides opportunities for every Christian to develop their ministry skills. Peter gives us some keys to develop ministry skills in I Peter 4:9-11. Those verses say, “Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

In these verses we see that ministry skills are developed as people are given the opportunity to use their homes for hospitality. Speaking skills are developed as people are given the opportunity to share the Word of God with one another. Ministry or serving skills are developed as people are given the opportunity to use their serving gifts to serve one another in the strength that God supplies.

Here we see that we need to develop church structure so that it provides opportunities for people to spend time with one another so that they can minister to one another both by word and by action. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop church structure that will give every Christian opportunities to minister both to those who are not yet Christians and also to those who are Christians.

8.

Developing Structure to Transform Lives

In our last topic we talked about three attitude changes that are needed to transform lives. We saw that the first attitude that often needs to change is changing our focus from the problems of people to the potential that Christ has given them as He transforms their lives. We see that the second attitude that often needs change is the need to measure success by transformed lives and not by numbers. The third attitude that often needs change is the need to see that our goal is to equip others for the ministry to which Christ has called them and not worldly success for self. When these three attitudes are transformed in our lives, the Lord is able to use our lives to make a great eternal impact. We will see that it will also have a dramatic impact on church structure.

We have seen that from the day that the church began in Acts 2 that the new believers began to meet in small groups immediately. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 2:41-47 we have seen that these small groups focused on at least eight things. Those can be summarized by saying that these small groups were FLOCKS that were praying and praising. FLOCKS stands for:

F fellowship
L leadership development
O outreach
C caring
K knowledge
S service

In the next eight topics we will focus on what you do as a leader of a small group to transform lives as you focus on these eight things. Today we will talk about what you do to help each one in your small group to develop fellowship with God and with one another. New Christians will only develop fellowship with God as they learn to share their lives with God. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned they hid themselves from God. When God called him, Adam answered in Genesis 3:10, “So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” Adam was separated from God. This verse says that he had fear, guilt and shame within and verse 12 shows that he tried to blame God for giving him the woman and blame the woman for giving him the fruit. As a result, every non-Christian is motivated by separation, fear, guilt, shame and blame.

To help a new Christian transform his or her thinking and life, you will need to help him reverse the effects of original sin. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” The mind will be renewed as a new Christian learns to think Biblically instead of thinking like the world. That is why structuring for small group Bible studies is so important. First, each person is learning how to understand and apply the Word of God to daily situations in life. Second, each person is able to discuss his or her questions with a small group of others who are also in the process of having their minds transformed. A person who is getting his questions answered from the Bible is learning to think Biblically.

This also determines the type of Bible study that is needed. Remember that a Bible study is not designed to show the group your Bible knowledge. The purpose of a small group Bible study is to transform the thinking and lives of those in the Bible study. Acts 17:11-12 describes the kind of Bible study needed in both an evangelistic Bible study and in a small group Bible study designed to transform the lives of those who have become Christians. Those verses say, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.”

We see that the Bereans:

Were fair-minded – they came with a learner’s attitude

Received the Word with all readiness of mind – they studied and discussed the Word with eagerness

Searched the Scriptures – kept on discussing their questions and studying to see what the Word of God taught about their questions

Searched daily – they were building relationships with one another as they searched together

Wanted to find out if these things were so – want to back up what they were learning from the Word of God

Many believed – their lives and thinking were being transformed

Transformed both Jews and Greeks – this kind of Bible study is effective in any culture

Transformed both women and men – this kind of Bible study is effective with any group (men, women, young people, children)

The total separation from God has already begun to be reversed in the life of a new Christian. The new Christian has now entered into a new relationship with God because John 1:12 promises, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” You want to help the new Christian begin to understand the fact that he has been placed by the Holy Spirit into the family of God and that now he has both a physical family and a spiritual family. Romans 8:16 describes Christians as a family. That verse says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” One of the things you want to do regularly both in Bible studies and in personal contacts with new Christians is to remind them of this change in relationship with God from being separated from God to becoming children of God. Remind them that this relationship will now never change. Once we are in the family of Christ we are in that family for eternity

However, fellowship is sharing our lives with God and with other Christians and so that will depend on whether we are sharing our life or isolating ourselves from God and from other Christians. John told his spiritual children how he was helping them build their fellowship with God and with other Christians. I John 1:3-4 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. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” John said he wrote this book to help his spiritual children learn what he had seen and heard as he walked with Christ on the earth for more than three years.

As a result, the book of I John is an ideal book to study with a small group of new Christians to help them grow in their understanding of how to have fellowship with God and with other Christians. This is very effective both with one individual and with a small group that meets

together. I encourage new Christians to read the entire book of I John (if a person has a difficult time reading, encourage them to listen to it being read on tape or CD) every day for a month and then each time that we get together we discuss the questions that they have from their reading. John says that the goal of sharing these things with his spiritual children was to help them learn how to have a full joy. In just the first chapter we see two things that help new Christians to begin to experience a full joy. First, they will learn to have a full joy as they learn to walk in the light. Second, they will experience a full joy as they learn to confess their sins daily so that nothing is hindering their fellowship with Christ.

Paul, Silas and Timothy also wrote a letter to part of their spiritual family just a few months after they became Christians to help them in their spiritual growth. That book is the book of I Thessalonians. This book was written to answer the questions of people that had only been Christians for a few months. The book of I Thessalonians contains the answers to many other questions that new Christians ask. As a result, I encourage new Christians to read the entire book of I Thessalonians every day the second month after they become Christians. Then we discuss their questions from their reading every time we get together during that month.

Since I Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,” this tells us that Peter wrote this book to new Christians to help them get their questions answered. Peter answers some more of the common questions of new Christians. Acts 2:42 says the new believers continued daily in the apostles’ doctrine (the New Testament). This makes a third book that includes the apostles’ doctrine written to new Christians. In three months a new Christian will have read each of these books daily for a month (30 times). Then they will get their questions answered by meeting together regularly with either an individual Christian or with a small group of Christians. That Christian or small group of Christians will learn how to build their relationship with God and with each other as their questions are answered. This will happen because they are sharing their lives together and discussing their questions with a spiritual parent that is concerned to help them grow. As new Christians, they are finding their answers in the Word of God (apostles’ doctrine).

Many churches do not design their structure to help new Christians grow. As a result, many are Christians for a long time before they begin to grow. Since Christ commissioned us to “Make Disciples”, we want to develop a structure that will make that happen. Small groups provide such a structure. May the Lord richly bless you as you structure your church to help new Christians grow and begin their progress toward becoming reproducing Christians that impact the world around them.

9.

Transform Lives Through Leadership Development

In our last topic we said that our goal in developing a church structure is to develop a structure that will transform the life and thinking of each person. We saw that was the goal of the early church from the day that it began in Acts 2. New believers began to meet in small groups continually to begin that life transformation. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 2:41-47 we have seen that these small groups focused on at least eight things. Those can be summarized by saying that these small groups were FLOCKS that were praying and praising. FLOCKS stands for:

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Today we will be looking at how the structure of a small group can provide the ideal situation to begin leadership development. In Exodus 18:20 Moses was told how to develop the leadership that would share the leadership of an entire nation with him. That verse says, “And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.” This verse lists the three areas in which a person must develop in order to become an effective spiritual leader. First, to become an effective spiritual leader a person must grow in knowledge of the Word of God. Second, an effective spiritual leader must grow in godly character. Third, an effective spiritual leader must develop the skills necessary to lead others. An evangelistic or follow-up Bible study group provides the ideal small group for all three things to begin to happen.

Since the purpose of the Bible study is not to show your Bible knowledge but to transform the thinking and lives of those in the Bible study, this means that as you lead a small group in Bible study that you ask questions and encourage them to ask questions. Christ illustrated this so well by the way that He guided the thinking of the religious leaders in Jerusalem when Christ was only twelve years old. Luke 2:46-47 says, “Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.” In these verses we see that Christ did three things that helped the religious leaders to learn from a boy. Christ: sat in the midst of the teachers – He was sitting with them instead of standing above them listened to them – He listened to them and did not just expect them to listen to Him. asked them questions – He had the attitude of a learner.

As a result of doing these three things, when Christ spoke these adults who were religious teachers themselves were astonished at both the understanding of Christ and the answers of Christ. We will be most effective in encouraging a small group to ask their questions if we are sitting with them instead of standing above them. In most cultures when a person stands to speak a group becomes an audience listening to a speaker instead of participating in a discussion. Because Christ listened

carefully to what these teachers were saying, they were ready to listen to Him when He spoke. Christ showed them that He had a learner's attitude by asking questions and so they also felt free to ask Him questions. As a result, they were amazed as He explained things to them. We begin the leadership development process when we change people from an audience to participants.

However, something much greater is also happening. As a group discusses the meaning of Scripture together and are led to find their answers in the Bible instead of the opinions of the group, they begin to learn to think Biblically. Your example as a leader here is very important. When a question is asked, do not respond by giving an answer. Instead say, "Let's see what the Word of God says about that question." Have the group turn to a Bible passage that discusses that question. Read the verses. Then have the group discuss what God says is the answer to that question. Over a period of time the group will begin to realize that the Bible has answers to their questions and they will also learn what Bible passages to turn to when others ask them the same questions.

If you do not know what Bible passage to have the group read, write down the question and tell the group that you will find a Biblical passage before the next time you get together that speaks about that question. Tell them you will come prepared the next time with a Bible passage that will help them answer their question. The next time, repeat the question, read the Bible passage that applies, and then have the group find the answer to the question from the Word of God. Remember that Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God will help each person discover the thoughts and intents of their own hearts rather than just listening to the opinions of others.

The second key basic thing that you want to do in an evangelistic or follow-up Bible study is show people by your own example the way to walk. A person will never be an effective spiritual leader unless that person is an example of godly character. That is one of the great differences between a godly leader and a worldly leader. A worldly leader drives others by authority and power because he tells people what to do. Mark 10:42 says, "But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them." A worldly leader tells people what to do because he is focused on reaching his goals for worldly success.

A godly leader leads by godly character and example because he is showing people how to live and walk to please the Lord. He is modeling what he is sharing as he shows people by his own godly character. Christ said in Mark 10:43-45, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Here we see that a godly leader leads by serving others and helping them develop their full potential to carry out the ministry that God has prepared for each individual. A godly leader is not focused on his own success. Instead he is focused on serving and equipping each Christian to carry out the ministry that God has prepared for each Christian.

The third basic thing that you want to do in a follow-up Bible study is to help each person in the group begin to develop ministry skills. Some of that development happens right in the group. Other parts of ministry development happen outside the group as you take two or three people from the group with you as you minister to others. As those in the group begin to grow in their understanding of Scripture, begin to have one or two each week prepare to explain two or three verses at the next Bible study. Gradually give them a larger group of verses to explain. At the same time you take time to show them how to study and prepare. Your goal is to help every one in the group grow in their ministry skills to the point where they can lead a Bible study with others.

In Acts 1:15 we see that there were 120 disciples. There is no mention of disciples again until we come to Acts 6. Acts 6:1a says, “Now in those days, when the number of disciples was multiplying...” Then Acts 6:7 says, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Between Acts 1 and Acts 6 there is a period of about six or seven years. During that period each of the 120 disciples were able to help a group of new disciples develop so that the number of spiritual parents multiplied. One of the basic skills that we want to develop in each of the people in the Bible study group is the ability to lead a Bible study group themselves. This will take time but your goal as a Bible study leader is to reproduce yourself by developing a group of Bible study leaders.

After giving the three keys to develop spiritual leaders in Exodus 18:20, Moses was given another instruction. Exodus 18:21-22 says, “Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you.” In these verses we see that Moses was told that the basic unit for a group leader to lead was a group of ten.

Acts 6 says that the number of disciples multiplied greatly. The difference between addition and multiplication is simple. If you train an assistant in a Bible study, you make possible the addition of one more leader. If instead you help each person in the group develop so that each one is able to lead a group of ten, then you have multiplied your ministry. Most Christians can be developed to lead a group of ten. You are also training them how to lead a group of ten by your example of leading the group and having them learn to participate. Because they have been shown by example they will also help others learn to participate. It is a great privilege to develop a small group so that they become reproducing Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop a group of reproducing Christians.

10.

Transform Lives Through Outreach

In our last two topics we said that our goal in developing a church structure is to develop a structure that will transform the life and thinking of each person. We saw that was the goal of the early church from the day that it began in Acts 2. New believers began to meet in small groups continually to begin that life transformation. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 2:41-47 we have seen that these small groups focused on at least eight things. Those can be summarized by saying that these small groups were FLOCKS that were praying and praising. FLOCKS stands for:

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Today we will look at the Biblical principles that apply to help transform each person in the group and equip each person for outreach to those who are not Christians. Here we see that we follow the example of the way that Christ trained the disciples to become fishers of men. When a person becomes a new Christian, I give the person the diagram entitled “Love Motivates” (see diagrams www.aibi.org). That diagram immediately helps the new Christian realize that he can begin praying for the salvation of his relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances. In a follow-up Bible study group, give a copy of this diagram to each person in the group.

As the group spends time in prayer each time they meet, begin to pray for the salvation of these relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances. In addition, begin taking those in the Bible study group in teams of two or three to visit the homes of those for whom they are personally praying. Christ said in Matthew 4:19, “Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” At least three things are happening as you take these teams with you.

First, you are taking the team to share the Gospel with a person or family for whom you have already been praying as a group. This prayer should include praying that the Lord will prepare and open the hearts of those for whom you are praying. Acts 16:18 says that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia. When we pray and ask the Lord to open hearts, He will be preparing them even before we share the Gospel with them. In Ephesians 6:19 we see that Paul gives us an example of at least one other thing to include in our prayer for others. That verse says, “Pray ...for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.” We need to help the entire group pray for boldness as we go as teams to share the Gospel.

Second, take the team to visit the people that are on one of their prayer lists. Since you are visiting a relative, friend or co-worker of one of the team, that member of the team already has a relationship with the person or people that you are going to visit. That person is able to introduce the other team members as friends and so the whole team will immediately have a relationship with the person or family that is not a Christian. This often saves many weeks or months spent building

relationships before you even have the opportunity to share the Gospel. Since your goal at this point is to show the team how to become fishers of men (lead people to Christ), you want to start with the people that they know. Later on you can show them how to make contacts with strangers, with people of other cultures and with people of other languages.

Third, you are showing the members of the team with you what to share and how to share it. As you pray before you make each visit, you are showing them the importance of praying for the Lord to open the opportunity to share the Gospel with relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances. I often explain John 16:8-11 and explain that we are learning how to work with the Holy Spirit as we visit their relatives or friends. I point out that the Holy Spirit convinces people of the sin of unbelief. The Holy Spirit convinces people of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One that could pay the penalty for sin. The Holy Spirit convinces people of the fact that Satan has already been judged by the death and resurrection of Christ and that those who continue to follow Him will share in his judgment. I point out that we share Scripture and the Holy Spirit speaks and convicts from those Scriptures because the Word is living and powerful.

Since each person in the Bible study usually has several relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances that are not Christians, this will provide you with many opportunities to show each one in the Bible study what to share and how to share it over the next several months. In fact you will probably have the opportunity to visit most people several times because most people will have many questions that they need answered before they are ready to become Christians. This allows the team members to see how you answer these questions from Scripture. The goal is to help each one in the Bible study learn to share the Gospel with others as they watch you share the Gospel with their network of contacts.

A second way that you show those in the Bible study how to do outreach is to show them how to do outreach in their own homes. Acts 2:46 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." One thing that we see in this verse was that these Bible studies were being held in the homes of the various people for Bible study and communion. They were going to their various houses and they were also eating meals together. This can be a very important key in evangelism if some of the members of the family are not yet Christians. Through the years I have had many young people and other family members tell me that they listened to the Bible study from their room even though they did not come and sit with the group for the Bible study.

We see that the fact that the Christians gathered in homes for Bible study and communion had a powerful impact on the families of those who had become Christians. The next verse, Acts 2:47 says, "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." Here we see that the Lord was adding extended family members to the church every day because family members were becoming Christians as a result of these Bible studies being held in their homes.

Cornelius also shows us another way to use these Bible studies in homes to reach family and friends for Christ. Acts 10:24 says, "And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends."

Cornelius had not even put his trust in Christ yet but he was already inviting his friends to come to his house to hear how to become followers of Christ. In the same way new Christians can often invite family, friends or co-workers to their home for a Bible study even though they do not yet know how to explain the Gospel themselves.

In fact this was very common in the ministry of Christ. As soon as Andrew met Christ, he introduced his brother to Christ. John 1:41-42a says, "He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus..." Philip brought his friend Nathanael to Christ. John 1:45-46 says, "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

Matthew shows how he used his house to introduce his co-workers to Christ immediately after he followed Christ. Matthew 9:9-10 says, "As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples." When Christ visited the home of Peter and Andrew, Mark 1:33 says, "And the whole city was gathered together at the door." In many cultures we see that extended members of a family may live in the same house. Christ shared with both the extended family and with the entire town by going to the house of Peter and Andrew.

Our goal is to equip every Christian in the Bible study to show them what to share and how to share the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. We see that we can train the Bible study members how to share the Gospel most effectively in their homes and the homes of their relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances. By doing this in teams, you will have the opportunity to show several people in the Bible study each time you take a team with you to visit their network of contacts. As people come to Christ, in some cases the contact will be ready to start a Bible study with the new Christian. In other cases the new Christian can become a part of the Bible study group that you are leading.

What a privilege it is to become a part of the team that the Lord uses to transform lives. Those in the Bible study will never be the same once they see how the Lord has used them to help reach people within their network of relatives and friends for Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop those in a Bible study so that they become reproducing Christians that are leading others to Christ.

11.

Transform Lives Through Caring

In our last three topics we said that our goal in developing a church structure is to develop a structure that will transform the life and thinking of each person. We saw that was the goal of the early church from the day that it began in Acts 2. New believers began to meet in small groups continually to begin that life transformation. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 2:41-47 we have seen that these small groups focused on at least eight things. Those can be summarized by saying that these small groups were FLOCKS that were praying and praising. FLOCKS stands for:

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Today we will look at the Biblical principles that apply to help transform each person in the group and equip each person to care for one another as Christians. The care and concern of the early church is easily seen in Acts 2:44-45. Those verses say, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” Here we see that there was a great concern for the physical needs of those that lacked. This concern was so great that people sold or shared their possessions to meet the needs of one another.

However, there are many things involved in caring for one another in addition to meeting the physical needs of one another. I Corinthians 12:24-26 says, “But our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.” Here we see that as a body of Christians we are to have such a great care for one another that it involves sharing many things. When a Christian suffers, we are to share with that Christian in their suffering. When a Christian is honored, we are to rejoice with that Christian for the honor that they have received.

The statement “the members should have the same care for one another” is just one of 43 one anothers in the New Testament. Twelve speak of things that we are to avoid in our relationships with one another. Thirty-one speak about things that we are to do in our relationships with one another. The manual “New Life in the Family of Christ” available to download at www.aibi.org has a complete list of the things that Christians are to do and to avoid in their relationships with one another. The Bible study group could learn to understand each of these and how to apply them if you take a few minutes in each Bible study to discuss one of the one anothers. Then discuss ways that you can apply that particular one another in your relationships with one another during the next week.

One very helpful way to help a Bible study group learn to apply these one anothers on a continual basis is to number the thirty-one positive one anothers. Then encourage the Bible study group to find some particular ways to apply each one on that particular date each month in their contacts with other Christians on that day. This will help the group to become conscious of ways that they can show true care for one another every day. The key is to help the group move from knowledge about the one anothers to finding practical ways to actually begin doing these things to encourage other Christians on a daily basis. This is one of the ways that we help a small group Bible study learn to act Biblically as well as think Biblically.

Many Christians are more concerned about their own needs instead of caring about the spiritual and physical needs of others. As a result, Paul told the Philippians to be concerned about and care for one another. Philippians 2:4 says, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." We are to do what benefits others and not focus on pleasing ourselves. In that same chapter Paul said in Philippians 2:19-22, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel." Paul knew that Timothy had a genuine care and concern for the Christians at Philippi.

Paul was in prison because of his faithful service for the Lord. Instead of being concerned about his own needs, these verses show that Paul was more concerned about the needs of the Philippians. As a result, Paul was planning to send Timothy to Philippi to encourage and strengthen the Christians there even though Timothy would have been a great help to him as a prisoner. Timothy understood what it meant to care for other Christians. As a result, Paul knew that Timothy would be able to show the Christians at Philippi how to have a greater care and concern for one another. That is exactly what we want to show each member of a small group Bible study so that they can learn to really care for one another and not just think about their own needs.

A small group Bible study provides an ideal place to learn to care for one another as a spiritual family. In II Corinthians 1:3-4 we read, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." In these verses we see that God comforts us so that we can learn to comfort one another when others are in any trouble. When a small group Bible study becomes a spiritual family, they are able to show the kind of love and concern mentioned in these verses.

Psalm 23:4 says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Here we see that Christ is our Shepherd that walks with us through the valley of death. Christ also walks with us through our other valleys and shows us how to do the same for others. Christians go through times of discouragement and fear. During those times they need a spiritual family to walk with them through those valleys. Paul described how Titus provided that kind of comfort to him. II Corinthians 7:6 says, "Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus." Titus came to Paul and provided comfort.

Timothy also did the same thing for Paul. I Thessalonians 3:5-8 says, “For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us, as we also to see you--therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.” Paul was comforted both by the coming of Timothy and by hearing about the faith and love of the Thessalonians.

Christians also need to know that others care during their times of rejoicing. Romans 12:15 says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” A small group Bible study that has become a spiritual family is able to share the joy with those who are rejoicing. As this verse shows, the two times that we most want to share with others are our times of joy and our times of sorrow. During our times of joy we want others to rejoice with us. During our times of sorrow, we want others to bear our burdens with us. As a Bible study group grows spiritually, they learn to share these times with the others in the Bible study.

I Peter 4:8-10 says, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” In these verses we see several ways that a small group Bible study can show their care for one another. First, they show care by having a fervent love for one another. Second, they show love by not exposing the sins of others. Instead they help them to deal with those sins. Third, they show care by showing hospitality to one another. Fourth, they use their spiritual gifts to serve one another. This helps us to realize that God did not give us spiritual gifts to bring glory to ourselves. Instead He gave us spiritual gifts so that we could serve and care for one another in love.

We see that it is the desire of God that small group Bible study groups learn to really care for one another. I John 4:10-11 says, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” The reason God wants this to happen was summarized by the world during the time of the early church. The thing that the world said about the Christians was, “See how they love one another.” We can learn to show that love today as we learn to function as spiritual families that have a great concern for one another. May the Lord richly bless you as you show Bible study groups how to function as spiritual families by your example.

12.

Transform Lives Through Knowledge

In our last four topics we said that our goal in developing a church structure is to develop a structure that will transform the life and thinking of each person. We saw that was the goal of the early church from the day that it began in Acts 2. New believers began to meet in small groups continually to begin that life transformation. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 2:41-47 we have seen that these small groups focused on at least eight things. Those can be summarized by saying that these small groups were FLOCKS that were praying and praising. FLOCKS stands for:

F fellowship

L leadership development

O outreach

C caring

K knowledge

S service

Today we will look at the Biblical principles that apply to help transform each person in the group and equip each person to grow both in their knowledge of the Word of God and in their knowledge of Christ. Many times when people think of growth in knowledge they only think in terms of helping people learn the Word of God. However, that is only a part of growth in knowledge. People learn in three stages. First, they gain knowledge. Second, they gain understanding. Third, they apply what they have learned and understood to their own lives. However, a second area of growth in knowledge is described in II Peter 3:18. 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.” In this verse we see that we are to help people grow in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. That will be the focus of the second part of this topic.

A small group Bible study is an ideal place to help people grow in their knowledge of the Word of God because it provides a place where they can get their questions answered. In a large Bible study or a church service, if people have questions or lack understanding, they cannot ask their questions. As a result, they either forget their questions or they do not know where to get their questions answered. Acts 2:41-47 shows that the early church focused on helping new believers get their questions answered. In Acts 2:42 they met in small groups for Bible study and fellowship. In Acts 2:46 they were meeting both in the temple and from house to house. As they met together in homes they were able to ask their questions and get them answered.

Even in the temple they were able to get their questions answered. Around the outside of the temple court was a large covered porch. This porch went all the way around the outer court of the temple and was supported by 1500 pillars. When the lame man was healed in Acts 3 we see that many people quickly gathered in Solomon's Porch. That porch stretched the entire length of the east side of the temple court so it was about 45 feet wide and 1200 feet long and would have been supported by about 400 of the 1500 pillars. Groups of Christians gathered near different pillars every day for prayer at the time of the morning sacrifice and the evening sacrifice. Most people probably had a favorite pillar where they gathered. In addition to prayer, this also provided a place for discussion and an opportunity to get questions answered by other Christians.

Sermons provide an opportunity to grow in our knowledge of the Word of God. However, it is in small group that people get their questions answered. It is as Christians get their questions answered that they grow in their understanding of the Word of God. This understanding is essential before most people can begin to apply the Word of God to their daily living. As a small group discusses a passage together each member of the group grows in understanding including the one that is leading the group. Then the group can discuss together how they can apply what they are learning to their daily lives. This application of the Word of God to daily living is what results in life transformation.

This means that in a small group Bible study we want to help people learn to study the Bible until they understand. II Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Since our goal is to help everyone in the Bible study learn to lead a Bible study, we want each one to understand how to rightly divide the truth and not just pick verses out of context. That means that they must be shown how to study and view each verse within the context of the entire chapter and of the entire book. If you are working with someone who has never led a Bible study before, seven key words to give them to develop good discussion questions are: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How and Explain.

In addition to helping people grow in their knowledge, understanding and application of the Word of God, we also want to help each one in the Bible study grow in their knowledge of Christ. There is a great difference between knowing what the Bible says about Christ and knowing Christ. You can know about any historical person by reading about that person in a book. However, that does not mean that you know the person. In Philippians 3:10 Paul said, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." Here we see that Paul wanted to know Christ in four ways.

First, Paul wanted to really know Christ. We get to know a person as we talk to that person and that person talks to us. We get to really know Christ as we talk to Him in prayer and ask Him to reveal Himself to us. Then we need to listen as the Lord speaks to us through His Word. Samuel gives us an example of what it means to have the Lord speak to us and reveal Himself to us through His Word. I Samuel 3:7-10 says, "(Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him.) And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. Then he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you did call me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord had called the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears."

We also need to pray and ask Christ to reveal Himself to us. He will do so through the Word of God. In I Corinthians 2:9-10 we read, "But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." Here we see that the entire Trinity gets involved in helping us get to know Christ. The Father prepared things for us to learn to get to know Christ. The Father

then reveals them to us through His Spirit. The Spirit helps us to know Christ as the Spirit teaches us.

The second thing Paul wanted to know as he got to know Christ was the power of His resurrection. Paul realized that He could not serve the Lord in his own strength. Romans 7:14-25 gives a summary of what happens when a Christian tries to serve the Lord in his own strength. Romans 7:24 summarizes the uselessness of depending on our own strength when it says, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" In contrast, Paul understood what Christ would do through his life as he yielded himself to Christ. Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 3:10 shows that Paul understood that he needed to get to know Christ even better so that he understood the full power of the resurrection.

The third thing Paul wanted to know as he got to know Christ was the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. It is when we are suffering for the sake of Christ that our understanding of Christ grows in depth. That is why it is important to help every future Bible study leader realize that he or she will experience suffering because that is how Christ develops the depth of our fellowship with Him. II Timothy 3:12 says, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." We see in Acts 14:22 that Paul prepared the disciples by telling them, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Fourth, Paul wanted to be conformed to the death of Christ. Paul understood that to really know Christ he had to die to his own desires and seek the will of God in every area of his life. Paul said in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." In the same way we want to help every Bible study leader learn to live by faith. As Bible study leaders get to know Christ in these four ways, their lives will become examples that others can follow. That should be our goal in our own life and that should also be the goal that we have for each person in a Bible study group. As they grow in their relationship with Christ, they will become effective leaders of others.

God has given us a great privilege to help new Christians grow and become mature reproducing Christians. This will only happen as we invest our lives in them. However, each Christian that becomes a mature reproducing Christian will multiply our ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you show others how to become mature reproducing Christians.

13.

Transform Lives Through Service

In our last five topics we said that our goal in developing a church structure is to develop a structure that will transform the life and thinking of each person. We saw that was the goal of the early church from the day that it began in Acts 2. New believers began to meet in small groups continually to begin that life transformation. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 2:41-47 we have seen that these small groups focused on at least eight things. Those can be summarized by saying that these small groups were FLOCKS that were praying and praising. FLOCKS stands for:

F fellowship

L leadership development

O outreach

C caring

K knowledge

S service

Today we will look at the Biblical principles that apply to help transform each person in the group and equip each person to grow both in their service to Christ and to one another. We will look at the service of each Christian from two different viewpoints. First, every Christian is called to serve Christ. Second, every Christian is called to serve others. It is only as we understand both aspects of this that we will be effective servants for Christ who carry out His will by serving others.

First, we will look at our service as a relationship to our Master, Christ. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” The word that is translated serve here is the Greek word “douleuo”. That word comes from the root word “doulos” which means a bonds slave. Paul often used this word when he described himself as the bonds slave of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:10 says, “For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.” Paul made it clear that his desire and goal was to be a bonds slave of Christ.

In Galatians 5:13 we see that we are to use the liberty that we have in Christ to serve one another as bonds slaves. This really speaks of our relationship to Christ. When we understand that we have the privilege of being bonds slaves of Christ we realize that we are able to serve one another with the love of Christ. An understanding of our relationship to Christ changes the whole meaning of service. II Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Since Christ died for us, the love that He showed to us means that we no longer want to live just to please ourselves.

Service becomes a great privilege when it is based on the love of Christ. We are thankful for the privilege to be able to live for the One that died for us. It is amazing to think that the One that is King of kings and Lord of lords would give us the privilege of being His servants. One of the key ministries of spiritual leaders is to serve others by equipping them to serve the Lord so that each

Christian can share in the work of the Lord. That is what gives life real meaning and purpose. Ephesians 4:16 says, "From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Life suddenly has a purpose when each person realizes that the Lord can use their life to make an eternal impact in the lives of others.

When we realize that our service is actually serving the Kings of kings and Lord of lords it also changes the way that we look at everything that we do. Ephesians 6:6-8 says, "Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free." These verses show us that:

- We do not serve to please people
- We do serve as the bondservants of Christ
- We are able to do the will of God from the heart
- We are able to do service as to the Lord
- We can look forward to reward from the Lord
- We can do this whether we are bond or free

Second, we will look at our service as a relationship to our work. I Peter 4:10-11 says, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." The Holy Spirit has given each Christian at least one spiritual gift in order make it possible to serve Christ and His body, the church. No Christian is left out because it is the desire of Christ that every person in the body of Christ be equipped to have a ministry to serve Christ.

We also see why Christ gave every single Christian at least one spiritual gift. That gift is given so that we can minister to one another in the body of Christ. This reminds us that the gift is not given to us so that we can boast. Instead it is given so that we can carry out the ministry that the Holy Spirit has uniquely prepared for each Christian. These gifts are given to Christians so that they can be good stewards of the grace of God. A steward is a manager of the affairs of someone else. This means that God gave each of us a gift because He wanted to give each Christian the opportunity to be entrusted with a part of the work of the Lord. This means that Christ has given every Christian some ministry to carry out in this world and that Christ trusts every Christian to carry out that work (service).

The reason that Christ can trust us to carry out the work He has given to us is due to the fact we do not have to depend on our own strength to carry out that work. In fact these verses tell us that God is the One that has supplied the ability to us to carry out that ministry. Before we became Christians, we had various abilities. However, we did not have any spiritual gifts to carry out the work of the Lord. However, at the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit gave us at least one spiritual gift so that we would have the ability to do that ministry that Christ has for each one of us. That spiritual gift was given by the grace of God so that we could carry out the ministry that Christ has prepared for each of us as individual Christians.

Some spiritual gifts are speaking gifts. Our verses say that if we have been given a speaking gift that we are to speak the oracles of God. The oracles of God are the very Words of God. This means that a speaking gift is not given so that a person can share his own opinions. A speaking gift is given so that the person can speak the very words of God. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts." Speaking gifts are given to us so that we can speak the thoughts of God from the Word of God instead of from our own opinions. That Word is living and powerful and will accomplish what God pleases as we share His Word with others.

Some spiritual gifts are serving gifts. Our verses say that if we have been given a serving gift that we are to serve in the ability that God supplies. Here we see that God is the only One that knows what we can do as we serve because we do not have to depend on our ability. Instead we are specifically told to depend on the ability that the Lord supplies. His ability is unlimited and so that means that He is able to work through our lives to accomplish far more than we could ever imagine. That is why Ephesians 3:20-21 says, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." As we yield ourselves to Christ, He is able to far more than we can ever imagine through our lives.

Since we are to speak the Word of God if we have been given speaking gifts and we are to serve in the ability that God gives if we have been given serving gifts, none of the credit can be taken personally. If we speak or serve in our own strength, we will accomplish nothing for the Lord. However, if we speak His Word and serve in His strength, Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." We see that the Lord chooses to do far beyond what any Christian can imagine as the Lord works through their lives. That is why we are to help each Christian learn to use their God given gifts so that He can do through them all that He chooses. That opportunity to learn to use those spiritual gifts happens best in a small group Bible study where every Christian is given the opportunity for ministry.

God wants to use your life as an example to help those in your small group Bible study develop and learn to speak and serve in the strength that God gives. As you give each one in the Bible study the opportunity to learn and share the Word, grow in godly character and learn to serve in the ability that God provides, the Lord will do more in and through their lives than they or you can ever imagine. You serve them by giving them an example to follow as they observe your life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help growing Christians learn to speak the Word of God and serve the Lord with the ability that God gives.

14.

Transform Lives Through Prayer

In our last six topics we said that our goal in developing a church structure is to develop a structure that will transform the life and thinking of each person. We saw that was the goal of the early church from the day that it began in Acts 2. New believers began to meet in small groups continually to begin that life transformation. Acts 2:42 says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." In Acts 2:41-47 we have seen that these small groups focused on at least eight things. Those can be summarized by saying that these small groups were FLOCKS that were praying and praising. FLOCKS stands for:

F fellowship

L leadership development

O outreach

C caring

K knowledge

S service

Today we will look at the Biblical principles that apply to help transform each person in the group and equip each person to grow in their spiritual life through prayer. Many people have a background where they have said prayers but they have never learned how to pray. Christ often showed the disciples by His example the importance of prayer. Mark 1:35-36 says, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before day light, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him." The disciples came to Christ and heard Him praying. This happened many times.

Luke 11:1 says, "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." As the disciples had heard Christ pray many times, they began to really understand what it meant to talk to the Father and not just say prayers. As a result, they asked Christ to teach them to pray. We see that Christ used the opportunity to teach them many things about prayer. Such opportunities happen as we spend time together.

First we see that Christ taught the disciples some of the keys areas to include in prayer. Luke 11:2-4 says, "So He said to them, "When you pray, say:

- Our Father in heaven, - this recognizes our relationship to the Father
- Hallowed be Your name. – this recognizes the fact that God is holy
- Your kingdom come. – this is praying for the work of God
- Your will be done – this is praying for the will of God
- On earth as it is in heaven.
- Give us day by day our daily bread. – this is prayer for personal needs
- And forgive us our sins, - this is prayer for forgiveness
- For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. – this shows a forgiving attitude
- And do not lead us into temptation, - this is prayer for victory over temptation
- But deliver us from the evil one." – this is prayer for deliverance from Satan

Here we see that Christ did not just give them a prayer to repeat. Instead Christ showed them some of the important areas to include in prayer. As we help new Christians learn how to pray, we also want to help them understand some of the areas that they need to include as they learn to talk to the Father and learn to have fellowship with Him.

However, Christ did not stop His instruction about prayer once He had taught them about key areas to include in prayer. Christ also taught them about the importance of continuing to pray and not give up when prayer is not answered immediately. Luke 11:5-8 says, “And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.’” Christ shows that even a friend will respond if a person will keep making their request. We want to help new Christians realize that God will certainly answer our prayers as we continue to pray.

Christ went on to give three words that show that prayer will be answered as people continue to pray with persistence. Those words are ask, seek and knock. “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Christ promised that those who continue to ask and bring their requests to the Father would have the Father give what they are requesting in their prayers. Christ said those who seek an answer from the Father would receive an answer. Christ said those who knock would have the door opened to them.

Christ went on to give three illustrations of the fact that God is a loving Father that wants to do good to his children. Luke 11:11-13 says, “If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” An earthly father would not give a stone instead of a piece of bread. An earthly father would not give a snake instead of a fish. An earthly father would not give a scorpion instead of an egg. That is true of earthly fathers even though they still commit sin. Certainly God as our heavenly Father will give His children what is needed when they ask.

In these verses we also see that Christ promised that the Father would give the Holy Spirit. Christ explained more about the ways that the Holy Spirit would transform lives as He taught the disciples the night before He was crucified. John 14:16-17 says, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” In these verses Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would be in us forever.

John 14:26 says, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” In this

verse Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would teach us. John 14:27 says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." In this verse Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would give us peace.

Then Christ gave another promise about the Holy Spirit before He returned to heaven. Acts 1:8 says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Luke 24:49 adds another statement that Christ gave earlier, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." The Holy Spirit is the One that gives Christians the power to change.

One of the greatest struggles that many Christians face is speaking the Word of God with boldness. The early church learned that God answered their prayer and the Holy Spirit gave them boldness to speak. Acts 4:29-31 says, "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." Here we see that the Christians prayed for boldness and the Holy Spirit gave them boldness. This shows that the early Christians were learning to be transformed by the Holy Spirit as they learned to yield to Him instead of depending on their own strength.

People that were fearful when they depended on their own strength became bold as they learned to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give them boldness. This was true even for those who were new or growing Christians. Acts 8:1 says the Christians were scattered except the apostles. Then Acts 8:4 says, "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word." That is why new Christians need to be shown how to pray with persistence and ask the Father to transform their lives. The Father has given them the Holy Spirit. Christ said the Holy Spirit would give them understanding. Christ said the Holy Spirit would give them peace. Christ knew the Holy Spirit would give them boldness. The new Christians learned that God would answer their prayers.

We have been called to show those we lead how to have their lives transformed as they pray and yield their lives to the Lord. New and growing Christians will learn that the Lord transforms their lives as they ask Him for understanding, for peace or for boldness to speak the Word of God. It is a great privilege to be an example and to see the lives of Christians learn to be transformed as they mature. May the Lord richly bless you as you help new and growing Christians learn to pray and yield their lives to the Father so that the Holy Spirit can work in their lives and the love of Christ can flow through their lives.

15.

Transform Lives Through Praise

In our last seven topics we said that our goal in developing a church structure is to develop a structure that will transform the life and thinking of each person. We saw that was the goal of the early church from the day that it began in Acts 2. New believers began to meet in small groups continually to begin that life transformation. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In Acts 2:41-47 we have seen that these small groups focused on at least eight things. Those can be summarized by saying that these small groups were FLOCKS that were praying and praising. FLOCKS stands for:

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Today we will look at the Biblical principles that apply to help transform each person in the group and equip each person to grow in their spiritual life through praise to God. In Acts 2:47 we read, “Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” In this verse we see that the early believers were joining together and expressing their praise to God. This same thought is expressed in Luke 24:52-53, “And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.” As we look at these two passages we see that the early church was continually praising God.

Romans 15:11 shows that it is the plan of God for all of the Gentiles to learn to praise God. That verse says, “And again: “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!” This verse is a quote from Psalm 117:1 and shows that it is the desire of God for the Gentiles to also praise the Lord. Psalm 150:6 summarizes the desire of God for all people. That verse says, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!”

As we read Acts 2:47 we see that the early church understood that praise to God was an important part of the ministry of new believers. In fact the Lord was using that praise to draw additional people to Christ. Acts 2:47 says, “Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The people were giving praise to God and the Lord was adding to the church daily.

One key thing that we notice in each of these passages is that praise is to be directed to the Lord. Many Christians have a very confused idea about what happens when they gather together. Many people think that a few singers and a speaker are the participants and they are the audience or spectators. However, that means that such Christians have not understood the purpose of praise to God. When Christians gather together to give praise to God, God is the audience and the Christians are the participants. That is true whether the group is large or small. As Christians give praise to God, the Father draws others to Christ.

Acts 2:46-47 show that this praise to God was happening both in the temple and from house to house. Here we see that praise should be a part of small groups as well as meetings of the whole church. This points out the fact that the early believers were giving praise to God as they met from house to house. This provided an ideal time for people that were gathered to express praise to God for what God was doing in their lives. As they expressed praise to God, other family members were hearing what the Lord was doing. The Lord was using this praise to draw others to Himself.

We also see that the Lord used praise in the temple to draw people to Himself. In Acts 3 Peter and John went to the temple at the hour of prayer. They met a man that was unable to walk. This man had been crippled for many years. In fact chapter 4 says that he was more than 40 years old. Peter and John healed the man in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Acts 3:8-9 gives the result when it says, "So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them--walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God." He was praising God and all of the people heard him praising God.

Peter used the praise of this man to God as an opportunity to share about Christ. Acts 4:4 tells the result when it says, "However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." The Lord used the praise of this man to continue to draw other people to Christ. This brings us to the question, What is it that causes Christians to give praise to God? Ephesians 5:20 says, "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." True praise to God is the result of having a thankful heart. In this verse we see two important things about a thankful heart:

- God wants us to give thanks always.
- God wants us to give thanks for all things.

Colossians 3:17 gives us a key to giving thanks always. That verse says, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." We see that all that we say is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. All that we do is to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. When all that we say and do is done in the name of the Lord Jesus, this means that we are depending on His strength and not our own strength. As we gather in small group Bible studies, we need to give people the opportunity to share how the Lord has given them His strength to say and do the things that they have done that week. As they tell what Christ has done in their lives, they are giving thanks.

The second thing we see that Christians are to learn to do is to give thanks for all things. Many Christians find this difficult because they have never understood the Biblical principle taught in James 1:2. That verse says, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials." This verse does not say to feel joy when experiencing trials. Instead it says to count it all joy. Paul expresses the meaning of that word in Philippians 3:7-8 where we read, "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." Paul chose to consider all things loss for Christ. This was a decision. James tells us to make a choice to count it all joy when we fall into various trials.

Happiness is related to what is going on around us. Joy is related to what is going on within us. Hebrews 12:2 says, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus gives us an example of joy in the midst of suffering. Christ looked beyond the cross to the fact that He was doing the will of the Father and it filled Him with joy. The same is true in our lives. If we are focused on doing the will of the Father we will experience joy even at a time when we are experiencing tribulation or suffering.

We want to develop a church structure that helps people to see things from the viewpoint of God rather than the world. This means that people need the opportunity to discuss tribulation and suffering from the viewpoint of God rather than the viewpoint of the world. That was one of the first things that Paul did to help disciples grow in their spiritual lives. Acts 14:22 says, "Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." Paul and Barnabas knew the importance of preparing the disciples for many tribulations before they left to return to the region to return to Antioch.

The disciples in the cities of Lystra, Iconium and Antioch of Pisidia were going to be working with small groups of Christians to help them in their spiritual growth and development. As a result, Paul and Barnabas knew that they must be prepared for tribulation if they were going to help the newer Christians learn to count it all joy when they experienced various tribulations. This was an important part of preparing these developing leaders to be able to help others learn to praise God in all situations and for all things.

New Christians are transformed as they are shown in small groups how to praise God in all situations and for all things. That is why developing a structure that equips small group Bible study leaders to respond to tribulation with joy is such an important part of developing the structure of a church. May the Lord richly bless you as you help small group leaders learn to count all things joy so that they can be an example to others of what it means to give praise to God in all situations and for all things.

16.

Developing Structure to Equip for Evangelism

In I Peter 3:14-16 we read, “But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.” In these verses we see that Christians may suffer for the sake of righteousness. However, the important thing that we see in these verses is that Christ wants Christians to make a difference in this world. This raises the question, How do we develop Christians that make a difference?

In these verses we see that Christ uses two key things to draw people to Christ. First, Christ uses our actions to cause people to realize that life can be different. Second, we are to be ready at all times to explain our hope so that others can hear why we have hope in a world that is without hope. In our last eight topics we talked about eight characteristics of the early church from Acts 2:42-47 that transformed the lives of the early believers. Christ wants that same transformation to happen in the lives of every Christian today. Only as that begins to happen will we see Christians that are making a difference in our world.

Christians will make a difference if we are transformed in three ways. First, Christians need to be transformed in our thoughts. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Our minds are being transformed as we learn the Word of God, grow in our understanding of the Word of God and then apply the Word of God to our lives.

Second Christians need to be transformed in our attitudes. James 1:2-3 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” The word translated “count” means to make a choice to consider it all joy even when we are going through times of testing. That is not a natural choice but a supernatural choice of yielding ourselves to God so that He can work in our lives and through our lives through the things that are happening to us. Ephesians 5:20 says, “Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This shows us that attitudes are changed as we make a conscious choice to yield to Christ rather than depend on our own strength.

Third, Christians need to be transformed in our actions. The verse that we mentioned in the first paragraph, I Peter 3:16, speaks of our good conduct in Christ. II Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” If we are led by the love of Christ, we will act out of love. If we are driven by our own fear, we will act out of that fear. We need to develop a structure that will help people to think Biblically, develop godly attitudes and also godly actions if we want to develop Christians whose lives are making a difference.

However, I Peter 3:15-17 gives a second key if we are going to develop Christians whose lives are

making a difference. Verse 16 says we are to “Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.” This means that we need to develop a structure that both transforms our thoughts, attitudes and actions and also equips us to explain why we are different. That was common in the early church. In Acts 5:28 the religious leaders accused the apostles by “Saying, Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!” Later, when persecution came, the apostles remained in Jerusalem while the other Christians were scattered. Acts 8:4 says, “Therefore those who were scattered went every where preaching the word.” Here we see that all of the Christians knew how to explain the hope that they had in Christ.

Why is it that the early Christians all knew how to explain what the Word of God teaches about the hope that we have while only a few Christians today are equipped to explain the Word? The answer to that question can be learned from the example of Christ. In Matthew 4 Christ had been taking many people with Him for about a year. However, in Matthew 4:18-22 Christ told Peter, Andrew, James and John, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” These men were going to now spend even more time with Christ. Matthew 4:23 then says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.” Christ said that if they would go with Him that they would learn how to become fishers of men.

For the next nine months Christ showed them even more about how to share the gospel. Several things were happening during this time. These men were growing in godly character as they saw the example of Christ. They were learning what to share. They were learning how to share what they learned. They were learning the importance of prayer as they saw the example of Christ. Mark 1:35 says, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Later Christ would tell them to wait until the Holy Spirit gave them power and boldness to witness. Luke 24:49 says, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

Finally after about 21 months, Christ chose a smaller group of just twelve disciples. Mark 3:14 says, “Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” Christ had already taken the disciples with Him as He taught in the synagogues throughout Galilee according to both Matthew and Mark. Now He was going to send them out to preach and put into practice the things that He had been showing them. Luke 9:1-10 tells how He sent out the twelve. Then Luke 10:1-12 tells how He sent them out again as a part of a larger group of seventy.

These passages show that Christ developed a structure where He could train by example. He had the disciples observe for a year. Then Christ had them begin to participate as He told them what they would become as they continued to follow Him. Later He gave them on-the-job training and had them report back about what had happened. In John 17:4 Christ said, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” That work was training His disciples. Then in John 20:21 Christ told them after His resurrection, “So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”

Christ told them that just as the Father had sent Him to train them, now He was sending them forth to train others in the same way.

The disciples followed that same pattern once the church began in Acts. They had learned from Christ to train others by example through observation, participation, on-the-job training, reporting back, further training and dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit to give them boldness to speak. Acts 4:31 and Acts 8:4 show the results. Acts 4:31 says, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Acts 8:4 says, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.”

If we are going to both transform lives and also equip people to give an answer for the hope that lies within them, we must make it our priority to train others in the same way that Christ and the disciples trained others. Paul also said that was how he trained the leaders in the church at Ephesus. Acts 20:20-21 says, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul realized He would only equip people to be effective in sharing the Gospel by showing them how instead of just telling them what to do.

The Thessalonian Christians had only been Christians a few months when Paul wrote his first letter to them. Paul showed that he trained new Christians the same way he trained leaders. I Thessalonians 1:5-8 says, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.” Paul had shown them how to share the Gospel by his example and now they were showing others how to follow the Lord by their example.

There are many ways to develop church structure. However, these passages show us that the most effective way to equip people to share the Gospel is to show them how by our example. If Christ made it His priority to train people by example, then as we develop church structure we want to develop the structure in such a way that our leaders will have the opportunity to show others how to do evangelism by their example. May the Lord richly bless you as you show others by your example how to share the Gospel effectively.

Developing Structure to Equip for Ministry to One Another

In Galatians 6:2 we read, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” In this verse we see that it is the plan of Christ for every Christian to learn how to bear the burdens of other Christians. This verse says that is how we fulfill the law of Christ. Christ gave us that law the night before He was crucified. In John 13:34-35 we read, “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.” Here we see that we are commanded to love one another as Christ has loved us.

Christians do not automatically learn how to love one another as Christ has loved us just because they become Christians. The reason for that is simple. Once Adam and Eve sinned they were separated from God. In addition, once they sinned every person was controlled by fear and acted out of fear, guilt and shame. That is illustrated for us so well by the answer that Adam gave to God after he sinned. Genesis 3:10 says, “So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” In this verse we see that Adam was filled with fear and he had to admit to that fear. We see that Adam was filled with shame because of the fact that he was naked before God. We see that Adam was filled with guilt and the first way he tried to handle that guilt was to try and hide from God. The only other way Adam knew how to handle his fear, guilt and shame was to blame Eve. These things have been the pattern of the world from the time of Adam.

That is why the new commandment that Christ gave is not something that automatically happens when a person becomes a Christian. Salvation does reverse the separation from God because it brings a person back into a relationship with God. John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” However, a new Christian still needs to learn to have daily fellowship with the Father and with Christ. That is why John also wrote in I John 1:3-4, “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. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” From these verses we see that complete reversal of the original effects of separation includes both relationship through salvation and fellowship with other Christians, with the Father and with Christ.

We mentioned in a previous topic that the new Christians in Acts 2 immediately began gathering for Bible study and fellowship. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Here we see that the early church immediately began meeting in small groups for Bible study and fellowship to help the new Christians grow in their relationship with God and with one another. The early church were led by the Lord to develop the structure of small groups to help the new Christians get into a Bible study and fellowship group led by one of the 120 disciples mentioned in Acts 1:15. This structure provided both a spiritual parent for each small group and a spiritual family in which to grow and learn to love one another as Christ loved them. A spiritual parent and a spiritual family are the two things that every Christian needs to learn to minister to one another.

In I Corinthians 3:1-3 Paul wrote, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” In these verses we see that the Christians in Corinth had not learned to love one another as Christ had loved them. Paul explains the reason for this in I Corinthians 4:14-17 where we read, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. 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. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”

In the first passage we see that the Christians in Corinth had not learned to love. Instead they were acting like people that were not even Christians. In the second passage we see that the Corinthian Christians had lots of instructors but few spiritual parents. The word translated “instructor” in this verse is only used two other times in the New Testament. That is in Galatians 3:24-25 where we read, “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” In these verses we see that the word is translated by “tutor”. An instructor or tutor was mentioned by the Greek poet Homer in his book the *Odyssey*. The name of that instructor or tutor was “Mentor” which has become a widely used word by the world today.

By comparing these verses, we might summarize them this way. The law was our “Mentor” to bring us to Christ but after we come to Christ we are no longer under our “Mentor”. Instead we need spiritual parents to show us how to live and love as Christ loved us. A mentor was a slave that raised a child by severe discipline and did not have the love and concern of a parent. Paul said in I Corinthians 4:14-17 that he was a loving parent that have a great love and concern for the Corinthians. He invited them to imitate his example. Paul repeated this same thought in I Corinthians 11:1 when he said, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” Paul could say imitate me because he was imitating Christ. A spiritual parent is one who is imitating Christ and giving others an example to follow.

All new Christians need spiritual parents that they can imitate. Paul, Silas and Timothy said to the Thessalonians in I Thessalonians 1:5-6, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” For children that grow up in a Christian family, the physical parents may also become the spiritual parents when that child becomes a Christian.

However, if a person does not have godly Christian parents or becomes a Christian as an adult, that person needs one or more spiritual parents that spend time with them in a wide variety of situations to show them by example how to love others as Christ has loved us. Christ walked with the twelve for three years to show them how much He loved them. In the new commandment He pointed to His own example as the example of how to love others. Then He promised them the Holy Spirit to give them the power to love others as He had loved them.

Paul, Silas and Timothy explained what it means to be spiritual parents in I Thessalonians 2:7-12 where we read, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

In these verses we see that spiritual parents provide the loving care of a nursing mother and the example of a godly father. They share their lives with new or struggling Christians. They give them an example to follow. They encourage them just as a physical father encourages his physical children. Spiritual parents show new and immature Christians how to walk in a way that is pleasing to the Lord. Every church needs to develop a structure that provides spiritual parents to new and struggling Christians. As we saw, the early church did that by developing small group Bible studies led by a spiritual parent.

The Biblical definition of a disciple is given in Matthew 13:52. That verse says, “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.” A householder is a person that is a head of a spiritual household -has a spiritual family. He has a treasure – the Word of God. He is able to bring out of that treasure things that are new – he continues to learn more himself. He brings out of that treasure things that are old – he is able to teach the basics of Christianity and provide an example to follow. All Christian leaders needs to ask themselves the question, “Am I a just a mentor that tells others what to do or am I a spiritual parent that takes responsibility for a group of new or struggling Christians and shows them how to live by my example?”

If a church has few or no spiritual parents, that church is not equipping Christians to minister to one another. If a church has many spiritual parents that are walking alongside each new and struggling Christian to show them how to live, that church has an effective ministry of equipping Christians to minister to one another. What are you doing and how is the Lord using you to equip others to serve one another in love? May the Lord richly bless you as you show people by your example how to become spiritual parents to others.

Developing Structure to Equip Each Christian to Teach the Word of God

In Ephesians 4:15-16 we read, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” In verse 15 we see that every Christian is to learn to speak the truth. That verse also tells us that all Christians are to learn to speak in love as they speak the truth. Verse 16 says that every Christian is to learn to work effectively and every Christian is to learn to do his or her share.

Since Ephesians 4 says we are to speak the truth, we need to know what truth is. Pilate asked Christ a question in John 19:38. That question was, “What is truth?” In John 14:6 Christ said that He is the truth. In John 17:17 Christ further defined the truth. That verse says, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” Since every Christian is to speak the truth in love, that means that every Christian must be taught how to teach the Word of God.

In John 8 Christ defined what happens when we learn the truth and apply it to our own lives. John 8:32 says, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Then John 8:36 adds, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” Christians have been set free from sin and its consequences. However, they must know and understand the Word of God to understand what that freedom means. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Then Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

The first place that people need to learn to teach the Word of God is in their own homes. In Deuteronomy God taught some very important principles to the nation of Israel. As Christians we need to learn those principles. Several key principles are given in Deuteronomy 6:5-8 where we read, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.”

First, we see that the basis for effective teaching is to love the Lord with our whole heart, soul and strength. As we have seen, we need to grow both in our love for the Lord and grow in our understanding of His love for us. The New Testament gives four things in which people take root. Two are negative. Hebrew 12:14-16 warns of the danger of having a root of bitterness. I Timothy 6:10 says that the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil. However, the other two roots are very positive. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” Here we see that we are to take root in Christ. Then Ephesians 3:17-19 says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to

know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” We are to take root in Christ and then let His love take root in our own lives.

Second, Deuteronomy 6:6 says that to teach the Word of God effectively we must have the Word in our hearts. Psalm 119:11 says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!” We help new Christians, struggling Christians and growing Christians learn to hide the Word of God in their hearts by helping them begin to memorize the Word and then meditate on that Word. God told Joshua in Joshua 1:7-8, “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” People must know the Word of God in order to be able to teach the Word of God.

Third, we see that effective teaching begins in the home as we learn to teach our children. II Timothy 1:5 illustrates the ministry of Lois and Eunice with Timothy, “When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.” For those who do not have physical children, they still can use their home to teach spiritual children. That is illustrated so well by Aquila and Priscilla as they taught Apollos. Acts 18:26 says, “So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”

Fourth, we see that we are to teach our children throughout the day. Deuteronomy 6:7 says to teach them when we are sitting in the house, when we are walking or traveling together, when they go to bed in the evening and when they get up in the morning. As we as parents learn to share the Word of God with our children in love, we are learning to speak the truth in love. The interesting thing is that the parents who are doing the teaching usually learn as much or more than the children that they are teaching. As a result, both we as the parents and the children we are teaching are growing in our understanding and obedience to the Word of God.

Fifth, we see that as we teach the Word of God that the Word is to be the distinguishing characteristic of both our actions and our thoughts. When the Word of God is in our thoughts, it is much easier for the Word to guide our actions. We might call that learning to think and act Biblically instead of thinking the way that the world thinks. That has a tremendous impact in our lives. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.” This is why it is so important to develop a structure that will help every Christian learn to teach their physical or spiritual children.

One we have helped people learn to teach their children, then we want to help them learn to teach the Word of God to a small group. In II Timothy 2:2 Paul told Timothy, “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 these verses we see four spiritual generations – Paul, Timothy,

faithful men and others also. Paul had taught his spiritual son, Timothy, both by his word and his example. That is why Paul was able to tell the Corinthians in I Corinthians 4:17, “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Paul knew that Timothy would remind the Corinthians of his example as well as teaching them the Word of God.

Then in II Timothy 2:2 we see that Paul is reminding Timothy that he is to keep on teaching faithful men and equipping them to teach others also. Christ had given an example by devoting a large part of the second 21 months of his ministry training eleven faithful men (and one betrayer) so that they would be able to teach others also. Paul nearly always had a small group of men with him that he was teaching so that they could teach others also. Acts 20:4 says, “And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.” Paul was teaching these men and showing them how to teach others as they traveled with him.

One key passage that must be mentioned is Ephesians 4:11-13. Those verses say, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” In these verses we see that the primary ministry of evangelists, pastors and teachers is to equip the saint for the work of the ministry. Evangelists are to equip the saints by example to explain the Gospel clearly to those that are not Christians. Pastors are to equip the saints by example how to minister to one another as Christians. Teachers are to equip the saints by example to teach and apply the Word of God. This will result in every Christian becoming mature and equipped to do the work of the Lord.

As we saw at the beginning of this topic, the following verses, Ephesians 4:15-16, show that every Christian is to learn to speak the truth in love so that every Christian is equipped to do his or her part. That will only happen as we develop a church structure that focuses on equipping the saints for the work of the ministry rather than entertaining the lost. Christ says that as every Christian learns to do his or her part that the body of Christ will build up itself in love. May the Lord richly bless you and multiply your ministry as you teach Christians to teach the Word of God to their children and then to a small group of others.

19.

Developing Structure to Develop Spiritual Families

In John 1:12 we read, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” In this verse and many others we see that we become a part of the family of God at the moment that we place our trust in Christ. This is a very great privilege. In the physical life we see that families often have children, parents, grandparents, great grandparents and occasionally one or two more generations. Children that have two or three generations older than them have the opportunity to learn many things from these older generations. The same can be true in spiritual families.

In Matthew 13:52 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.” Since the word translated “instructed” is the same form of the word translated “Make Disciples” in Matthew 28:19-20, we see that one who has become a disciple is defined as one who is the head of a spiritual household. In the time of the New Testament a family would often include three or more generations plus servants. The person that led this family was a householder or the head of the household. By putting that information into this context we see that as a Christian grows and matures that he or she should mature and become the head of a spiritual household.

We see that the early church functioned as many smaller spiritual families. Acts 1:15 says there were 120 disciples so that made it possible to have 120 spiritual families. Acts 2:42 and 46 tell us how they functioned as spiritual families, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers...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.” In these verses we see that the early Christians fellowshiped together, they studied the teachings of Christ together, they broke bread together, they prayed together, they did this daily, they did these things in the temple and they did these things in their homes. The result was that they were of one accord and were filled with gladness and simplicity of heart. Verses 44 and 45 also show us that they met physical needs of one another. They were learning to function in small groups as spiritual families.

Paul referred to part of his spiritual family in I Corinthians 4:14-17 where we read, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. 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. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” When Paul says that he had begotten the Corinthians through the Gospel, he is saying that he had taken the responsibility of a spiritual parent to help them grow and mature.

In I Thessalonians 1:1 we read, “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Then I Thessalonians 2:7 says, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.” I Thessalonians 2:10-12 goes on to say, “You are

witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” Paul, Silas and Timothy were spiritual parents that provided the love of a nursing mother and the example of a godly father to these new Christians to help them grow.

First, healthy physical families teach their children. Deuteronomy 6:7-8 says, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” In these verses we see that teaching is continuous and throughout the day. Second, healthy families have parents that provide a good example for their children to learn to imitate. An example of healthy physical parents is mentioned in the previous paragraph.

The same should be true in spiritual families. New Christians and immature Christians need someone who explains the Word of God to them regularly and answers their questions so that they can begin to understand and apply Biblical principles to their daily lives. They also need mature Christians that will walk alongside them as they go through life providing them an example to imitate. This will only happen as mature Christians take the responsibility to invest their time and lives in the lives of new and immature Christians just as physical parents invest their lives and time in the lives of their physical children. That is why every church needs to develop a structure that will help spiritual families to form and to function effectively.

We see that the 120 disciples mentioned in Acts 1:15 took that responsibility to function as smaller spiritual families to help the new Christians begin to grow in Acts 2:42-47. We see that the teams that traveled with Paul took that same responsibility to help new Christians grow in the various churches that they established. The results are clearly seen in the New Testament as the church spread rapidly because Christians grew and matured and then they became the heads of spiritual families.

In the book of Acts, there is no mention of disciples from Acts 1:15 to Acts 6:1, a period of six or seven years. Then Acts 6:1 says, “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.” Then Acts 6:7 says, “Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” These verses show that the number of leaders of spiritual households multiplied in Acts 6:1. The leaders dealt with the problem mentioned in Acts 6:1 by increasing the number of men on the leadership team of the church with the new leaders of the leadership team all being Hellenists. The result was that the number of leaders of spiritual households multiplied greatly. All of the new Christians had spiritual families to help them grow.

When the early Christians were scattered to other areas because of persecution, the church at Jerusalem also took the responsibility to help these Christians grow. We are given the example of that fact as they sent Barnabas to Antioch to help the new Christians there in their spiritual

growth. Barnabas immediately realized that there were enough new Christians that he needed to form a spiritual parenting team to help him. Acts 11:25-26 says, "Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Here we see that many spiritual families developed in Antioch.

Paul and Barnabas also made it their priority to develop heads of spiritual households as they established churches in other areas. Acts 14:21-23 says, "And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." In these verses we see that they reached people but they continued to help them grow until there were many that were able to become heads of spiritual families. In fact enough heads of spiritual families developed that they were able to help part of these continue to mature so that they were able to appoint a group of elders to lead each church and train other spiritual parents.

In Acts 19:9 we see that Paul and the team with him developed a structure in Ephesus very similar to what they did in other cities to equip disciples to lead spiritual families. That verse says, "But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus." Because of the heat in the area, most businesses closed for a couple of hours during the hottest part of the day. That made it possible for Paul and the team to be able to make use of a school to have a daily place and time to teach all those who were leading spiritual households.

However, this discussion of questions was only a part of the training of those who were leading spiritual households. Later while talking to the leaders that had developed in the church at Ephesus, Paul said in Acts 20:20-21, "How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we see that Paul and the rest of the team with him combined their daily discussions with these heads of spiritual households with on-the-job training as they took these people with them as they shared the message of repentance and faith with people in their homes.

Christ worked in a mighty way as each of the early churches developed a structure to develop spiritual families and mature disciples to lead these spiritual families. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop mature disciples to lead spiritual families and to develop the structure to help every Christian grow and mature.

Developing Structure to Develop Spiritual Leadership Teams

Timothy became a part of the spiritual leadership team that Paul developed. In II Timothy 2:2 we read, "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 Timothy and every other spiritual leader needs at least two different kinds of spiritual relationships. Every Timothy needs one or more very mature Christians like Paul that help them to continue to grow and mature. At the same time, they need a group of faithful men that they are continuing to help grow and mature in their spiritual lives.

However, this also raises a different question. Who helps the people like Paul to continue to grow and mature? Who provides them with encouragement when they are faced with difficult times? This is an important key to understand. In John 15:15-16 Christ told the eleven, "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." Christ chose the eleven to become a part of His leadership team and said that He had shared with them all that the Father shared with Him. He elevated them from servants to friends. Later in John 20:17 Christ called them friends. Then in John 20:21 we read, "So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." Christ shared His plans and then made them full partners in ministry.

In fact Christ even asked three of the disciples to minister to Him. Matthew 26:37-38 says, "And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." Even though they failed that night, Christ recommissioned them a few days later. John 21:15-17 says, "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep." Christ recognized them as full partners and left them to carry on His ministry when He returned to heaven.

Paul did the same thing. He led people to Christ, helped them grow in godly character, taught them and showed them how to minister with him. Then he gave them opportunities to minister with him and to him. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, Paul said he was sending his spiritual son, Timothy, to remind them of his actions so that they could imitate his life. Paul describes Timothy as his faithful and beloved son in the Lord. This was not talking about a physical son because Acts 16:1 says that his physical father was a Greek. Instead it meant that Paul had taken the personal responsibility to help Timothy grow and mature in his spiritual life and now he had become part of the team that ministered with Paul and to Paul as they served the Lord together.

Paul also spoke of another spiritual son in II Corinthians 7:5-6, “For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” Paul was going through a difficult time and Titus ministered to him. We see that Titus and Timothy had become adult spiritual sons that ministered with Paul and to Paul. This should be the goal of every spiritual leader. We help people grow and mature and become adult spiritual sons and a part of the leadership team. In turn they minister with us and to us. In this way, even individuals like Paul have a spiritual team to minister to them as they minister to others. When a team like this is developed, then the team will be equipped to carry on the ministry without the ministry struggling when the Lord takes one of the leaders to heaven.

The reason for this is explained in the last part of II Timothy 2:2, “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.” Timothy was to help faithful men grow and mature so that they could help others just as he was helping them. The proof of the effectiveness of Paul and Timothy was the fact that these faithful men would be fully equipped to develop others just as Paul had developed Timothy and Timothy had developed them. Every healthy church will develop a leadership training structure that develops godly leaders and equips them to develop and equip other godly leaders. This means that the leadership team of every healthy church develops a structure that will train a third generation (faithful men) and fourth generation (others also) of spiritual leadership.

Notice that it does not say that the third generation of spiritual leadership “might” be able to develop others also. Instead it says that the third generation of spiritual leadership “will” be able to develop others also. The most important ministry of the spiritual leadership team in any church is to develop godly leaders that are able to develop that third and fourth generation of spiritual leaders. In our last topic we talked about developing spiritual families. We saw that a disciple is the head of a spiritual family. Then if we are going to obey our commission to “Make Disciples” it means that we must be focused on developing that third and fourth generation of spiritual leaders.

In the church at Antioch we saw in Acts 11:25-26 that the church had a leadership team of two – Paul and Barnabas. Then in Acts 13:1 we see that the leadership team had grown to five. In Acts 13:2-3 the Lord sent the original two, Paul and Barnabas, out to develop other churches. An important question to ask is, “What had happened in Antioch by the time that Paul and Barnabas returned?” That question is answered in Acts 15:35 where we read, “Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.” Here we see that the leadership team of three that had been left in Antioch had developed many others during the years that Paul and Barnabas were gone. Just like the church in Jerusalem, the church in Antioch had developed a structure that produced reproducing spiritual leaders that were training faithful men to equip others also.

In Acts 14:23 we see that Paul and the team with him developed a leadership team in every church. That verse says, “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Paul made it clear that

he followed the same pattern wherever he went. I Corinthians 4:17 says, “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.”

In cases where Paul was forced to leave an area before he finished developing a leadership team, he would leave part of his team there to complete that ministry of developing a leadership team. Titus 1:5 says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you—.” However, Titus was not just to appoint men. His ministry was to help men become qualified and then appoint them. In fact Titus 1:6-9 give us the qualifications that he was to develop in each of the men that would become a part of the leadership team in each church. Our purpose is to qualify men not disqualify them.

Since these men were going to be training the people that would be the heads of the spiritual families in each city, most of these qualifications deal with godly character. As a result, Titus was to develop godly leaders in the same way that Christ and Paul developed godly leaders. He was to take men with him so that they could see his godly character and learn to follow his example. At the same time he was to teach these men as they went with him what to teach (Biblical principles) and how to teach what they learned (ministry by example and by word). The primary ministry of spiritual leadership is to develop godly men that will be able to reproduce themselves in the lives of others as they model godly character, discuss how to apply Biblical principles and provide an example of how to minister to others.

In physical families the next generation is to be fully equipped to carry on all that the older generation did by the time the older generation dies. The same is true in spiritual families. In spiritual families, the godly leadership team is to fully equip the next generation of spiritual leaders by the time the older generation dies. This actually means that the leadership team will grow and multiply its ministry as each member of the team equips a number of others to reproduce themselves.

What is your most important ministry if you are a spiritual leader. As we look at the example of Christ, the example of Paul and the example of many others in the New Testament, we see that each of these leaders felt that their most important ministry was to develop the next generation of godly leadership by taking faithful men with them and showing them how to grow in godly character, teaching them how to teach and apply Biblical principles in their own lives and the lives of others and to show them how to do effective ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you make these your priorities in your spiritual life and ministry.