

Omega Course:

Practical Church Planter Training

Manual Three

By

The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting



**Omega Course:
Practical Church Planter Training
Manual Three**

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MANUAL THREE

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PREFACE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MATERIAL

Church planters are often recruited and sent out with little or no training for the task that is before them. Church leaders who are overwhelmed with ministry difficulties often lack a clear vision of what God desires to accomplish through them. Both church planters and church leaders need training and vision, but Bible schools and seminaries are not realistic options for many.

This material is designed to provide not only vision for the church planter and church leader, but also the biblical foundation and practical ministry skills in order to see that vision become reality. It is not an educational "program." Rather, it provides necessary biblical and educational foundations, as well as practical ministry skills, which are required for church planting. Although the *Omega Course* was designed for Central/Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, we've been encouraged by reports that it is already being found useful when adapted for use in other contexts.

This curriculum has been designed to accomplish two goals:

1. To provide the necessary training for churches to be planted.
2. To encourage mobilization in the whole Body of Christ toward a church planting movement.

Today we see church planting movements taking place in many countries throughout the world, including Brazil, Romania, the Philippines, Nigeria, and others. We believe that the local church is God's primary instrument for world evangelization, and that church planting based upon multiplication principles is the most effective means of working towards the completion of the Great Commission. New churches must be planted with a vision for multiplication and the ability to plant other new churches. When this happens, there is potential for a movement of churches which is able to sweep across a nation and transform the lives of people throughout the land.

A church planting movement needs people involved in all levels of the church planting task, from young believers who are excited about their new faith, to leaders of denominations. Church planters by themselves can never be the catalysts for a church planting movement. This material is applicable and has much benefit for all levels of church workers and church leaders who can directly and indirectly support the efforts of church planters as they strive to fulfill the ministry to which God has called them.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

This manual is one of five manuals, each of which contains approximately 26 one-hour lessons. In order to accomplish the goals stated above, the curriculum covers a wide range of subjects that are necessary for the church planting task. These include SCP vision, cell group ministry, discipleship, Church, evangelism, inductive Bible study, leadership, prayer, spiritual character and more.

The curriculum was divided into five manuals in order to provide an ever-expanding approach to the learning process. As each participant completes a manual, he or she spends time before the next manual putting into practice the principles that have been learned. Therefore many of the later sessions build upon principles and skills which have been learned and practiced in earlier lessons.

In other words, the curriculum has been designed to be learned and used in parallel with the actual planting of churches. As the participant actively works towards starting a new church, he or she will need certain skills and knowledge, and will encounter various problems along the way. The skills and knowledge needed at the beginning of the church plant are provided in the first manuals, while the activities and principles needed at a later stage in a church plant are presented in the later manuals. Each manual has been designed to provide skills, answer questions, and discuss potential problems that relate to the corresponding phase of church planting in which the participant is actively working. After this Preface you will find a list of key development activities or "thresholds" that trainees are prepared for and expected to apply between training seminars.

The lessons are grouped by subject, and each of the five manuals includes lessons from some subjects. Some of the themes, such as "vision" and "church" are included in all five of the manuals. Others, such as "discipleship" occur later in the curriculum, when the participant is at the point in his or her ministry when

these themes are necessary. A curriculum overview containing a list of the lesson titles for each of the five manuals is included later in this section.

USING THE MATERIAL

Advice for the Participant

Much time, prayer and effort has been put into the preparation of all five of the manuals in this curriculum. Each manual is designed to address specific ministry skills and knowledge that are required during the process of starting a new church. Therefore it is highly recommended that you begin with the first manual, and not with one of the later manuals. In the same respect, each lesson has been carefully chosen and crafted to be useful, applicable and indispensable for the church planting task. It is to your benefit not to skip lessons.

Be aware that real learning takes place when you apply the concepts presented in these lessons to your personal life and ministry. Most lessons include an action plan at the end. These action plans are designed to help you apply the ideas in the lesson and should be completed before you begin working with the next manual. It can be extremely helpful to have a mentor to encourage and advise you as you apply yourself to church planting. A mentor can also serve your need for accountability as you apply the concepts being learned to your life and ministry. Having someone to come alongside you is not only effective pedagogy, but many church planters testify to the help this provides in their life and ministry. Therefore, we strongly encourage you to prayerfully seek some form of mentoring to enhance and strengthen your church planting ministry.

Advice for the Trainer

This material can be used in a variety of settings such as a Bible school, seminary or a church-based seminar. However this is not primarily educational material. It is training material. Education focuses on knowledge and information. The intent of the material is not merely to impart knowledge, but to motivate toward action employing biblically sound ministry skills. This manual is for 'doers.'

Although the method you choose to teach the lessons for each manual will depend on your particular context, each manual can be taught in a weeklong seminar. From this ideal, many training locations have successfully used other arrangements that fit better with the flow of life and existing ministries. They have sometimes opted for two intensive weekends or regular weekly sessions. It is recommended that the action plans at the end of each lesson be emphasized so that they are completed before the next seminar. Four to six months is a reasonable time to expect between seminars. The advantage of this type of training method is that it combines principles learned in the seminar with hands-on practice between seminars.

During seminars it is not necessary to teach every point of every lesson since participants can read the material on their own. Sometimes having trainees read the lesson and interact on how it relates to their own experience is a good method. At other times, a lecture from someone who is an expert in the subject being covered may be the best way to impart the concepts. But **DO NOT DWELL ON THE LECTURE APPROACH**. Be creative as you try various methods to convey the principles and skills contained in the lessons. Other trainers have found variations such as discussion groups, workshops and role playing to be helpful and interesting.

You have a sacred trust. The Lord of the Church wishes to disciple the nations, and leaders are needed. You have the awesome potential of helping to equip many who could foster church planting movements and to facilitate others in ministries of church multiplication.

Further help

Do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance to you in spreading the vision of saturation church planting or practically equipping church planters.

Jay Weaver, General Editor
Budapest, Hungary, January 2000
JayWeaver@compuserve.com

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

This curriculum has been prepared by *The Alliance for Saturation Church Planting* in cooperation with Project 250 of Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries. *The Alliance* is a partnership of churches and mission agencies committed to mobilizing believers to saturate each country in Central/Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union with evangelical churches. Saturation Church Planting is a strategy that seeks to establish local churches in every town, village and neighborhood so that those who accept Christ will have a local fellowship in which to grow in Christ and be equipped for ministry. *The Alliance* is built on the premise that joining forces will increase effectiveness, reduce duplication, and demonstrate unity within the body of Christ.

WHAT WE BELIEVE:

- The local church is God's primary tool for evangelism and discipleship.
- Partnership with churches and mission organizations is crucial for the multiplication of local churches and the development of saturation church planting movements.
- Training leaders is essential to church planting and church growth.
- The Lausanne Covenant is the statement of faith for *The Alliance*.

WHAT WE DO:

Church Planter Training and Mentoring

The Alliance provides skill-based training in seminar fashion with practical ministry assignments geared towards starting reproducing churches.

Information Gathering

Accurate information leads to good decisions in the church planting task. *The Alliance* can help with training and consultation for your information gathering needs in the areas of church planting and church growth.

Prayer Movement Consulting

A church planting movement starts with vision, which is discovered and refined through seeking God's heart in prayer. *The Alliance* can help you better understand the role of prayer movements in the church planting task, and how you can facilitate a prayer movement in your region.

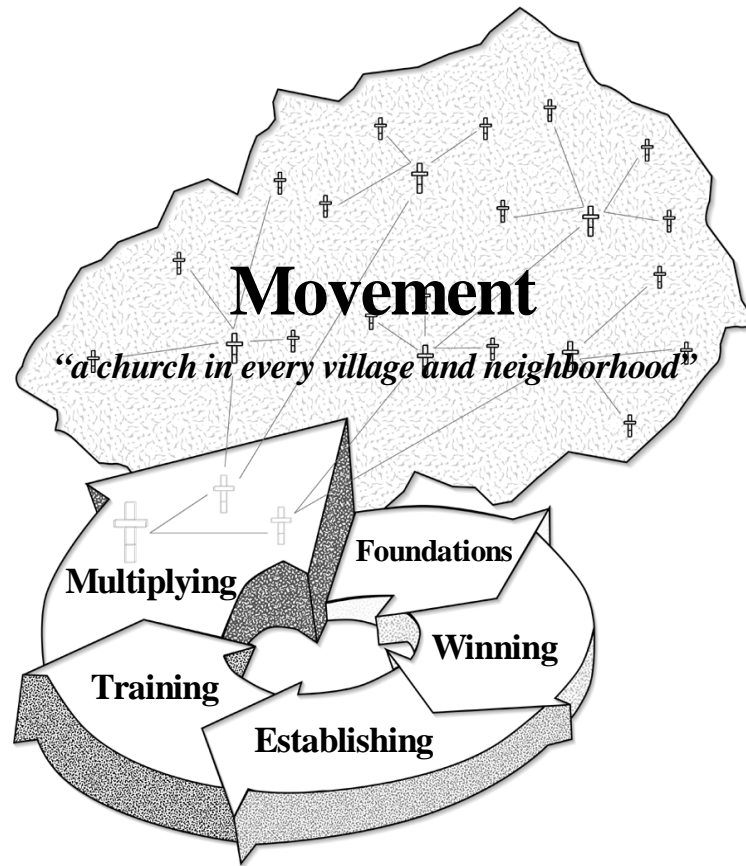
Vision Casting

What does God want for your country? He wants churches everywhere! *The Alliance* can help foster a vision for new churches with conceptual seminars on the principles of saturation church planting.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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THE CHURCH PLANTING CYCLE



Church planting is not a randomly connected series of events and activities; it is a goal-driven process. This process requires the coordination of activity, the combination of skills, a commonality of philosophy, and competence in leadership. Development in these critical areas is the goal of church planter training. The "Church Planting Cycle" is a diagram of the church planting process that visualizes, from a particular point of view, the interrelationship of the key principles and practices at work within that process. This represents a kind of 'roadmap' for the church planter, allowing one to always determine from where they've come and where they are headed.

THRESHOLDS

For the *Omega Course* Church Planting Curriculum

Thresholds are concrete ministry activities which have been incorporated into this curriculum. Each threshold can be thought of as an individual stepping stone within the larger process of starting new congregations. The thresholds provide concrete action points which help the trainee to practically apply the concepts contained in the *Omega Course*. They are both milestones that indicate progress, as well as signposts which help give further direction. Following is a list of thresholds and emphases in the *Omega Course*.

MANUAL ONE: Emphasis On SCP Vision, Purpose Of The Church, Inductive Bible Study, and Research

Specific action items:

- Examining the purpose of the Church in light of the Great Commission
- Developing an overall ministry strategy based on "Z-thinking" vision
- Investigating "form and function" in the early Church and in today's Church
- Learning and practicing inductive Bible study
- Writing and sharing a personal testimony
- Initiating prayer support groups for evangelism and church planting
- Completing a comprehensive research project for the target area

MANUAL TWO: Emphasis On Evangelism and Cell Groups

Specific action items:

- Sharing of findings from the research project with others in the target area
- Writing a church purpose statement
- Developing a philosophy of church planting ministry
- Developing a personal evangelism strategy, including one-on-one evangelism
- Beginning cell groups with an emphasis on evangelism
- Using inductive Bible study personally and in the cell groups

MANUAL THREE: Emphasis On Discipleship, Spiritual Warfare, Teams and Teamwork

Specific action items:

- Identifying and training potential leaders for cell groups
- Spending time in prayer and fasting
- Evaluating the worldview of the church planter as compared to the biblical worldview
- Using scriptural truths to withstand spiritual attack in the life and ministry of the church planter
- Creating individual disciple making plans for the people involved in the church planting ministry
- Performing team development and evaluation activities
- Analyzing the spiritual gifts of the church planter and the church planting team

MANUAL FOUR: Emphasis On Leadership and Stewardship

Specific action items:

- Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the church planter's leadership style, with an emphasis on methods of personal interaction with others
- Incorporating principles of servant leadership into the life and ministry of the church planter
- Tracking the use of time in the life and ministry of the church planter, setting priorities, making schedules
- Evaluating the financial giving of the church planter, as well as that of the church plant itself
- Reviewing the biblical roles of a husband and wife and the responsibilities that church planters have to their families
- Leading existing cell groups through the process of multiplication
- Preparing a strategic plan for working towards saturation in the church planting ministry

MANUAL FIVE: Emphasis On Multiplication, Mobilizing Others, and Promoting SCP Movements

Specific action items:

- Initiating ministry cooperation with other evangelical groups in the target area
- Planning and implementing a supervisory structure for cell groups that will promote ongoing growth and multiplication
- Teaching people to pray for saturation church planting; mobilizing prayer at a city, regional, and national levels
- Developing and implementing a plan for the church planter to train and mentor new church planters
- Empowering and releasing new leaders for church planting ministry
- Promoting a vision in new churches for missionary involvement not only in their target area, but also to "the ends of the earth"

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

MANUAL ONE Overview

Addresses primarily the **FOUNDATIONS** phase of the Church Planting Cycle

SCP Vision (VI)	The Church (CH)	Spiritual Character (SC)	Prayer (PY)	Bible Study Methods (BS)	Evangelism (EV)
Lesson 1: "Z" Thinking Lesson 2: The Great Commission and Church Planting Lesson 3 (3A): Church Planting Cycle 3A: Church Planting Models Lesson 4 (4A,4B): Principles of Research 4A: Understanding Your Target Area 4B: Sample Questionnaires	Lesson 1: Biblical Foundations for the Church Lesson 2 (2A): The Purpose Of The Church 2A: Great Commission Worksheet Lesson 3 (3A): Form And Function 3A: Form & Function Applied Lesson 4: Defining The Local Church	Lesson 1 (1A): Justification by Faith Lesson 2: Living by the Gospel Lesson 3: Christian Growth Lesson 4: The Transforming Power of the Gospel Lesson 5: Keeping a Spiritual Journal	Lesson 1, 2: Concert of Prayer: Praying for Revival Lesson 3 (3A): How To Facilitate Prayer 3A: Prayer Triplets	Lesson 1 (1A): Intro to the Inductive Bible Study Method 1A: How We Got The Bible Lesson 2 (2A): Observing God's Word 2A: The Language of the Bible Lesson 3: Observation Workshop Lesson 4 (4A): Interpreting God's Word 4A: Bible Charts Lesson 5: Interpretation Workshop Lesson 6: Applying God's Word Lesson 7 (7A): Application Workshop 7A: Ephesus - an I.B.S.	Lesson 1: Introduction to Evangelism Lesson 2, 3: Developing Your Personal Testimony
4	4	5	3	7	3

Numbers in brackets () refer to appendices

Addresses primarily the **WINNING** phase of the Church Planting Cycle

MANUAL TWO Overview

SCP Vision (VI)	The Church (CH)	Spiritual Character (SC)	Prayer (PY)	Leadership (LD)	Cell Groups (CG)	Bible Study Methods (BS)	Evangelism (EV)
Lesson 5: Biblical Foundations of Saturation Church Planting Lesson 6: Research Workshop Lesson 7: Mobilizing Resources through Research	Lesson 5: The Nature of the Church Lesson 6 (6A): Corporate Functions of the Church 6A: <i>Baptism in the New Testament</i> Lesson 7: Developing A Church Purpose Statement Lesson 8 (8A): Philosophy of Church Planting Ministry 8A: <i>Developing a Philosophy of Church Planting Ministry</i>	Lesson 6: Living Like Sons Instead of Orphans Lesson 7 (7A): Learning to be Sons 7A: <i>Orphans vs. Sons</i>	Lesson 4: Concert of Prayer: Worship and Meditation	Lesson 1 (1A): Biblical Principles of Leadership 1A: <i>Leadership Case Studies</i> Lesson 2 (2A): Profile of a Leader 2A: <i>The Leader</i>	Lesson 1: Functions and Benefits of Cell Groups Lesson 2 (2A, 2B): Principles of Cell Group Leadership 2A: <i>Cell Grp Ice Breakers</i> 2B: <i>Sample Activities</i> Lesson 3 (3A): Starting a Cell Group 3A: <i>Planning Worksheet</i> Lesson 4 (4A): Cell Group Evangelism 4A: <i>About "Oikos"</i> Lesson 5: Cell Group Demonstration Lesson 6: Philosophy of Cell Group Ministry	Lesson 8 (8A): Various Ways to Use Inductive Bible Studies 8A: <i>Biographical Study - Barnabas</i> Lesson 9 (9A, 9B): Leading Inductive Bible Studies 9A: <i>Study of Mt 20:17-28</i> 9B: <i>Study of Lk 15: 1-7</i> Lesson 10,11 (10A): Workshop Leading Inductive Bible Studies 10A: <i>Passages for IBS</i>	Lesson 4 (4A): Evangelism and Church Planting 4A: <i>Evaluating Evang Strategies</i> Lesson 5 (5A, 5B): Barriers to effective Evangelism 5A: <i>"A Church in Every People"</i> 5B: <i>Answering Common Objections</i> Lesson 6, 7 (6A, 6B, 6C): The Process of Conversion 6A: <i>Profile of persons to Evang</i> 6B: <i>Three Principles</i> 6C: <i>Examining Jesus' Approach</i>
3	4	2	1	2	6	4	4

Numbers in brackets () refer to appendices

MANUAL THREE Overview

Addresses primarily the **ESTABLISHING** phase of the Church Planting Cycle

SCP Vision (VI)	The Church (CH)	Spiritual Character (SC)	Prayer (PY)	Leadership (LD)	Cell Groups (CG)	Evangelism (EV)	Disciple Making (DI)	Spiritual Warfare(SW)
Lesson 8: The First Advance Lesson 9: Elements of Church Planting Movements	Lesson 9, 10: The Church and Spiritual Gifts Lesson 11: Social Dynamics of the Church	Lesson 8,9: The Law and The Gospel Lesson 10 (10A): Repentance as a Way of Life 10A: The Sinner's Place	Lesson 5: Prayer and Fasting Lesson 6, 7: Concert of Prayer: Praying to Spread the Gospel	Lesson 3: Spheres of Leadership Lesson 4: Introduction to Team Work Lesson 5: Team Development	Lesson 7 (7A): Cell Group Discussion Dynamics 7A: Discussion Questions Lesson 8: Caring for People in a Cell Group Lesson 9: Training New Cell Group Leaders	Lesson 8: Relational Evangelism	Lesson 1: Introduction to Disciple Making Lesson 2(2A): Your Role in Making Disciples 2A: Character-istics of Christian Love Lesson 3(3A): Know Your Goal, Know Your People 3A: Faith, Hope & Love Lesson 4(4A): Helping Disciples Grow Spiritually 4A: Spir Grth Need Evaltn Lesson 5(5A): Forms for Disciple Making 5A: Disciple Making Plan	Lesson 1: Understanding Worldview Lesson 2 (2A): Dynamics of Spiritual Warfare 2A: Study of Eph. 4:17-5:21 Lesson 3 (3A, 3B): Spiritual Battles 3A: Bible Study 3B: Case Studies from Around the World
2	3	3	3	3	3	1	5	3

Numbers in brackets () refer to appendices

Addresses primarily the **TRAINING** phase of the Church Planting Cycle

MANUAL FOUR Overview

SCP Vision (VI)	The Church (CH)	Spiritual Character (SC)	Prayer (PY)	Leadership (LD)	Cell Groups (CG)	Disciple Making (DI)	Stewardship (ST)	The Family (FA)
Lesson 10 (10A,10B): Strategy Components for a Church Planting Movement <i>10A: Faith and Obedience Vs Fear and Unbelief</i> <i>10B: Things that Promote Natural Growth</i> Lesson 11: Signs of a Movement Lesson 12: Shepherding within a Movement	Lesson 12: Dynamics of the Emerging Church Lesson 13: Characteristics of Growing Churches Lesson 14: Church Government And Church Offices	Lesson 11: Love as the Foundation for Ministry Lesson 12: Understanding the Father's Heart Lesson 13: Grace is for the Humble	Lesson 8,9: Concert of Prayer: Praying Biblically	Lesson 6 (6A): Servant Leadership <i>6A: The Leaders Checklist</i> Lesson 7: Leadership Dynamics Lesson 8: Styles of Interaction Lesson 9: Leadership Needs Lesson 10 (10A): Training New Leaders <i>10A: Qualities to Encourage in a New Leader</i>	Lesson 10: Discussion of Cell Group Questions and Problems Lesson 11: Cell Group Multiplication	Lesson 6: Disciple Making Workshop	Lesson 1: Introduction to Stewardship Lesson 2: Financial Stewardship Lesson 3: Time Management Lesson 4: Strategic Planning Process Lesson 5: Strategic Planning Process Workshop	Lesson 1: Biblical Roles in the Family Lesson 2: Parenting
3	3	3	2	5	2	1	5	2

Numbers in brackets () refer to appendices

Addresses primarily the **MULTIPLICATION & MOVEMENT** phases of the Church Planting Cycle

MANUAL FIVE Overview

SCP Vision (VI)	The Church (CH)	Spiritual Character (SC)	Prayer (PY)	Leadership (LD)	Cell Groups (CG)	Preaching (PR)	The Family (FA)
Lesson 13: Vision and Telescoping Lesson 14: Mobilization Lesson 15: Next Steps Lesson 16: Training As Part Of A Church Planting Movement Lesson 17: Mobilizing Leaders Through National Initiatives	Lesson 15: Church Discipline Lesson 16: Corporate Worship In The Local Church Lesson 17: How To Lead Corporate Worship Lesson 18: The Local Church and the Bigger Body of Christ Lesson 19: The Historical Impact of the Church in _____ (History of the Church in country context)	Lesson 14: Reconciliation Ministry Lesson 15: Moral Integrity of Church Planters	Lesson 10: Facilitating Prayer for a Church Planting Movement Lesson 11, 12: Concert of Prayer: Thanking God for His Faithfulness	Lesson 11: Releasing Leaders Lesson 12: Movement Leadership 12A: <i>Movement Leaders</i>	Lesson 12: Cells That Saturate Through Local Churches Lesson 13 (13A): Supervising Cells 13A: <i>Final Step</i>	Lesson 1: Biblical Preaching I: Understanding the Message Lesson 2: Biblical Preaching II: Understanding the Audience Lesson 3: Biblical Preaching III: Understanding Yourself	Lesson 3: Ministry to the Family
5	5	2	3	2	2	3	1

Numbers in brackets () refer to appendices

TOTAL CURRICULUM HOURS: 127

SCP VISION

SCP VISION

8

LESSON

The First Advance

THE CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT IN ACTS

☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help the trainee understand the biblical precedent for church planting movements by looking at the expansion of the Church as recorded in Acts.

☛ Main Points

- The spread of the first-century Church was rapid and powerful.
- Certain events and the application of particular ministry principles contributed to the successful spread of the Church.

☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Know principles from the great advance of the Gospel in the New Testament that moved church planting teams toward a church planting movement.
- Participate in a church planting movement of growing churches which multiply by planting other growing and reproductive churches.
- Be able to set strategy for evangelizing a region through church planting.

☛ Suggestions to Trainers

Have a map of the Mediterranean world ready to show the region covered by Paul's ministry.

INTRODUCTION

In the early days immediately following the ascension of Jesus, the gospel had had no impact on the world outside of Judea, Samaria and Galilee. At first, Christianity appeared small and powerless in comparison to the political powers of the day. Yet it rolled like an avalanche across the Roman empire so that within one generation worshipping communities were established everywhere from Jerusalem to Rome and beyond. Modern historians marvel, wondering how Christianity could have spread so widely in such a short time (Berkhof, p. 21). Was this just a haphazard expansion? Did the first missionaries blindly wander the world to spread the gospel? Not exactly. A careful study of Acts reveals that the expansion of the church resulted from Spirit-guided plans based on ministry principles that we can still use today.

During this lesson we will study the Scriptures, the best text book on church planting anywhere. We will look for the factors that contributed to the rapid expansion of the church believing that it is possible to extract ministry principles for advancing and saturating any region with the gospel.

A careful study of Acts reveals that the expansion of the church resulted from ministry principles that we can still use today.

I. THE BIRTH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The Day of Pentecost, when the New Testament church was born, played a major role in the rapid expansion of Christianity. Pentecost took place during a time of a major celebration when thousands of Jews and proselytes came to Jerusalem from all over the world. Luke records people from 13 different regions including Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Cyrene, Rome, Crete and Rome. Many of the Pentecostal pilgrims took their new faith back to their homelands but only after receiving instruction and experiencing church life that took

place after the Pentecost celebration (Ac 2:42-47). This initial training could explain how the church in Rome was well established before any of the apostles arrived there.

II. PERSECUTION

In Acts 8 a great persecution broke out that caused the church to scatter (Ac 8:1; 11:19-21). This also influenced the spread of the Gospel. As the believers scattered they spread the gospel mostly to fellow Jews. At Antioch in Syria, however, many Greeks were targeted and won to Christ resulting in the establishment of the first church made up largely of Gentiles recorded in Scripture. This was considered so unusual that the leaders in the Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas to investigate the situation (Ac 11:22-24).

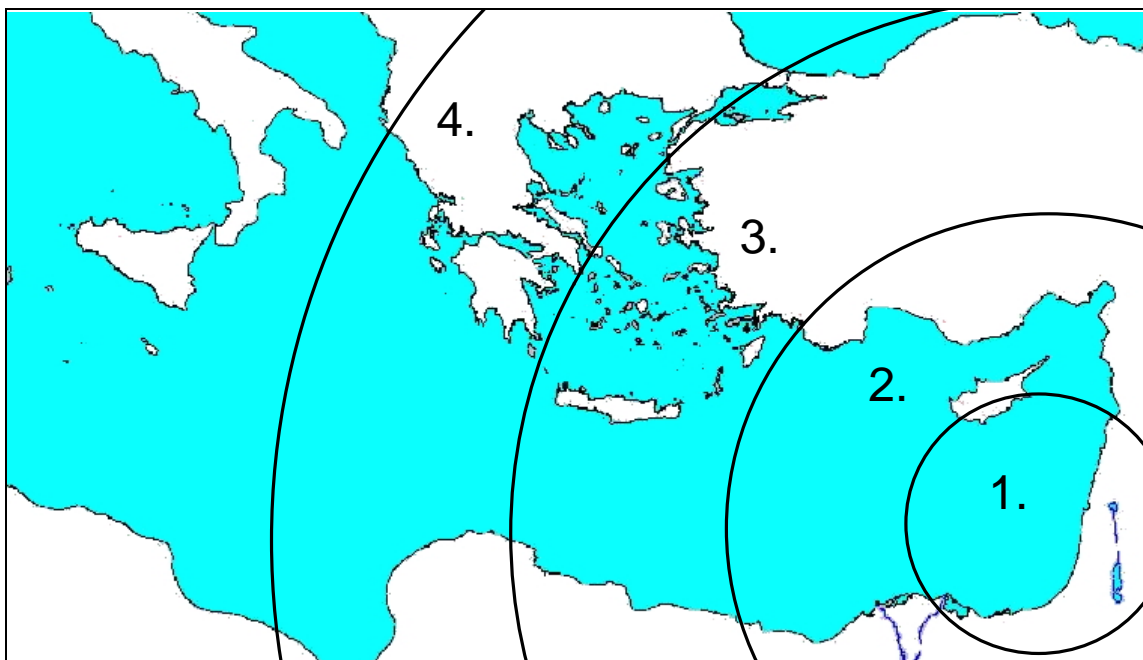
Barnabas was so impressed with the Gentile believers at Antioch that he spent at least a year ministering there. He even recruited Paul all the way from Tarsus to join him (Ac 11:25-26). With others from still other regions they made up a dynamic leadership team (Act 13:1). It was here in Antioch that the disciples were first called "Christians" (Ac 11:26).

III. PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

"So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ"
St. Paul (Ro. 15:19).

Paul was many things: an apostle, a theologian and a teacher. But in all these things his role as a church planting missionary was clear. Others have received more converts than Paul, some have preached to larger audiences, but probably no one has been so successful in planting churches (Allen 1962:3). By examining Paul's missionary journeys we can learn the key to Paul's success.

Figure 8.1 The Spread of the Gospel



A. First Journey (Acts 13-14)—Expanding into Cyprus and Galatia

Paul and Barnabas were sent off as missionaries first to the Island of Cyprus, Barnabas' homeland. They started by preaching in the synagogue in Salamis the largest city on the island. Later they went to the city of Paphos the administrative capital of the island. The conversion of Sergious Paulus (the proconsul) would have given them favor in the region (Ac 13:1-12).

Following the ministry on Cyprus they headed for Galatia in modern day Turkey. In Pisidian Antioch, an administrative capital of southern Galatia, Paul preached in a synagogue and saw many Gentile converts. Being the strategic city that Antioch in Pisidia was, the impact of Paul and Barnabas' ministry was not limited to the city as *"The word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region"* (Ac 13:49). In spite of this success the persecution incited by the Jews was so severe that Paul and Barnabas were forced to leave (Ac 13:14-52).

Paul and Barnabas traveled next to Iconium, an important commercial center also in Galatia. Many responded to their preaching in the synagogue, but they soon encountered a plot from both Gentiles and Jews (Ac 14:1-7). Having been driven away, they fled to Lystra, a military city with strong Roman elements. It appears that Paul passed by indigenous cities in the province like Misthia and Vasada (Allen 1962:13). As a Roman citizen, Paul felt more comfortable in the cities with a strong Roman presence. After the healing of the lame man in Lystra, the people proposed to worship Paul and Barnabas, confusing them with Zeus and Hermes. The Jews stirred up opposition and Paul was stoned. Undaunted, Paul and Barnabas escaped to Derbe (Ac 14:8-20).

In Derbe they preached the gospel and taught many. From Derbe, Paul could have easily gone back to Antioch via his home town, Tarsus. But he considered it more important to encourage the new believers and appoint leaders in the four churches he had planted in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in spite of the danger he could again face (Ac 14:20-23).

B. Second Journey (15:36-18:22)—*Expanding to Macedonia and Achaia*

As a result of a disagreement concerning John Mark's role on the team, Paul and Barnabas began to minister separately. Barnabas and John Mark returned to Cyprus. Silas was chosen to accompany Paul on his second missionary journey. They set out with the goal to "strengthen the churches" (Ac 15:36-41).

The new team returned to Derbe, and Lystra and most likely other Galatian cities (16:1-6). While in Lystra, Paul recruited Timothy to join them in the ministry. Paul wanted to go to Asia but the Spirit led him away. While in Troas Paul saw a vision of the Macedonian man (Ac 16:7-11). Luke joins them so the team has grown to include four (Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke). And together they moved on to Philippi. Philippi was an important city on the "Egnatian Way," the Roman highway connecting Macedonia with Asia (16:12-40). In Philippi, Lydia is saved and her home becomes the center of operations. Silas and Paul were beaten and jailed after the delivery of a slave girl from demons resulted in official complaints by the slave owners. The jailer and his 'household' are saved (Ac 16:16-40).

Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia Paul, Silas and Timothy arrive in Thessalonica, the district capital and chief port of Macedonia. Once again, they begin in a synagogue where Paul preached for three Sabbath days. There is a good response from both Jews and God fearing Gentiles. But jealousy on the part of some Jewish leaders leads to persecution (17:1-9). So Paul moves on to Berea where they are eager to hear. When the Thessalonian persecutors follow the missionaries to Berea, Paul is forced to escape leaving Timothy and Silas behind in Berea (17:1-15).

Paul waited for Timothy and Silas to catch up to him in the city of Athens the cultural and intellectual center of the world. While there he preached an excellent sermon in which he established common ground with his audience and then proclaimed the distinctives of the faith. A few were saved (17:15-34).

After this Paul settled in Corinth, the capital of Achaia, an important transportation and communication hub for the region (Ac 18:1-16). Paul is joined by Aquilla and Priscilla, fellow tentmakers from Rome. Now the team includes Paul, Silas, Timothy, Aquilla and Priscilla. Like so many other places, Paul's ministry in Corinth had a regional impact in the province of Achaia (2 Co. 1:1).

After 18 months Paul sailed to Antioch in Syria leaving behind Silas and Timothy to carry on the work in Corinth. On the way Paul stopped in Ephesus, a sea port in modern western Turkey. Paul was well received in the synagogue and the Jews invite him to stay. Having earlier been forbidden

by the Spirit to preach in Asia, He promises to return "if it is God's will." Paul leaves Aquilla and Priscilla there to carry on the work there (Ac 18:19-21).

C. Third Journey (Acts 18:23-21:15)—*Expanding into the province of Asia*

Paul began his third missionary journey by visiting the churches he planted in Galatia for the fourth recorded time (Ac 18:23). He then made his way through the interior to Ephesus (Ac 19:1). Ephesus was a seaport on a major caravan route with easy access to the Roman province of Asia, for which Paul had had a burden for a long time. Just 150 km to the east up the Lycus valley lay the cities of Laodicea, Colossae and Hierapolis. Ephesus was a stronghold for sorcery and idolatry. At that time it was one of three main cities of the eastern Mediterranean world (the other two important cities are Alexandria and Antioch in Syria). This was indeed a strategic place in which to minister.

As was his pattern, Paul preached in the synagogue and was rejected after three months. This rejection resulted in what was perhaps the climax of his church planting ministry, the great advance of the gospel in the province of Asia: *"...He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord"* (Ac 19:9-10).

How is it that everyone in the province of Asia heard the "word of the Lord"? Other passages in the New Testament reveal that Churches sprung up in the cities of Colosse (Col 1:2), Laodicea (Col 4:16), Hierapolis (Col 4:13), Smyrna (Rev 2:8), Pergamum (Rev 2:12), Thyratira (Rev 2:18), Sardis (Rev 3:1), Philadelphia (Rev 3:7), and elsewhere (probably Magnesia, Troas, Militus, etc.). These churches in the province of Asia give evidence to a church planting movement and substantiate Paul's statement that all of Asia heard the word of the Lord. In addition, the books of Ephesians, Colossians, First and Second Timothy, Philemon, First, Second and Third John, Revelation, portions of Acts, are all about churches and church leaders in Asia that came about from the great advance of the gospel there.

After three years in Ephesus Paul decided to go back to Macedonia and Achaia to visit four the churches he had planted on his second journey in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth. He sent Timothy and Erastus ahead of him (Ac 19:21) and stayed in Ephesus a little longer. After a riot incited in Ephesus by those who depended on idolatry for their income, Paul left for Macedonia. Paul was traveling with Sopator (from Berea), Aristarchus and Secundus (from Thessalonica), Gaius (from Derbe) Timothy (from Lystra), Tychicus and Trophimus (Ac 20:3-6). Some of these were colleagues Paul had been training at the training center he had established in the hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus.

Paul encouraged the brothers in Macedonia and Achaia staying in Corinth for three months (Ac 20:1-3). On the way to Jerusalem Paul stopped in Miletus where he meets with the Ephesian elders to instruct them in their leadership (Ac 20:17-38).

IV. THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM (ACTS 15)

In the middle of the events just described, right after the first journey, an important meeting was held in Jerusalem which had a great impact on the rapid spread of the Church among the Gentiles. The events leading up to the counsel include incidents of Jewish and Gentile animosity. The first evidence of conflict occurs when Gentile widows of Jerusalem are neglected (Ac 6). Stephen, one of those was chosen to solve the problem is then stoned. Tension is seen again in the personal experience of Peter. He was asked by God to break the Law previously given and eat "unclean food." Only after this did Peter witness the conversion of the first Gentile, Cornelius (Ac 10). The third event involves the Church at Antioch which included many Gentile converts. It seemed strange to the Jews in Jerusalem that Gentiles in Antioch would be following the Jewish Messiah. Thus, they investigated it for themselves sending Barnabas to inspect (Ac 11:19-24). The first missionary journey was the last piece on the stage for the events of Acts 15. Paul and Barnabas saw and sought Gentile converts in many cities of Galatia. Soon some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem were in Antioch, the center of the Gentile Christian movement, teaching that all Christians were required to observe the Law of Moses (Ac 15:1).

This led to the conference at Jerusalem. The essential issue was whether the Gentiles needed to observe the Law of Moses. Or put another way, was the Gospel even open to the Gentiles or were they

expected to convert to Judaism first? By God's guidance, the council made its decision without much trouble. Liberty was extended to the Gentiles so that they were not expected to observe the Law of Moses. *"It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you (Gentiles) with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality"* (Ac 15:28-29).

The events in Acts 15 have great missiological and theological truth. Church planting movements take place when the Gospel, in all its fullness, is embraced by the Church. When the Gospel is hidden or replaced by traditions, laws or man-made "forms," its power to transform lives is diminished. We tend to put much emphasis on the "forms." It was natural for the first Jewish converts to expect the Gentiles to express their faith with exactly the same "forms" that they were accustomed to. But God was doing a new thing! Had the Jerusalem Council made the wrong choice, Christianity would likely have remained a small branch of Judaism instead of spreading among "all the nations" as it was intended.

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V. PRINCIPLES BEHIND STRATEGIC MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

The Scripture gives us detail on Paul's activity. We do not know as much about the other Apostles. However, tradition says that the Apostle Matthew planted churches in Mesopotamia, Thomas in India, Peter in Rome, and Mark in Egypt while Andrew took the gospel to Scythia north of the Black Sea (Shenk, p. 157 and Forster, p.40). In any event the church continued to expand steadily even after the Apostolic era. Note the following remarks:

- "Christ has planted a new race of us **Christians in every nation.**" Bardaisan, a Christian-nobleman of Edessa in northern Mesopotamia about the year AD 200.
- "But those whom you call 'third race' may well become first, since **there is no nation which has not Christians.**" Tertullian of Carthage around AD 200.
- "There are **churches now on the frontiers of the world**, and all the world shouts for joy to the God of Israel." Origen AD 240 (Foster 1972, p. 35).

How did this happen? Was it haphazard? A careful study of Acts reveals that the expansion of the church resulted from Spirit-guided plans based on ministry principles that we can still use today. Now that we have carefully studied Acts, the following are some of the principles.

A. Submission to the Leading of the Holy Spirit

Much missionary activity is not only a result of biblical strategizing or good decision making, but of direct divine guidance. The Spirit sent Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch; the Lord told Peter to go to Cornelius' home; the Holy Spirit spoke to the leaders at Antioch telling them to send Barnabas and Paul as missionaries. The Spirit guided Paul to Macedonia instead of Asia (Ac 16:6ff). Jesus appeared to Paul in Corinth telling him to stay on there. The Holy Spirit and the prophet Agabus confirmed what Jesus said to Paul at his conversion, that "he must suffer for my name" (Ac 9:16). This prophecy led him on toward Jerusalem.

We cannot fully comprehend the ways of God, but we can be sure that there were reasons for all that is described above. Perhaps God forbid Paul to work in Asia during the second journey because the time was not right and because God knew that the most strategic place to reach Asia was from Ephesus and not from Bithynia and Mysia. It is interesting to note that when Paul went to Macedonia one of the first people he meets is Lydia who is from Thyrtira a city in the province of Asia. Also note how God prepared the way for his later arrival in Ephesus by sending Priscilla, Aquila and Apollos there ahead of him.

Already involved in the work, Paul and others received guidance while "on the move." There is no biblical excuse for someone to remain inactive until apparently receiving a special call. Those involved in church planting must work from good planning and strategy but need to realize that God will intervene—even changing their plans—guiding them as they actively pursue their church planting objectives.

B. Moving Quickly

Paul spent an average of only a few months in most of the cities where he planted churches. For example he spent only three weeks in Thessalonica. How could Paul plant churches so quickly? Perhaps Paul understood a great principle of church planting and knew when he needed to get out of the way. He knew that there was something about his presence as a great teacher that prevented the development of others. The little time Paul spent in each place forced others to realize that they could not depend upon him for everything. They had to find their own resources. Paul trained leaders and trusted the Holy Spirit to guide the new believers. As Roland Allen explains:

"It is the training of the first converts which sets the type for the future. If the first converts are taught to depend upon the missionary, if all work, evangelistic, educational, social is concentrated in his hands, the infant community learns to rest passively upon the man from whom they received their first insight into the gospel" (Allen 1962:81, 93).

Paul understood as well that he was called to be an Apostle. For Paul this meant being a "pioneer", a "foundation layer" (Ro 15:20; 1Co 3:6-8). Paul trusted others who were gifted as pastors to lead the churches he founded.

C. Facilitating Others in Ministry

As we said Paul moved quickly, but there are notable exceptions to this practice. Paul spent 18 months in Corinth and three years in Ephesus. But in these cases, when Paul was not physically on the move, he worked in such a way that the Gospel was on the move.

Studying Paul's journeys reveals a gradual shift in emphasis during his ministry. During his first journey, he planted at least four churches and made a follow-up visit to each. His emphasis was on frontier evangelism and direct church planting. But during his last journey he does not seem to have the same objective. Instead of moving rapidly, he spent most of this journey in Ephesus. Ephesus was central enough so that from it he could easily get in touch with all the churches he had planted. It appears that he planted only one church (Ephesus) during this journey but he invested his travel time in visiting at least nine cities where he had planted churches before. His focus had changed from frontier/evangelism to discipleship/training. During this journey Paul had many disciples traveling with him (Ac 20:1-2). We also read about his teaching ministry from the Hall of Tyrannus which resulted in the evangelization of the province of Asia (Ac 19:9-10).

D. Preaching to Responsive People

All the cities Paul visited seemed to have a sizable Jewish community with the exception of Philippi. Paul normally entered synagogues to preach his message. This is partly because he was Jewish himself, partly because the Messiah's coming has unique significance for Jewish people (Ro. 1:16), and partly because the people in the synagogues would be "pre-evangelized." They could understand and accept the Gospel, which had Jewish roots, with the least amount of cultural disruption.

While Paul started in the synagogue as an apostle to the Gentiles, his real target was the God-fearing Gentiles. God-fearers were Gentiles who believed in monotheism and would have converted to Judaism had it not been for the strict legal requirements, especially of circumcision. God-fearers attended the synagogue meetings and would have studied the Old Testament Scriptures. When the Gospel was proclaimed by a Pharisee, Paul, in a synagogue, and circumcision was not required, many God-fearers would feel that this was a logical faith for them. Paul's message had the monotheism that attracted them to the synagogue without the legalism that kept them from converting to Judaism.

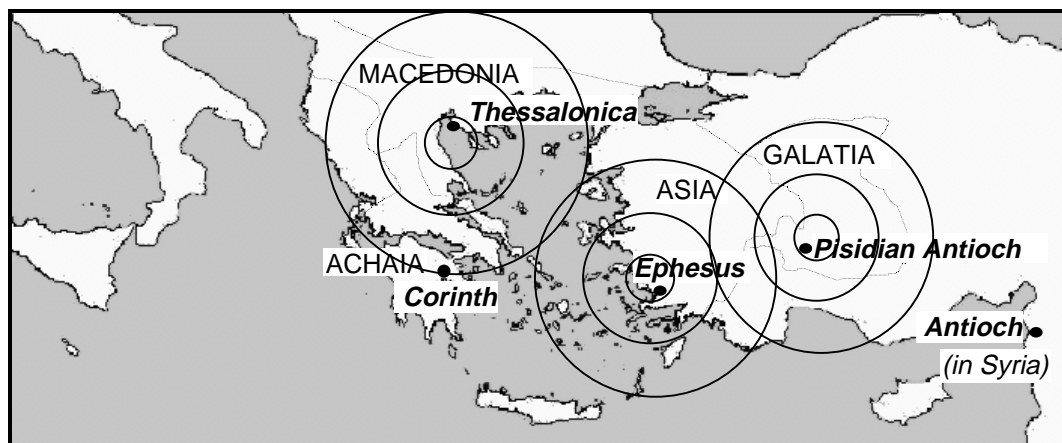
E. Working from a strategic base for a regional movement

Paul attempted to evangelize whole regions, but not by preaching in every part. Rather, he established strategically located churches from which the Gospel would spread and permeate the whole region. (See Figure 8.2.).

Nearly all the centers in which Paul ministered were great centers of trade. They were usually on the most important highways of the day. In fact even today, as a theologian who traveled the region observed, all of the cities Paul worked in can be reached by train or by boat or by both. This testifies to the importance of these locations. Paul, by divine guidance, made the highway of commerce the vehicle for spreading the gospel from Jerusalem all the way to the capital city of Rome (Berkhof, p. 40).

By establishing strategically located churches the Gospel spread and permeated the whole region.

Figure 8.2 Regional Church Planting movements



1. *Galatia from Pisidian Antioch*

In strategically selecting Pisidian Antioch "The word of the Lord spread throughout the whole region (Galatia)" (Ac 13:49).

2. *Macedonia, Achaia, and everywhere from Thessalonica*

The Great Commission as recorded in Acts 1:8 was illustrated by the church in Thessalonica to whom Paul says, "The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia your faith in God has become known everywhere" (1Th 1:8)

3. *The province of Asia from Ephesus*

As a result of Paul's teaching ministry in Ephesus "all the Jews and Greeks in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Ac 19:10).

CONCLUSION

Was the expansion of the church given to chance? The expansion of the church resulted from Spirit guided plans based on ministry principles that we can still use today. In summary, Paul's plan was to evangelize responsive people in strategic centers, facilitating regional church planting movements (especially in Galatia, Macedonia, and Asia) under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What church planters need above everything else is to get back to the missionary methods of the early church.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- How was the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 a great day for the spread of the Gospel?
- Why was the counsel in Jerusalem so important?

- How did persecution affect the spread of the gospel? Has persecution resulted in the expansion of the Church in recent generations?
- Based on your study of the New Testament, how many churches did Paul plant directly?
- Describe the shift in emphasis between the first and third journeys of Paul.
- How did research affect the growth of the church in the Book of Acts?

SOURCES

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SCP VISION

9

LESSON

Elements Of Church Planting Movements

☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to present elements that promote a church planting movement. Church planters should see themselves as part of a church planting movement that is bigger than the concept of one congregation at a time.

☛ Main Points

- Church planting movements must be founded on the bedrock of God's Word.
- New ways of thinking about the Vision, the Church, and Leadership are the foundation for a church planting movement.
- The building blocks of prayer, research, mobilization, training, evangelism and vision-casting contribute to the success of church planting movements.
- God is the Architect of church planting movements.

☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- By faith be able to set strategy for evangelizing a region through church planting.
- Participate in a church planting movement of growing churches which multiply by planting other growing and reproductive churches.

INTRODUCTION

The goal of an SCP movement is a witnessing fellowship of believers within geographic and cultural reach of every person so that every person will be able to hear the Gospel presented in a culturally relevant way on various occasions and see the life of Christ lived out in community.

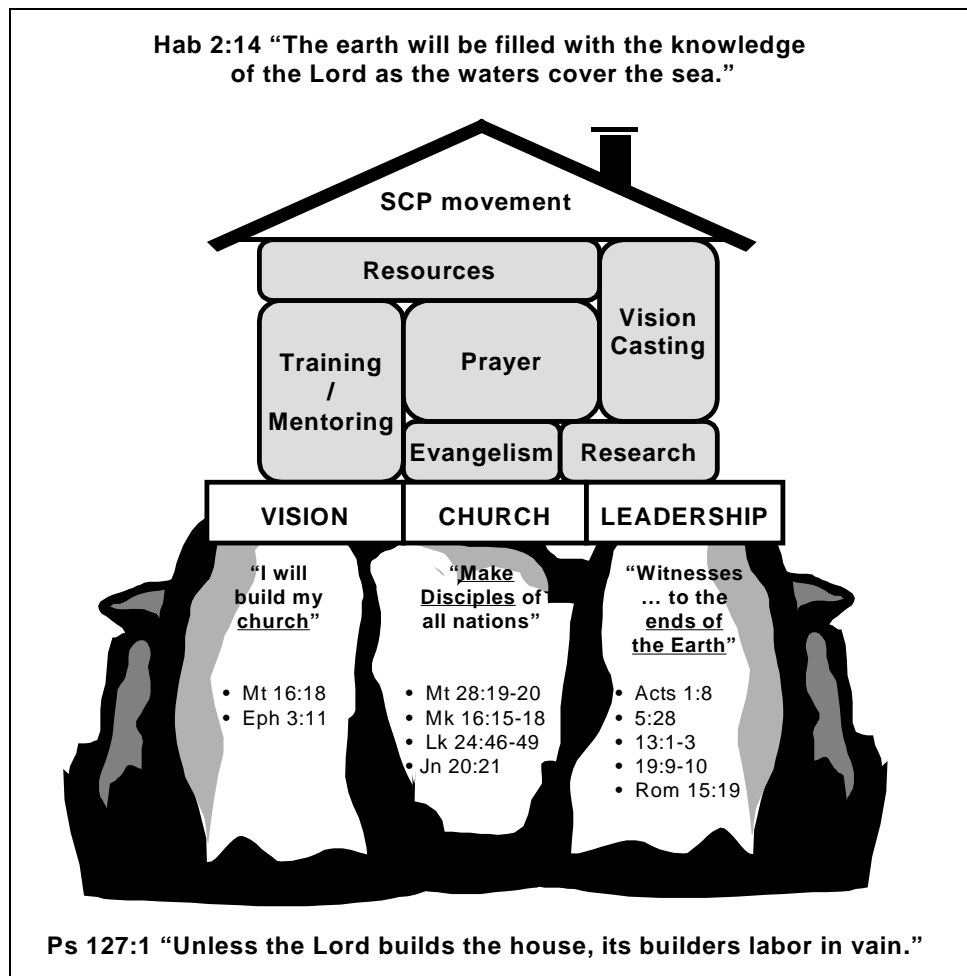
As you read this lesson, Saturation Church Planting movements are growing in dozens of nations around the world. Each movement has its unique aspects, depending on its culture; but at the core they all have a goal like the one stated above. They also all have in some way, shape or form, the elements described below.

If we think of Saturation Church Planting movements using a metaphor of a house (see Figure 9.1), **the bedrock is the Word of God**. Built onto that bedrock are three foundational paradigms that undergird successful church planting movements. On this foundation are the building blocks of prayer, research, evangelism, training/mentoring, resources and vision casting.

I. FOUNDATIONAL PARADIGMS FOR A SATURATION CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT

The first paradigm is a VISION that is not limited to starting a few churches but one that sees the nation filled with multiplying churches fulfilling the Great Commission. The second paradigm is the CHURCH which consists of all of God's people, gifted and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, working together to fulfill the Great Commission. The third paradigm is LEADERSHIP that trains and releases God's people to do the work of the ministry. Because these are important, a separate track in this Church Planting Curriculum is devoted to each one.

9.1 Components of a Saturation Church Planting Movement



II. BUILDING BLOCKS OF A SATURATION CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENT

A. Prayer: Declaring Dependence on God

Part of a great church planting movement is the building block of prayer, both spontaneous and organized. Prayer is necessary in both the church planting task and in keeping the church planting movement continuing in the proper direction.

1. *Intercessory Prayer*

Prayer is needed on behalf of missionaries, church planters and pastors. These people are in critical spiritual positions and need the prayers of God's people. Paul states the importance of praying for political and other leaders as a priority in the prayer life of believers (1Ti 2:1-3). This dedication to prayer for people in authority is so that there may be positive conditions for the spread of the gospel.

2. *Prayer for Unity*

Jesus prayed that his followers would be one (John 17:22-23). Paul encourages believers to pray in a spirit of unity with one another (1Ti 2:8). Perhaps nothing encourages unity like cooperate prayer. Prayer is often used by God to bring believers together, when they might be divided over other issues.

3. *Spiritual Warfare Prayer*

The expansion of the church is spiritual warfare. Satan does not want a church planting movement in your region and will mobilize demons against it. Powerful spiritual warfare against Satan, demonic rulers, authorities, powers of the dark world, and spiritual forces of evil requires solid Christian living and prayer (Eph 6:10-20).

B. Research: Seeing the Big Picture

Research enables God's people to see how God is working by making clear the big picture of what God wants to do in their nation or people group. Research also provides the information that helps Christian workers make correct decisions about ministry efforts and strategy. More specifically, it helps agencies and churches know where churches need to be planted, and which methods of evangelism are successful and which are unsuccessful among various people groups.

Church planting movements often include research because people involved want to know where and how God is working. Sometimes research is one of the first things that takes place and results in motivating others, unleashing a movement.

There are two specific places where research is done:

1. *Specific Church Plant*

By revealing the worldview and felt needs of people living in the target area, research can help determine which evangelism and church planting strategies should be used. Research will also reveal available church planting resources which may be mobilized to help with the church planting effort.

2. *Region - Nation/Province/County/City*

Researching a whole nation or specific region can give a general picture of the status of Christianity within it. This information can then challenge church leaders with the need to mobilize churches for evangelism filling that region with churches.

What research needs to be done in your region?

C. Mobilizing Resources

One of the most notable aspects of mobilization includes resources. As the Church grew in the New Testament, believers mobilized resources needed for its growth. The people of the Jerusalem Church gave sacrificially to assist others in need (Ac 4:32-37). Christians were exhorted to support other believers who had no other tangible means of support, such as godly widows (1Ti 5:9-16). The wealthy were encouraged to give more, to help those with less (1Ti 6:18-19).

At the heart of the issue of resources is the fundamental truth that God's own people provide the primary means for the work of the Gospel. The fulfillment of the Great Commission in a nation should be done primarily with the mobilized resources of the believers of that country. Their own tithes and offerings should be used to support their work. Nik Nedelchev is a national leader from Bulgaria. Nik has much experience in the mobilization of resources for the ministry of church planting. Nik writes:

"If the churches in Bulgaria are to continue to grow and multiply, the resources, both human and financial, must come primarily from Bulgaria... We welcome investment in Bulgaria by God's people from other countries. However, that investment should be made in the form of strategic partnerships with Bulgarian ministries. Those partnerships should have clear expectations and a specific time frame, avoiding the creation of long-term dependence."

D. Training/Mentoring: Preparing others in ministry

Training evangelists, cell group leaders, church planters, and pastors in a multiplication pattern promotes church planting movements. Each of the above workers needs a different kind of training, thus a variety of training approaches needs to be available to support a church planting movement.

Training evangelists, cell group leaders, church planters, and pastors in a multiplication pattern promotes church planting movements.

Acts 20, when Paul greeted the Ephesian elders, provides some of the best advice for training church leaders anywhere. Acts 20:20, 31, and 35 show that Paul “worked hard,” “night and day,” and “publicly and from house to house.” Church planting and training church planters takes hard work. Acts 20:20 and 27 show that he taught them constantly. He taught what was “helpful” for their task. Acts 20:33-34 shows that he lived in integrity. There were no questions about Paul’s personal motives. No one could raise any doubts about his financial dealings. Acts 20:35 shows that Paul taught and modeled giving and stewardship. Acts 20:31 and 36 show that Paul poured his emotions into his relationships with these leaders. They shed tears together. Ministry comes from relationships. The best training includes one-on-one mentoring and not just formal education.

The following principles relate to training leaders in the context of church planting movements.

1. Training Should Focus on Leadership

The training which leaders receive should enable them to equip others for a movement that multiplies churches and spreads the Gospel throughout a region. Notice in Acts 20:15-38 that Paul reminds the leaders of Ephesus how he worked with them while training them for leadership. From Ephesus, Paul equipped believers to lead a spiritual movement that covered the whole region.

The book of Acts shows Paul describing how he trained leaders and telling Timothy how to choose them. First Timothy 3:1ff shows the things necessary for someone to be a leader. For example, character takes priority over charisma (1Ti 3:2-10). Paul’s teaching relationship with Timothy was that of a father and son (2Ti 2:1).

2. Training Should be Reproducible

Church planting movements require training that can multiply (i.e. can be taught again to others). Paul’s training went on for four generations. It began with Paul passing on the teaching from his heart (2Ti 2:2). Timothy then taught reliable men who were “able to teach others also.” The teaching and training we pass on as we help people grow in Christ and prepare new leaders ought to be done so that they can reproduce it.

This four-generation model is a strategic way to plan training. This requires simplicity so that others can pass it on without expensive instruments, elite knowledge, or formal education. Reproducible training can be challenging because the material we teach needs to be not only simple but deep and of high quality so that it will result in strong churches that impact people’s lives and communities.

Training must include both words and example. When we teach and train, is what we teach able to be reproduced at four levels? Is it simple enough? Is it deep enough? Can it be passed on by example as well as words?

3. Training Should be Accessible

It is the job of local churches to train workers to complete the Great Commission. When people think of training programs, they commonly think of seminaries and Bible colleges or some other residential program. This is regrettable, since some of the most effective training programs are non-residential and church-based. Assuming that church workers need to go away to a school to be trained can hinder a church planting movement. When, on the other hand, local churches take seriously their responsibility to train workers, then training is available to more people.

4. *Training Should Grow From a Strategic Base*

On Paul's third missionary journey he spent most of his time in Ephesus (Ac 19:9-10). He chose the strategy of working from a strategic base to train leaders who could reach the whole region (See also Ac 20:18ff.). From Paul's training sessions, these leaders went out and reached the province of Asia with the word of the Lord. The Churches listed in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 are all in this region and may have been planted by people who learned from Paul during his time in Ephesus. In writing to the believers at Colossae (a city in the province of Asia), Paul even mentions the churches "who have not met me personally" (Col 2:1).

Have you found a strategic base for training church planters that will help your movement spread out throughout your region in the most effective manner?

E. **Evangelism: The fields are white**

God is at work in the world to bring people to Himself. He has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2Co 5:18). It is the responsibility of the Church to spread the Gospel to its community and beyond. For Saturation Church Planting movements to take place, the Gospel must be proclaimed everywhere.

Jesus showed His disciples that they did not "see" people as God saw them—already prepared (white) for a harvest (Mt 9:35-38). People really do want a relationship with God. Lost people live with a God-shaped vacuum in their souls, and are searching for something to fill this void. Evangelistic fruit is minimal not so much because people are not searching for God, but because they reject the forms and the expressions of faith that the traditional church uses. New forms and new expressions of timeless truths are needed to reach new generations.

Evangelism is the job not of specialists, but of every believer who has experienced God's love. For Saturation Church Planting to occur, as many believers as possible must be trained, mobilized, and challenged to share their faith in their home, work place, place of rest or recreation—everywhere.

F. **Vision Casting**

Church planting movements begin with vision. Vision brings clarification to the task, inspires cooperation among groups of believers, and motivates God's people to attempt greater things for Him. The vision, or 'Z,' is to see churches established everywhere so that every man women and child has a chance to hear and accept the Gospel.

Some regions lack movements because the Body of Christ lacks a vision for it. How can people strive toward that which they do not conceptualize? By contrast, in parts of the world where there are church planting movements, there is great vision.

Vision is stirred up through prayer, research and by asking "what does God want?" This is a very powerful question. Vision can be asked one on one, in groups or in special vision-casting seminars. Those who thoughtfully consider it come to realize that God wants all people to have a chance to hear the Gospel in their own language, and furthermore that God wants His Church to grow in such way that everyone has a chance to become a disciple of Jesus. This is the SCP vision which must be passed along to others in various vision-casting opportunities.

The goal is a witnessing fellowship of believers within reach of every person so that every one will be able to hear the Gospel presented and see the life of Christ lived out in community.

III. **THE RESULT: CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS**

The roof, or pinnacle of our building, is a church planting movement. The goal is a witnessing fellowship of believers within geographic and cultural reach of every person so that everyone will be able to hear the Gospel presented in a culturally relevant way on various occasions and see the life of Christ lived out in community. To see the Great Commission accomplished, it is necessary to have reproducible models at home and cross-culturally.

A. Reproducible Church Planting

Planting churches that reproduce themselves is the best way to evangelize a region. Planting churches in an addition model will not result in a movement. One plus one plus one equals three. One times two times two equals four.

Hardly different at first, but comparing these patterns over the long haul makes a BIG difference. A multiplication model is the model Saturation Church Planting is committed to. This means that when a new church is planted, it should have a vision to reproduce even from its inception.

Saturation Church Planters look for the infinitely reproducible model. They want to plant a church that can easily be reproduced so that a movement can result. Saturation Church Planters are not finished once they have planted a church—they expect that church to reproduce and only then have they come close to accomplishing God's purpose.

B. Cross-Cultural Church Planting

As churches multiply they normally reproduce 'after their own kind.' This means at some point pioneer and cross-cultural church planting may be necessary to reach new people groups in the region.

The revival in Asia reached across cultural barriers to both "Jew and Greek" (Ac 19:10). Ephesians 3:6 states that the Gospel's crossing cultures is the mystery that is fulfilled by the Church. The people of God are not a single ethnic group but come from the nations of the world (Rev 7:9-10). Cross-cultural church planting is one of the activities of the Church which fulfills this mystery.

CONCLUSION: "THE LORD BUILDS THE HOUSE"

God is the Architect of church planting movements. Great spiritual movements depend on Him and His perfect timing. No one can force God to move. God is sovereign and He moves as He wills. In the book of Acts, we see this demonstrated in the life of Paul. Paul had a desire to reach Asia with the Gospel and was planning to go there until the Holy Spirit intervened. As he was going forward, God gave him a new direction. Later, in Acts 19, when God did open the door for Paul to work in the province of Asia, He demonstrated His power in unique and amazing ways (Acts 19:1-12). All of Asia heard the word of the Lord! Some of the signs of God's power (like healing through handkerchiefs) never happened in any other Scriptural accounts. It was obvious to the people in Asia that God was working with them in an unusual manner. The point is simply that in Ephesus at that time, God in His sovereignty chose to work in a unique way.

Creating a Saturation Church Planting movement is impossible if it is not God's timing. How can we know where and when He is working or desires to work?

To know God's will we must first know God. To know Him we must develop a relationship with Him in prayer. As we come together in prayer and perhaps fasting, He will show us His will. Perhaps the reason He is not working is because there is sin that has not been dealt with. Perhaps He will reveal that now is a time for seed sowing, or for watering with prayer the seed that has been sown. Perhaps He will show us a different approach that will be the key to unlocking the hearts of people. There may be many reasons why God is not moving in an area, but if God is placing a burden on your heart, continue to seek His face in prayer.

To know God's will we must first know God.
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QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What is your vision?
- Is a prayer movement part of your church planting plan?
- How do we work with the existing Body of Christ before church planting?
- Do you have a regional plan to plant churches in surrounding cities?
- Where is God especially working in your region?
- What elements of a church planting movement are present in your region?

THE CHURCH

THE CHURCH

LESSON 9,10

The Church and Spiritual Gifts

GOD'S EMPOWERMENT FOR MINISTRY

Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help church planting teams identify each other's spiritual gifts so that all may serve the Lord in the manner He gifted them.

Main Points

- Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to empower the body of Christ.
- Spiritual gifts are not the same as natural or learned talents and abilities.
- Spiritual gifts can be discovered through service and then developed.

Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should

- Know how to identify his own and help others identify their own spiritual gifts.
- Be ready to make any changes necessary to work with others based on spiritual gifts.
- Participate in a church planting team effort where each member can be most effective according to the spiritual gift(s) God has given each one.

Suggestions to Trainers

Note that this is a two-hour lesson. If a pause is necessary, it is possible to break between point III, "Abilities...Given by the Holy Spirit...", and point IV, "Observations from the list of Spiritual Gifts."

I. WHY DO WE NEED SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

The church is a spiritual entity. We believe that in the supernatural kingdom of God, angels and demons exist. We also believe that man himself did not simply evolve, but was created with both physical and spiritual attributes. We are more than flesh, blood and chemicals. We desire to live a supernatural life, living in the Spirit rather than in the flesh. Paul stated:

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds (2Co 10:3-4).

The church must use this divine power. Essentially, there are two types available to us—*prayer* and *spiritual gifts*. Both access God's power on behalf of His people and His work. Both are necessary to accomplish ministry that is too difficult for human effort. The Lord never intended that we minister in our own strength. He intends to help us. Jesus instructed the disciples *not* to leave Jerusalem or begin their ministry until they had received power from the Holy Spirit (Ac 1:4-5).

The Lord has provided various kinds of gifts to His Body to enable it to work properly. One category of gifts includes types of **leaders** "to prepare God's people for works of service" (Eph 4:12). Another category of gifts involves special **abilities** for service which are given in varying combinations to each believer. What we know about each of these categories we learn from Scripture.

II. LEADERS: GIVEN BY JESUS TO EQUIP THE BODY

This first category of gifts includes the **leaders** described in Ephesians 4:11-16. These are not positions or offices to which people are elected. These are simply people given by God to the Body of Christ to

equip each individual to do his or her part. These people are not specialists to do the work for us; their effectiveness is measured by our effectiveness as we do the work of the ministry.

The text lists apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers. Those with the apostolic role are those that are sent out to be foundational in beginning new ministry. Those with the prophetic role declare God's Word to the Body, while evangelists declare His Word to the lost. Pastor/teachers watch over and teach God's people. To understand a leader's role in the Body, consider the evangelist: he cannot just do evangelism; he must also equip other Christians to do evangelism.

III. ABILITIES: GIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO EMPOWER THE BODY

A. Definition

Another category of gifts is **abilities** given to believers by the Holy Spirit. Natural or learned abilities and talents should be used in God's service. However, the Spirit also gives believers abilities to contribute in a unique way to the building up of the Body of Christ. These are called **spiritual gifts**. Certain facts which stand out about these gifts are:

- Every believer has at least one (1Co 12:7; 1Pe 4:10).
- They are given at the Spirit's desire rather than our own desires (1Co 12:11).
- They are for the common good rather than individual benefit (1Co 12:7,12-27 Ro 12:4-5).
- The gift (or gifts) that we have is the Spirit's work (1Co 12:4). The ministries in which we use them are tied to Christ (1Co 12:5), and their effectiveness is God's work (1Co 12:6). Our responsibility is simply obedience.

B. Spiritual Gifts and the Body of Christ

God has distributed these gifts for the purpose of building up the Body.

1. *The Importance of Each Member*

The illustration of the Body in 1 Corinthians 12 shows the need for each member to fulfill his role in the Body. Just as the physical body suffers when one member is sick, the Body of Christ hurts when one member fails to use his gift. Each believer has "good works" (Eph 2:10) to accomplish. These works cannot be accomplished in our human strength. We need the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit working through us to complete them.

2. *The Function of "Gifted" Men*

God has given gifted men to the church to lead and train the believers. Each local church has individuals who are uniquely gifted in these areas. However, these are never intended to become an elite group that carries on the ministry of the church. Rather, Eph 4:11-13 makes clear that they are to prepare God's people so that those believers can carry on the work of the ministry. It is vital that each believer discover and use his gift in ministry.

3. *Ministering the Grace of God*

When we use our gifts, we are actually ministering the grace of God (1Pe 4:10-11). God's grace and power flow through us to others as we serve. God wants to minister to people, and He has chosen to do it through us—and specifically through our spiritual gifts. He has already decided how He wants to use each of us, and has given us the corresponding gift. Our job is to use it, and bear fruit for Him.

C. Determination of One's Spiritual Gift(s)

Determining what our gifts are takes time and experience. If you do not know what your gifts are, you can learn by knowing what the gifts are in general, getting involved in the ministry of the Body, and evaluating what God is doing through you by means of your spiritual gifts and natural abilities. In a sense your gifts will become obvious to you and others as you minister.

There is no test for spiritual gifts in the Bible. They do not depend on natural or learned abilities. A doctor does not necessarily have the gift of mercy, nor a teacher the gift of teaching. Such should have training and experience in those professions, but this is not the same as spiritual gifting. Their gifts might actually be evangelism, administration or some other kind. Evaluating your profession is *not* the way to discover your spiritual gift(s).

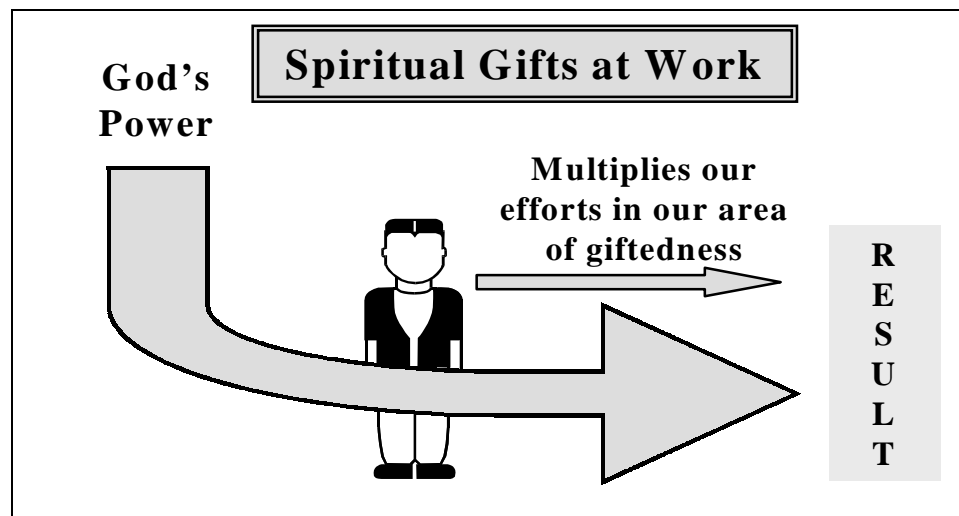
A gift is discovered by its effect when used. As we minister to others, God's grace, power and blessing flow through our gift to a degree that surpasses our human ability. The only way to discover our gift(s) is to be involved in various forms of ministry and watch to see what God uses. The process is essentially "trial and error." Since God's power will flow through us to others, it is important to listen to their counsel. We may not notice how the Lord is using us, but others will.

A gift is discovered by its effect when used.

There are many spiritual gifts listed in the New Testament (see Paragraph D below). Since each list includes different ones, it seems probable that no list is complete. There might be many other kinds of serving gifts. Also, it is clear that each believer has a gift. But it is not clear whether we each have only one. Some might have two or more. It is difficult to say. Because of this diversity, it is necessary that believers be involved in many diverse types of ministry.

Although natural or learned talents are not the same as spiritual gifts, training or talent can certainly increase the effectiveness of a gift. For instance, if a person has the gift of teaching, this means God wants to bless him in that ministry. But the gift is not a substitute for studying so that they have *something to say!* God is able to bless our *little*. He also desires to bless our *much*. Having a gift is no excuse for being lazy. This applies to any gift. Once we find out which gift(s) we have, we should do everything possible to develop them so that we increasingly become a better tool for service in the church.

Figure 9.1 God Multiplies Our Efforts



D. Description of Spiritual Gifts

The two major references on which our understanding is based are Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12-14. Knowing our natural temptation to let this subject be divisive, the Holy Spirit put the great chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13, in the middle of His teaching on gifts. An alphabetical rather than prioritized list follows. Most Bible scholars believe that these lists are not exhaustive.

E. Two Warnings

First remember, as previously stated, that our knowledge of any one or all of these gifts is from the Bible. Second, the availability of some of these gifts today is a matter of disagreement in the Body of Christ. The controversy usually centers around whether or not some gifts are available to the Church today, since the NT was written. Some believe that, with the completion of God's written

revelation, some of the gifts, especially in miraculous form, have ceased. Others believe that what the Bible teaches concerning spiritual gifts for the NT Church is still applicable for the Church today. Serious, sincere, and studied scholars line up on both sides. So what are we to do? A simple solution is to measure and pattern our obedience and experience on a simple and full application of what the Bible says.

IV. INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY OF PASSAGES ON SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. Observation

Below is a list of verses that talk about spiritual gifts. In column two write the general observations about all the gifts; in column three list the gifts. Some initial work has been done for you.

B. Interpretation

In column four write what each passage says about each gift.

Scripture	General Observations	Gifts	Interpretation
Ro 12:6-8	We have different gifts according to grace Use according to faith	Prophecy	
		Serving	
1Co 12:4-11	different...same each person has at least one gift		

Scripture	General Observations	Gifts	Interpretation
1Co 12:27-29			
Eph 4:11			

Now compare the lists. From your knowledge of Scripture, compose a working definition of each gift:

C. Application

Compile a list of the gifts you think you have. Beside each, tell how you believe that God wants you to use the gift to minister to the Body:

V. HINDRANCES TO DISCOVERING GIFTS

A. Personal reasons

- Fearing some abuse or misuse by others.
- Lacking functional understanding of the supernatural working in the physical realm. This is a worldview problem.
- Harboring unresolved personal sin problem and/or lacking faith.
- Lacking commitment to serve and minister to others.
- Attempts to imitate others in the functional use of gifts.
- Striving too hard to "get the gifts" rather than seeking the Giver of the gift.
- Adopting a "waiting for the gift before I minister" attitude, rather than obediently proceeding to serve and minister to others, trusting that the Lord will accomplish His purpose through us. In fact, we may be totally unaware of the effectual use of our spiritual gift(s) as we seek to love and serve others.

B. Organizational problems

- Doctrinal imbalance: some exclude certain ones; others over-emphasize some of the gifts.
- Over-emphasis on some gifts as a "mark of spirituality" rather than as ministry to others.
- No biblical teaching about the gifts nor a freedom to use.
- Presenting the gifts as an end in themselves, rather than as a tool of ministry.

VI. MOBILIZING THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO SPIRITUAL GIFTEDNESS

One of the keys to success in maturity and growth in a church planting effort is finding ways to train all members to discover, develop and exercise their gifts in ministry activities. There is no limit to the growth of a church which releases people to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than restricting them to the filling of a position of ministry.

The church planter is not only to "do the ministry" but rather to train new believers to do the ministry.

A. How to Help Others Discover and Use Their Gifts

The first thing we need to do to help others find their gift(s) is to encourage and to enable them to be involved in ministry. Only as they serve will we be able to see God use them effectively. It is important that we teach others about

- The need for the gifts
- The nature of the gifts
- The discovery of our gift(s)
- The responsibility to use our gift(s)

Then, in service, we need to observe the results of ministry to determine how the Lord is or is not blessing. If we see the presence of a gift, we need to encourage the believer to develop it and increase their ministry in that area (1Pe 4:10). If we do not see the presence of a gift, we need to be faithful to counsel the brother or sister about other areas of ministry to try, rather than allow them to be frustrated with lack of results.

It is also important to remember that all believers, *as part of the body of Christ*, have spiritual gift(s). The length of their Christian life is not relevant. Even new believers have a gift(s). Look at the results of the evangelistic efforts of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:28-30). She had believed less than an hour when God used her to bring a huge crowd to Jesus. New believers should be encouraged to minister and discover their gift(s).

There is one note of caution concerning new believers in ministry. They *should minister*. But they should *not* hold an *office* (1Ti 3:6). Serving others is not the same as directing others. A leadership office requires maturity and proven faithfulness. But *all* Christians are to be involved in ministering to others and in evangelizing the lost.

B. Training helpful to develop the gifts

Though the spiritual gifts are gifts of grace from God, there is still a place for training and developing their use in ministry activities. The training is at the human skill level, while the gifting is in the spiritual empowering level. Both should come together in ministry activities.

VII. SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND CHURCH PLANTING

In order to be effective in a church planting ministry, a church planter must be aware of his gift(s). As a result, he can focus on the ministry that God blesses in his life. There are many ways to plant a church. People can be drawn to the Lord through a church planter's teaching, evangelizing, compassion, or other gift. It is important that a church planter with a gift of evangelism spend his time with the lost rather than all his time preparing Bible studies. But a church planter with a gift of teaching should focus on the Bible studies. If he has the gift of mercy, he should be with the sick and the hurting.

Since no one has all the gifts, it is important that the church planter form a team with others who have gifts complementing his own. Only in this way will there be balance in the ministry. A church planter who does not have the gift of evangelism can plant a church, but he will find it very difficult unless he finds a teammate who has that gift. Whatever gifts the church planter lacks should be present in a team member. Otherwise, much of the work will depend on hard, human effort.

A team can provide complementing gifts.

God's plan is that the local church body work together with each member using his or her gift(s). However, in a new church plant, there may be only a handful of believers at the start. In this case, it is even more vital that the gifts of each believer be discovered, developed and used quickly and effectively.

Jesus has given specialized people to the Body to equip each person to do his or her part. Additionally, the Holy Spirit empowers each believer with special abilities to carry out his individual tasks, thereby making the whole Body work. Leaders are given to the Body for equipping each believer to do ministry.

ACTION PLAN

- Do the inductive study in section IV.
- Define the needs that you believe God wants your group to meet. List the ministry opportunities that the Lord has opened before this group.
- Have a time of dedication to the Lord asking Him to empower and release the gifts needed to meet the needs you have identified. Do not focus on the gifts but on the Giver of the gifts.
- Allow each person to begin moving toward meeting the needs they feel led to meet. Keep the focus and emphasis on meeting the needs in loving ministry rather than on the gift.
- Train people according to the ministry gift they feel led to use in the meeting of the needs.
- Allow others to evaluate and advise for confirmation of the gifts you have been using.

THE CHURCH

11

LESSON

Social Dynamics of the Church

HOW OUR CULTURE AFFECTS OUR CHURCH

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to explain how culture—both religious and social—has influenced the church throughout its history. It will also draw parallels between the church today in Central/Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and the early apostolic church.

☞ Main Points

- Churches will be influenced by culture but must not cross the line into sin.
- Culture can be a positive, negative, or neutral influence in the church.
- The church must adapt its forms to the changing culture in order to be relevant.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should...

- Be aware of the great influence of culture on the church in the past.
- Be convinced that church forms must change as culture and needs change.
- Evaluate his own church to see if it is adapting to win the lost or expecting the lost to change to match the church.

☞ Suggestions to Trainers

- In preparing to teach this lesson, briefly review the major points of your country's religious history. Consider preparing a short bibliography of your context.
- Consider making a transparency of Figure 11.1, or draw it on a board. Discuss whether the three cultures shown have the right to be different from each other—or should they always be the same if they are biblical.

INTRODUCTION

Culture always plays an important role in determining how we think and act. We are formed by our culture, surrounded by it, and influenced by it. This often happens without our notice. Even when we meet someone from another culture that is very different from ours, we may decide that *he or she* is unusual, and we are “normal.”

Culture surrounds and influences the church.

Culture also influences the church. Churches in every country are different. Some differences result from doctrinal beliefs, but most differences result from culture. For instance, the church buildings in Africa would be very different from ones in Russia. The climate is different, and so is the culture. Music in a South American church would be very different from music in a Korean one. These differences arise from the culture and not from doctrine.

Furthermore, no country is a homogeneous cultural group. Every country includes people from various countries and cultural backgrounds. Culture may vary greatly even among native groups within a country. Differences in economic status, educational level, and age may cause radically different worldviews. Even the cultural differences between rural and urban areas can be significant.

Some of these cultural influences on the church are positive. They help the church relate to and win their countrymen. An example of this kind of influence might be the use of poetry. If this is an art form that is greatly appreciated in the culture it may be used effectively for expressing spiritual truths. Other cultural influences are neutral and not very significant; they simply reflect the way a particular church chooses to do something. An example of a neutral influence is the collection of the offering: should it be taken during the service itself, at the beginning, middle, or end or should a box be left at the back of the room in which people can put their offerings? Unfortunately, there are also negative cultural influences that may impact church life. These might include racism or syncretism that spills over into the church from the culture.

Cultural differences can be positive, negative or neutral.

I. BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

A. Keeping the Balance

Adapting to the culture without conforming to sin in the culture can be difficult. This is an important issue for the church planter. As he works to organize a new church, he needs to make decisions about which forms and structures to use. There are two very significant passages about this issue in the New Testament.

1. Acts 14:11-18

In this passage, Paul had just healed a crippled man in the city of Lystra. When the people saw the miracle, they proceeded to offer sacrifices to Paul and Silas. Their intentions were good, but Paul recognized that this would be idolatry and struggled to prevent this evil. Paul refused to participate in a cultural practice that was clearly contrary to Scripture.

2. 1 Corinthians. 9:19-23

Paul clearly states that he is willing to become like a Jew, a Gentile, or anyone else in order to win them to Christ. He considered the salvation of the lost far more important than his own cultural preferences. However, he also states that there is a limit to the degree to which he can become like another culture. Paul is always under Christ's law (v. 21). He cannot accept sin, but he will yield the rest of his culture for the sake of the lost.

B. Form and Function

The concept of form and function has already been discussed in previous lessons. They are the keys to finding balance in the church's approach to culture. It is important to remember the meaning of these terms.

1. Function – **What** We Must Do

The things which the church is commanded to do are the *functions*. The main functions include teaching, preaching, evangelizing, baptizing, worshipping, praying and observing the Lord's Table. There are many other functions, such as encouraging one another, loving one another, singing hymns and spiritual songs, and giving to the Lord and to the needy. The church must do these things.

2. Form – **How** We Choose to Do the Functions

The *forms* of the church are the *ways* in which the church carries out its *functions*. The church has great liberty in this area as long as they do not choose a form that is prohibited by Scripture. For example, the church is commanded to pray. How, where, when and how often the church prays is not stated. The position one assumes (standing, kneeling, sitting, etc.) differs from culture to culture. There is liberty in these decisions. If, however, the church decided to pray to Buddha, that would be a sin. We do not have *that* much freedom.

We have freedom to choose how we worship and minister, as long as we do not cross the line into sin which is expressly forbidden in the Bible.

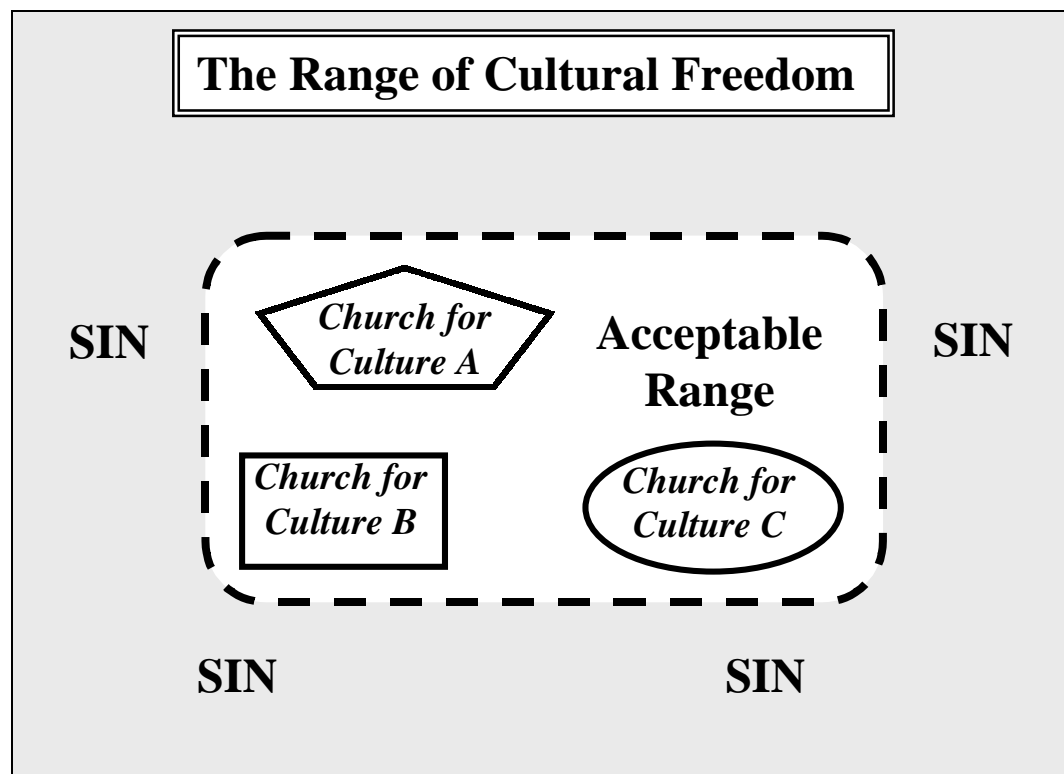
Distinguishing form and function is the first step in developing a church that is appropriate for each cultural group. We must understand that we have freedom to choose how we worship and minister

as long as we do not cross the line into sin, which is expressly forbidden in the Bible. The forms can and will be different for each culture. This is good and normal as long as sin is avoided.

Figure 11.1 helps explain how our range of freedom allows diversity in our worship and Christian life.

Note in the figure that the three different shapes in the center represent church forms appropriate for diverse cultures. Any point within the white center is acceptable to the Lord. However, different cultures prefer different forms within this acceptable area. Cultures A, B and C may each choose a different way of doing their biblical functions. This is good and normal. The gray area represents sin. Each cultural form is equally valid, as long as it does not cross the dashed line into the area of sin that the Bible forbids.

Figure 11.1 Range of Freedom for Church Culture and the Christian Life



II. THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH AND CULTURE

The influence of culture is clearly seen in the story of the New Testament church. It began as a basically Jewish group and then quickly spread to the Gentiles. Eventually, the church in the Gentile regions far surpassed the church in Jerusalem in size and importance. And in AD 70, the Roman destruction of the city of Jerusalem decisively ended the importance of that church.

As we read through the book of Acts and the epistles, we see that forms of worship, church structures and organization developed *as they were needed*, and often in response to cultural issues. This was a continuing process as new challenges and new cultures confronted the growing church.

Forms of worship, church structures and organization developed *as they were needed*—often in response to cultural issues.

A. The Jerusalem Church

The Jerusalem church was a tremendous example of a thriving local church. It still serves as a model for a loving, caring, sharing body. It had one major weakness. The congregation only

fulfilled the first part of Christ's command to be witnesses in "Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." We must imitate the love of these believers for one another, but not their lack of concern for the rest of the world.

The early church in Jerusalem was essentially composed of Jews who were greatly influenced by their Jewish culture. The apostles constantly had to decide how to mesh their Jewish traditions and forms of worship with their new Christian faith.

1. *Prayer in the Temple*

The disciples continued to meet, pray and worship in the Jewish temple even after their conversion (Ac 2:46; 3:1). They were already used to this style of worship, and it was comfortable for them to continue it. As the number of believers grew into the thousands, there was no other place large enough to meet. There was no thought of building a "church" building. The believers *were* the church. This part of their Jewish religious culture was acceptable. However, they no longer participated in the sacrifices. They understood that Christ, the Lamb of God, had already fulfilled the sacrificial function (Heb 7:27). They rightly rejected that custom, despite its deep roots in their culture.

2. *The House Churches*

In addition to the temple meetings, the believers met together from house to house (Ac 2:46). This pattern began even before Pentecost. The disciples were constantly together as they waited for the Holy Spirit (Ac 1:12-14), and for three years previously they had been together daily with Jesus. This custom therefore arose not from their Jewish culture, but from their experience with Christ.

3. *Evangelism*

The culture of the Jews had a negative effect on evangelism. They had trouble believing that God would save the Gentile "dogs" despite Christ's acceptance of all people (Jn 4). The Lord corrected this weakness by sending persecution to drive them out of Jerusalem to witness to the world. He also spoke to both Peter and Paul through dramatic visions in order to persuade them to go to the Gentiles (Ac 9,10).

The Jewish cultural view of the Gentiles had a negative affect on the evangelism of the world.

4. *Development of Deacons*

The foundational church offices were the apostles and the prophets (Eph 2:20). The next office appears to be that of deacon, although it is not specifically called such in Acts 6:1-7. The occasion for the development of this office was a cultural problem. It appeared that the church took better care of the "real" Jewish widows who spoke Hebrew than they did of the ones who spoke Greek.

This decision of the apostles was to have the congregation select seven men to care for this task. Since all have Greek names, it appears that the church made their decision based on culture. They decided that the Greek-speaking widows were as important as the Hebrew-speaking ones. They also decided that Greek-speaking men could best minister to their own cultural group. But they appointed them in a public fashion that demonstrated they were not a "second-class" culture within the church.

B. The Church Among the Gentiles

With the persecution of Acts 8:1-3, the disciples finally spread the gospel to Samaria and the "uttermost part of the earth." Many of the Gentiles readily believed the message, especially when they saw the miracles performed by the apostles. God also chose the Apostle Paul to specifically minister to this group (Ac 9:15). As a result of his ministry, the church exploded in growth despite severe opposition.

Even the churches in the Gentile areas of Asia Minor included a significant number of Jews. Paul's normal method of winning a new city was to go to the Jews first and to the Gentiles only when the Jews rejected the message of the Gospel. Paul knew that the Jews were God's chosen people and

that they already had a basic knowledge of God and of the Old Testament. Sometimes he found devout Jewish men or women who enabled him to quickly form the nucleus of a new church. But they also brought with them both secular and religious cultural traits that often hindered outreach to the Gentiles.

A common theme in the New Testament is how to integrate these Jewish believers into the body of Christ. Christ has broken down the division and formed one new body—the church—from both the Gentiles and the Jews (Eph 2:14-16). However, they did not always get along. Usually conflict arose when the Jewish Christians insisted on passing their religious culture on to the Gentile Christians. The epistles consistently rebuke such an attitude.

Conflict often arose in the early church when the Jewish Christians insisted on passing their religious culture on to the Gentile Christians.

1. *The Jerusalem Council*

Acts 15:1-21 records the landmark decision concerning how much Jewish religious culture should be brought into the church. The Jewish believers insisted that circumcision was necessary for salvation. There were two major decisions made by the council.

A. Circumcision

Circumcision was one of the most sacred rites of Judaism. However, the council rejected it. They were not willing to place any extra burden on those being saved (Ac 15:10-11,19). Salvation by grace through faith eliminated the need to perform any religious work. The book of Galatians is essentially written to address this same issue. The movement to force new believers to submit to Jewish traditions and religious culture was decisively rejected.

B. Eating of Meat

While specifically rejecting circumcision, the council did make another concession (Ac 15:19-21). They asked the Gentile believers to refrain from the following:

- Food polluted by idols
- Sexual immorality
- Meat of strangled animals and blood

Verse 21 gives the reason for this. There were unbelieving Jews in every city, whom the church desired to win to the Lord. Sexual immorality, meat offered to idols and meat with blood in it was so culturally offensive to them that it would hinder reaching them for Christ.

Sexual immorality is specifically prohibited in the Bible as sin. Its prohibition is understandable. But what about the eating of bloody or sacrificed meat? Paul later added an important discussion on this subject. In 1 Corinthians 8 he relates the following principles:

- Idols are nothing
- The food we eat does not affect our relationship to God

He also condemns abstaining from foods in 1 Timothy 4:3-5. Clearly, eating food is not a sin. And yet he decides not to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols in order to avoid offending the “weaker brother.” Paul is referring to young Christians who are still weak in their faith and do not yet understand their new freedom in Christ. Paul gives up such meat in order not to be an offense to the weak believer. This closely matches the situation in Acts 15. We therefore see that the disciples were to make cultural concessions to two groups:

Believers must adjust their religious forms to be less offensive to the culture of unbelievers and “weak” Christians.

- The unsaved Jews
- The “weak” Christians

The important teaching is that *believers must adjust their religious forms to be less offensive to the culture of unbelievers and "weak" Christians*. This then becomes the context for Paul's statement about becoming "all things to all men" in order to win them (1Co 9:19-23).

2. *Missions in Antioch*

God mightily used the Antioch church as a base from which to send out Paul and Barnabas, and later Silas, to evangelize the Gentile world. We know little of the internal life of that church as compared to the Jerusalem church, about which much is written. The new component that the Lord shows us through Antioch is the necessity of taking the Gospel to all peoples. The religious culture of the Jewish believers prevented them from accomplishing this task. They could not, and would not, make the changes necessary in their forms of worship that were necessary to reach the Gentile nations. God set them aside and used the Antioch church instead. It is a heart-breaking end to the wonderful beginning of the Jerusalem church in Acts 2.

The structure of the church changed, grew, and was refined as needed.

3. *Development of Church Offices*

As the church spread throughout Asia, and the Mediterranean area, new offices were added to the church structure. We see elders added in 1 Timothy 3:1-11 and Titus 1:5. Deacons continue, but their requirements, like those of the elders, are given in greater detail in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9. In these books we also see possible reference to deaconesses and a reference to a specific support list for church widows, complete with a list of requirements for them. It is clear that the structure of the church changed, grew, and was refined as needed in the changing times and needs. And church ministry was adjusted according to the specific cultural needs and traits of each group (Tit 1:12-14).

Church ministry was adjusted according to the specific cultural needs and traits of each group

4. *The Roman Persecution*

Beginning in Acts 8, the early church was severely persecuted by the Romans. The suffering and death of the Christians during this period is well known, as is their faith and love. Most of the New Testament was written during this time, and calls to remain faithful are common. In general, believers did remain true to the faith and serve as a great example to us. Forbidden to meet publicly, they met in homes, forests, and caves. But pressing on in faithfulness was difficult. They continued to struggle with leaving their cultural forms and customs. As the persecution became more severe, it was a strong temptation for Jewish believers to return to Judaism and the safety of its official status. The fact that they could not make a clean break with the past and their old forms of worship later served as a snare for them. The book of Hebrews is written to this group to demonstrate the foolishness of exchanging the power for Christ for these old forms.

III. FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT UNTIL NOW

Much time has passed from the New Testament days until our modern era, and the Christian Church has also changed. Some of this change has been positive and some has been negative. Much of it has been influenced by culture rather than by doctrine.

A. *The Development of the State Church*

The devotion of the saints was eventually victorious—even the Emperor Constantine believed, and Christianity was named the state religion. That act changed the religious picture of the world. Instead of a small group of serious believers meeting in homes at great risk, huge state church buildings appeared with the prestige that attracted even unbelievers to their power, beauty and wealth. There were always true believers—a "remnant." But as the political power and visibility of the

As the political power and visibility of the church increased, *forms* of worship became increasingly more important than their *functions*.

church increased, its spirituality declined. Forms of worship became increasingly more important than their functions.

B. The East-West Split

Eventually the Catholic and Orthodox Churches split. The issue was partly doctrinal (the “filioque” clause), but also was largely influenced by cultural differences between the East and the West, and by a struggle for power among the leaders of the two groups. Both the eastern and western churches relied heavily on forms rather than functions. *How* they went through the motions of worship meant more to them than *what* they believed. There emerged two very different forms of Christian worship—one in the East and one in the West. Notice this appreciation of form when emissaries reported in 987 AD to Vladimir, Grand Duke of Kiev, on the Orthodox faith in Constantinople:

The Protestant Church slowly adopted many of the same forms that the Orthodox and Catholics used.

“The Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we know not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty. Every man, after tasting something sweet, is afterward unwilling to accept that which is bitter, and therefore we cannot dwell longer here.”
The Primary Chronicle

C. The Protestant Reformation

The root of the Protestant Reformation was the desire of the reformers to correct this unwarranted emphasis on forms. They desired to return to the true functions of the church. The reformers preached that salvation was through faith in Christ—and faith alone. The forms of church were not as important as the functions. **What we believe** is far more important than **how we worship**. Both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches rejected this argument. Wars were fought over the issue. Countries were invaded. Infidels were slaughtered. Christian state churches persecuted the other Christian churches. Explorers raced to claim newly discovered continents for the “true” religion. There were abuses on all sides. In an extreme case in Russia, Orthodox fought Orthodox in the Old Believers Schism over the issue of how many fingers to use when one crossed oneself. They died for this form even though both sides agreed on the doctrine of the Trinity—the function! Amid this animosity, the Protestant Church nevertheless slowly adopted many of the same forms—large ornate buildings, professional priesthood and rigid forms of service—that the Orthodox and Catholics used.

The degree to which churches have been affected by their culture and past depends in large part on the choices church leaders have made concerning form and function.

IV. CONTEMPORARY CULTURE AND THE CHURCH

The churches in Central/Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union today struggle with the results of cultural, political and religious history. Each local church has its unique congregation and setting. It is impossible to paint a general picture that applies to all. The degree to which each church has been affected depends in large part on the choices church leaders have made concerning form and function. These choices may have been made consciously or unconsciously, but they were certainly made. Some of them are positive. Others may hinder the contemporary church from reaching the lost.

Two clear principles arose from the study of the New Testament church:

- 1. The forms of the church must change according to need or cultural change.**
- 2. The church must be willing to change its forms so as not to hinder unbelievers or weak Christians—although avoiding sin.**

Unfortunately, these principles are often completely reversed. Rather than follow the clear example of the Bible, we take one or both of the following actions:

A. We Refuse to Change

Many churches *refuse* to change. They may be totally unaware of the amount of “cultural baggage” they have collected over 2000 years of church history. If aware, they justify it as an ancient tradition. Forms have supplanted function. They follow the course of the Jewish Christians and cling to their traditions. As a result, they are unable to reach and relate to their culture.

B. We Expect the Unbelievers to Conform to Our Church Culture

This is so common as to be accepted without question. However, it is clearly opposed to Scripture. In the Bible the *believer* is supposed to become all things to all men. We are to live lives that identify with the unbelievers and make it easy for them to relate to us and listen to our message. We are to attract them to the Savior. Some things in a culture are sin. They must be rejected. But often they simply conflict with the church’s culture. When this is the case, the church must change. Even Christ totally changed his culture and became a man in order to reach sinners—yet without sin (Php 2:7; Heb 4:15).

In the same way churches often expect “weak” believers to quickly give up things for which they are not ready. But the scriptural pattern is for the strong believers to sacrifice their rights in order to keep from placing too difficult a burden on the weak believers. How often have church members acted as the “weak” brother and demanded that the new Christians give up their culture?

It is true that the stronger brother should teach the weaker one. But this is to take place over time. The first stage is for the stronger brother to yield his rights and suffer the shortcomings of the weaker brother until he grows and matures.

V. SUMMARY

The challenge for the church today is to know when to confront sin in the culture around it and when to change and adapt to the culture in order to win the lost. These must always be kept in balance. This is a difficult issue for the church in Central/Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union. There are centuries of tradition and history weighing on them. In many ways the issue resembles the problem of the Jewish Christians in the early church. They were devoted to the Lord. They prayed fervently. They loved one another. But they had a difficult time setting aside their 2000-year Jewish history in order to fulfill the Great Commission. Let us change before another persecution would scatter the brethren.

The challenge for the church today is to know when to confront sin in the culture around it and when to change and adapt to the culture in order to win the lost.

Some churches today will choose to change and win the lost, but many will not. For this reason, the planting of new churches is even more important, and the task of the church planter is an urgent one. The cultural dynamics of new churches are much more like the Antioch church. New believers come without the religious cultural “baggage” of older Christians. They can relate to their world and their culture easily. Their potential is unlimited. Without concrete forms they are free to adapt their worship and life in order to reach the lost.

The danger is that new believers also know little of holiness or doctrine. The Antioch church overcame that shortcoming with good teachers (Ac 13:1). As they taught the people about both grace and holiness, God used them to reach the known world of that day. May we be as faithful today.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What are some of the major cultural traits of your country or area? Where did they come from? Are they from history, religion, politics, climate, lifestyle or something else?
- How can a believer distinguish between something that is sin and something which contradicts his religious culture?

ACTION PLAN

- Review the lessons on form and function in light of this lesson. List the forms and the functions of your church.
- Evaluate your list above in light of what you now know about the historical cultural influences on the Christian Church.
- List the traits of the other historical branch(es) of Christianity in your country, such as Orthodoxy, Catholicism or Lutheranism. Critically and prayerfully evaluate which of these traits have been assimilated by your church. Categorize them as positive or negative.

SOURCES

Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text, Samuel H. Cross. N.p., n.d.

SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

SPIRITUAL
CHARACTER

LESSON 8,9

The Law and the Gospel

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to expose what is all too common in our day: Christians who are law-keepers, but who do not grow to love God and others. We will discuss the root of this problem; reliance upon the law to become holy without a growing faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And we will learn how true change is produced in us and in others.

☛ Main Points

- God's purpose for the law is to show us our sinfulness, his holiness and our need for Christ.
- The law cannot make us holy.
- Holiness is a heart matter.
- Life in the Spirit and faith in the Gospel liberates us from the law.

☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Understand that the purpose of God's law is to show us our sinfulness in contrast to God's holiness, and lead us to see our need for Jesus Christ every day.
- Discover that a growing faith in the Gospel takes us from law-keeping to a genuine love for God and others.
- Learn to serve God in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

☛ Suggestions to Trainers

This is a two-hour lesson. Most of the ideas in this lesson come from Romans 7:1-13, Galatians 3:1-5 and 3:19-26. In preparation to teach this session, be sure to be knowledgeable of these passages.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the law and the Gospel is one of the most important discussions for church leaders. Several times throughout the history of the church, this issue has taken central stage in debate. The first such debate is recorded in Acts 15 and in the subsequent epistles of Romans and Galatians. The issue: would the church emphasize the observance of the law as the primary way of serving God? Simply stated the answer was No! (Ac 15:19-21). Another such debate was in the 16th century when a German monk named Martin Luther, in the midst of a law-based religious system, rediscovered the doctrine of justification by faith. Luther went on to preach salvation as a free gift apart from good works and the Protestant reformation was ushered in.

Following both of these events, great movements of God took place. In Acts and during the Protestant reformation, the kingdom of God exploded, people came to Christ, churches were planted, and whole regions were transformed. Why is it that we do not see God working in these powerful ways today? What is necessary to experience the transforming power of Jesus Christ? Perhaps part of the answer has to do with the fact that we tend to misuse the *law* while failing to release the *Gospel* in our ministries.

We tend to misuse the *law* while failing to release the *Gospel* in our ministries.

In this lesson, we will first examine the intended purpose for God's law. Second, we need to discuss limitations of the law and its inability to produce holiness in us. And third, we will see a new way of living,

which the New Testament introduces to us. Our need is to learn to live by faith in the Gospel and power of the Spirit.

I. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE LAW

A. The Law Shows Us God's Holiness

God gave us His law so that the curtain which veiled His glory might be pulled back and so that we might behold what our human heart cannot comprehend, the awesome holiness of God. This is the aim of His law. It does not take long for someone who reads the Bible to realize how severe God's law is. The law is severe because God's holiness is severe. We see this in every aspect of the law, in the holy life it calls us to, in its uncompromising spirit, and in its tough penalties for failure. Consider the penalties for disobeying God's law. We see these in Exodus 21:15-17, 22:20 and Deuteronomy 22:20-22. Adultery required both persons to be stoned to death. If a son cursed his parents in a fit of rage, he was to be put to death. It is scary to think how many of us would be dead if these penalties were applied to us.

Should we then avoid God's law so that we will not suffer exposure to His holiness? No, not at all. If we never really come to know God in His true holiness, we will suffer grievously. As difficult as this is, knowing God in His holiness is essential for us to understand our true need for Jesus Christ and His redemption. Without an ever-growing knowledge of God's holiness, we will walk in pride, we will be merciless in our relationships with others, and we will walk in self-confidence and unbelief.

So the law is necessary, first for the unbeliever, to reveal God's awesome holiness in order to lead him to Christ. The law is also necessary for the believer, to show him what holiness looks like, as well as to show him where he goes wrong and needs to repent. We might say that the law is the tangible expression of the character of God. To imitate His character, we need the law's concrete pictures.

B. The Law Shows Us Our Sin

A second purpose of the law is to show us our sin. In Romans 7:7 we are told how the law worked in the Apostle Paul's life. Through the commandment "You shall not covet," Paul learned that coveting was sin. Paul then tells us in verses 8 and 9 that after he learned this, the commandment acted like a mirror reflecting all the times he would covet other things, and he saw how truly sinful his heart was. "Through the commandment, sin produced in me coveting of every kind," he says. In the end, as Paul saw how "alive" sin was in him, he also became aware of how condemned he was before God as the words of the Mosaic Covenant rang out, "Cursed is everyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out" (Dt 27:26). Through the law, he learned that he was cursed; he was a "dead" man.

The principle that we must understand here is that the law is like a diagnostic machine. If you suspected you had tuberculosis, you would go to a hospital and an X-ray machine would examine your chest. If the machine indicated that you had tuberculosis, would you go back to the hospital so the machine would give you the treatment that you needed to cure it? No, because while the X-ray machine is an excellent machine to diagnose the problem, it is completely ineffective to help you with the cure for tuberculosis. This is the way the law works. Its purpose is to show us our sin, but it has no power to produce true holiness in us.

C. The Law Shows Us Our Need For Christ

If God is holy, as the law demonstrates, and we are sinners, as the law shows us, then what are we to do? We need a savior! A third purpose of the law is to show us our need for Christ.

The law was given to us by God to "lead us to Christ" (Gal 3:24). Do we understand what this means? We come to see our need for Christ as we see the holiness of God, as well as our inability to keep the requirements of the law. After we have turned to Christ, do we think that the law is supposed to stop functioning in this way? Is the law supposed to stop pointing us to Christ after we

become Christians? No, the law is ever before us to show us that we need Christ, Who alone fulfills the ideals of the law and makes us worthy to be the children of God.

Consider the following statement made by an experienced pastor. He explains: *I must confess that for many years, I did not understand how the law should keep pointing me to Christ once I became a Christian. This attitude was obvious in the way I conducted my personal life and ministry. I thought that after I got rid of my initial sins, that I was keeping God's law. You can see that I had little need for grace and the Gospel since I thought I was keeping God's law. I could not understand why others had not progressed as I had in obeying the law. And I was frustrated, because people in the first church I pastored never seemed to really change. But, sadly, I was blind to the fact that I wasn't truly changing either, because I had put my confidence in something that really had no power at all to change me. All along, I had thought that I was keeping the law, while the whole time I had become a Pharisee! I kept the law to some degree, but at the same time I had become very demanding.*

Is your ministry characterized by a "demanding" or "legalistic" love?

II. LIMITATIONS OF THE LAW

As we have seen, the law has its place. The Bible clearly teaches that the law of God is good. Romans 7:12 says, "So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good." However, while the law is itself righteous and good, it is incomplete as a basis on which to grow in a way that pleases God (Ro 8:3, Gal 3:21). As we will see, the law is not, nor was it ever intended to make men holy or to be the primary basis through which we relate to God (Gal 3:1-25). The law has another function. It cannot make us holy because of the following limitations:

A. The Law Does Not Deal With The Heart

Holiness is primarily a heart issue (Dt 6:4,5; Mt 22:37-38). When the heart is changed, everything is changed. Holiness that is based on rigorous observance of the law usually grows out of the misperception that Christian maturity and holiness are a matter of behavior. This was the error of the Pharisees (Mt 23:23-28). They tried to attain holiness through rigorous observance of the law. Jesus was certainly not impressed!

Holiness is primarily a heart issue. When the heart is changed, everything is changed.

Take the example of the rich young ruler (Lk 18:18-23). He was a "good man" who followed the law. But his unwillingness to sell his possessions revealed this man's heart. For that reason, Jesus rejected him. Though he had kept the law, he was not a spiritual or holy man. A holy man would have obeyed Jesus at this point.

How do we think a Christian grows? Often we focus our attention on a list of things to do, such as read the Bible, perform good deeds, meet with the church, share our faith with unbelievers, and pray. These certainly are commands and a means of growing in our faith. But we err when we think these activities will produce holiness within us. We focus our attention on our duty to do these things, thinking that by simply doing them we become holy. We fail to deal with the issues in our heart and the reality of Christ's work within us as the basis of living by faith.

By focusing on the law as a measure of holiness, we have lost sight of the radical heart change that the new covenant is supposed to bring to the believer.

In many churches, we see conformity to regulations, but a lack of holy desire in the rest of life. Sometimes there is a rigid keeping of rules, but a lack of love for others. Outwardly, there may be growth to conform to a form of "holiness," but inwardly there may be a critical and unmerciful attitude. This is not "Christlikeness." What is often produced in our lives is "obedience" without love, and "holy activity" without faith.

The focus of the New Testament is on radical change from the inside (Ro 12:2; 2Co 5:17). By emphasizing the law as a measure of holiness, we have lost sight of the radical heart change that the new covenant is supposed to bring to the believer. Yet as we look at the church today, we don't see this transformation. Many Christians around the world do not have a heart for God. One of the

primary reasons for this is that we have turned to relying upon the law as the foundation for life and ministry and, as a result, the church shares the same weaknesses of Old Testament Israel (Ro 9:31-32).

B. The Law Produces Guilt

If you accept the law as your primary way of relating to God, then with it comes a "curse." The "curse" is that the law is "all or nothing." If you are going to live according to the law, then you must obey ALL OF IT—ALL OF THE TIME (Gal 3:10). But no one can keep the law; because as God's holiness is beyond measure, His law is beyond our keeping. A constant focus on the law then produces a conscious sense of guilt, because you never keep the law well enough. Instead of making progress, you are condemned by the law. It takes away your joy, causing you to see your failure and doubt the work of Christ, the power of the Spirit, and your adoption by our heavenly Father.

When church leaders focus on the demands of the law without grace, they weigh people down with demands that no one can keep. Instead of pointing people to the answer found in the Gospel, these leaders, like the Pharisees, often create new laws to help people keep God's law. By doing this, they simply heap on a greater load, a load that no one can bear.

In Dostoyevsky's book *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoyevsky describes a scene when the main character, Raskulnikov, was driving down a country road. On his journey, Raskulnikov met another driver along the way whose wagon had become stuck in the mud. The driver began to whip his horse, trying to force it to pull the wagon out of the mud. The horse was unable because it had become too weak from trying. But the driver continued to beat the horse, thinking that the whip would give it more incentive to pull the wagon out. The driver ended up beating the horse to death.

Because God's holiness is beyond measure, his law is beyond our keeping.

This is what we do week after week, as we tell people about the demands of the law without relating to them the Gospel and the way in which faith in the Gospel gives us freedom, joy and power in our service to God. By using guilt as a motivator, we produce "obedience" without love, and "holy activity" without faith.

C. The Law Produces Pride

There are some who do better than others at keeping the law. These people tend to be those with good personal organizational habits and self-discipline. Often, these people are exalted as models of the Christian life, not because of their hearts of love but because of their outward obedience to the rules.

Perhaps you are one of the ones who does better than most. Do you feel more spiritual because of your hard work at keeping the law? If you do, beware. Law-keeping and good works, especially with the result of hard work and discipline, often comes with an ugly by-product; boasting and pride (Eph 2:8-9, Php 3:4ff). The person who keeps the law through his own effort usually develops a sense of pride over his accomplishment (Ro 2:23). Pride is the last characteristic a godly person should have (Php 2:1-11; Ro 12:3).

If Abraham was right with God because of his works, then he had something to boast about (Ro 4:2). But as it turned out, he was justified by faith and therefore had nothing to boast about. On the contrary, he could do nothing but respond to God with a heart of gratitude for God's goodness to him. In the same way, the spiritual person is not proud of his spiritual standing as if he got there through his own hard work. Instead, we boast in what the Lord has done for us (1Co 1:29-31; Gal 6:14).

III. LIVING BY THE LAW

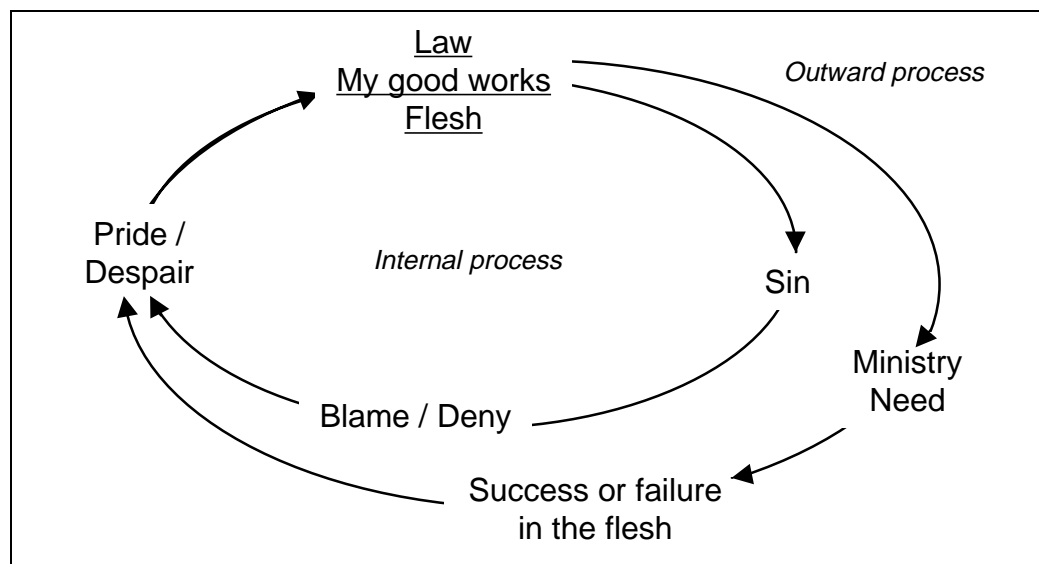
Living according to the law—legalism—could be described as living as if man must obey certain rules and regulations to win favor and rewards from God. Following the law is important. Certainly a holy or

spiritual person observes and honors the law. But observing the law legalistically, in order to gain a reward or special favor, is another matter.

Unfortunately, many people misunderstand the role of God's law and legalistically relate to God. This is seen in churches where there is a constant focus upon the demands of the law because of the widespread perception that the law makes us holy. New rules are made to keep us on track. Programs and gimmicks are designed to maintain some semblance of outward holiness. All this is done in hopes that observing these laws and regulations will bring our fleshly indulgences under control and create holiness.

Life according to the law could be described by the diagram below (figure 8.1). If our lives are based on the law then, when we become aware of sin in our lives, we often respond with defensiveness. We blame others or deny the sin. This will lead to either pride or depression, depending on how we go on dealing with our sin. If we beat our sin by our own effort—then the natural result is pride. If the sin beats us, then we tend to despair. But in either case, there is no joy. (See Paul's question to the Galatians, "*What has happened to all your joy?*" (Gal 4:15)). Outwardly, when we engage in ministry to others, if it is motivated by the law then our own efforts are on the line. The results once again are pride in successful ministry or despair because of failure.

Figure 8.1 Living By The Law—As An Orphan



IV. THE SPIRIT LIBERATES US FROM THE LAW

Christ's work on the cross changed everything between heaven and earth. Through His death and resurrection, He has conquered the law and given us the indwelling Holy Spirit, something far more powerful by which to live.

In Matthew 5:17 Jesus, having been accused of showing disrespect for the Old Testament Law, makes the following remark: "*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*" Some may use this verse to suggest that the Old Testament law is still in force in the way it was in Old Testament times. However, the Greek word designated "fulfill" is the word "*plerao*¹," which means, "to fulfill" as in "to complete."

Note the use of "*plerao*" in the following passages:

- "When he had finished (*plerao*) all his discourse..." (Lk 7:1)
- "After all this had happened (*plerao*)..." (Ac 19:21)

¹ πληρωω

- “When two years had passed (*plerao*)...” (Ac 24:27)

In other words Matthew 5:17 might easily be translated “*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I did not come to abolish it but to bring it to completion.*” Indeed, bringing an end to the law is exactly what Jesus did, as several other NT passages indicate.

- “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code” (Ro 7:6)
- “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...” (Gal 3:13a)
- “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law” (Gal 3:24-25)

As these verses indicate, Christ has conquered the law, releasing us from its condemnation. He has fulfilled the law through His perfect obedience. As we have put our faith in Christ, the law no longer condemns us! We no longer fall under its curse when we fail to obey it as we should. We have Christ's complete forgiveness and perfect righteousness, and our faith in Him fulfills the law's demands of us.

V. LIFE IN THE SPIRIT AND FAITH IN THE GOSPEL

If the law is not our primary way of relating to God, what is? Now that Christ has set us free from the law, how do we grow in holiness? If the law does not have the power we thought, what will keep people from living like non-believers? Many Christians have lived so long in the flesh and under the law that it is difficult for them to comprehend any other way to grow. However, there is a new way to live our Christian lives and we must learn to live in this new way in order to know the true power to obey and serve in the Kingdom's advance.

Instead of legalism, the New Testament teaches that God deals with us by His grace. To understand how this can be, we need to review the common biblical analogy in which God is a father and we are His children. Any child who has loving parents can relate to the concept of grace. A loved child does not earn his way into his parents' favor; he is loved because he exists. When a child disobeys or disappoints his parents, he may be punished, but he does not have to earn his way back into his parents' favor (like the Prodigal Son). No matter what he does, he remains the son and is always loved without conditions.

As God's children, we can relate to our Father by way of the **liberating power of the Gospel, through the indwelling Holy Spirit**. These we received when we were adopted as His children (Eph 1:13; Gal 4:6; Ro 8:14). Life in the spirit and faith in the Gospel ought to transform our personal spiritual lives as well as our ministry to others.

A. Personal Spiritual Growth In The Spirit

1. *The Spirit provides a new way to obey and grow in personal holiness.*

We need to obey, but how? This very question was once asked of Jesus: “What must we do to do the works that God requires?” Jesus' answer is simple: “Believe in the one He has sent” (Jn 6:28-29). Our faith is critical to our growth in holiness.

Table 8.2 New Way vs. Old Way

<u>New way of the Spirit</u> <i>Serving 'through faith in the Gospel'</i>	<u>Old way of the written code</u> <i>serving 'under the law'</i>
Out of love for God in view of what Christ has done for me.	Out of fear, trying to obey God well enough to be accepted.
With an awareness of my own failure; I put my confidence in the Holy Spirit	Out of self-confidence, my own effort
From my heart	From a slavish obligation
Out of a freedom from condemnation and failure	Out of a deep concern to succeed or be condemned
Out of a gratitude for God's grace	Out of a superior attitude because I am a "keeper of the law"

The Apostle Paul sheds more light on this new way to grow in holiness. In Romans 7:1-13 he describes service "in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code" (Ro 7:6). What is the difference between these two kinds of living? Let's look at them contrasted:

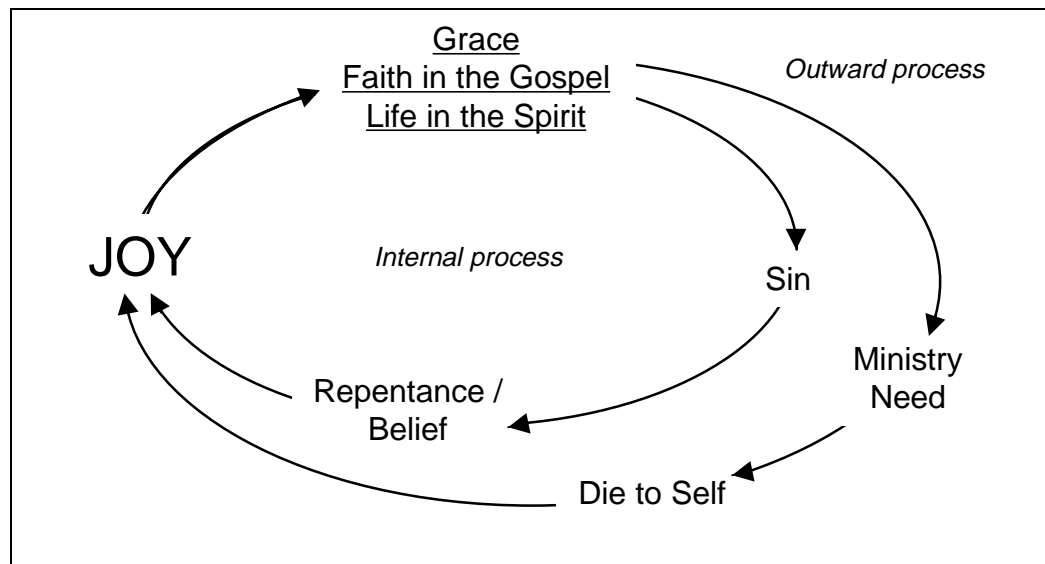
In Romans 8:1-4, we see once again the contrast between the law and the Spirit, and we are clearly told the limitations of the law. *"For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending His own Son..."* (Ro 8:3). The law could not produce holiness within us because our flesh is powerless to produce holiness within us. The law is weak because we are weak.

We now live as adventurers with the Spirit. The rest of Romans 8 more fully explains this. Because we have been given righteousness and the Spirit, we are no longer frightened and alone like orphans or slaves (v. 15-17). Because of the certainty of God's love, nothing is lethal any longer. The Spirit helps us when we are weak, and He guides each day. We have the confidence to look at life as an adventure, rather than a life-long task of rule keeping. We move from one adventure to another; Christ is the conquering King and the Spirit is helping us as we go. Sometimes the Spirit will lead us into opportunities for ministry, and there will be times the Spirit will show us our sin. But in this new way of thinking, nothing is so threatening that we cannot trust the Spirit to lead us through it.

It is through faith in the Gospel that we receive the Spirit, enabling us to serve in this new way. Consider Paul's words to the Galatians: *"Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?"* (Gal. 3:2-3,5)

The diagram figure 8.3 illustrates life in the Spirit. When we become aware of sin in our lives, if we are motivated by the Spirit, we repent and believe in God's forgiveness. This of course leads to joy. Outwardly we respond to ministry needs by self-sacrifice and again joy is the result.

Figure 8.3 Life In The Spirit—As A Son



2. *The Spirit shows us our sin.*

As we know, the law shows us our sin, and so does the Spirit (John 16:8).

As illustrated by the circle, if we respond to the Spirit's work as a child and own it, repent of it, and move on, then we move from repentant sorrow into renewed joy. The mark of true repentance is not continued sorrow but a renewed joy for God's grace and the greatness of Christ whose blood washes us clean. The Spirit's work is to keep bringing us back to the Gospel.

How do we know if we are walking in the Spirit? One way to know is to notice how we respond to our sin. Do we establish rules and try harder using our flesh? If so, we are living according to the law. Do we repent acknowledging our weakness as well as God's power to change us? If so, then we are walking by the Spirit.

B. The Spirit Leads Us Into Ministry

If we are walking in the Spirit, then life is an adventure; it is an opportunity to die to self and take on whatever the Spirit has for us. At the end of it, we also have joy. However, if we are living under the law and in the flesh, then we will find the opportunities for ministry are little more than pressure. They are filled with fear of failure. And when we respond to these opportunities, they leave us with either pride or depression, depending on how the opportunities for ministry turned out.

The Spirit gives us a new approach to ministry. Serving out of faith affects our personal growth in holiness, as well as the way we minister to people. How should we seek change in others? How should we work so that others will grow into holiness? Pastor Johnny Long, missionary in Kenya, writes how we usually approach this:

"The law supplants the Gospel in our homes and we are left with only one way to change ourselves and others—by making and enforcing rules! Instead of relying on the Holy Spirit, we rely on guilt, duty, and raw willpower to make change happen. Our self-reliance actually quenches and grieves the Holy Spirit so that things get worse, not better! In this "brave new world" where law is king, I come to believe that my rules, my teaching, my enforcement of God's laws will reform the terribly imperfect people I am forced to live with. I want them to shape up so that they'll be acceptable to me and to God (in that order)." (From Sonship For Africa manual, lesson—"Law vs. Gospel In Home and Family Relationships" by John Wade Long, Jr.)

As we seek change (for the better) in the lives of those to whom we minister, there are three important questions we must ask ourselves:

1. *What is the GOAL of ministry to others?*

Into WHAT do I hope to see them change? Using only the law to minister to others may result in outward conformity as opposed to heartfelt obedience. Take, for example, the little boy whose mother wanted him to sit down in a chair because he had disobeyed, and she wanted to give him some parental advice. "Young man, you sit down!" she commanded. He kept standing. "Sit down!" she insisted. He remained standing. "Vladimir, if you don't sit down, I am going to take a stick and whip you!" she finally threatened. Vlad sat down, but staring at his mother, he said, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside." Although his action was right, his heart was still disobedient.

2. *What MINISTRY STYLE will I use to reach this goal?*

HOW do I think these changes will take place? God did not design the law to change man's heart. Rather, it is a tutor to drive him in powerless desperation to Jesus Christ who can change him as he walks in the Spirit by believing the Gospel. Our flesh rejects the idea of our weakness and that only the Gospel can change people, so we try to change behavior by making and enforcing rules, and handing out punishments. The great danger here is that this exercise of the law can change people's behavior, but again, the heart is seldom changed.

3. *How can I personally MODEL the change I am seeking?*

What role does MY being changed have in motivating others to change? The type of leadership we exercise toward others in our church planting will say more about our spiritual maturity than anything we teach. Are we servants who lead by our example, so that people say, "That is what I want to become," or do we try to force people to change as we place demands upon them? (1Pe 5:3).

Our model for ministry is the way in which God our Father ministers to us, by grace. Thus our ministry should be characterized by grace. If our life and ministry does not move beyond the law to focus upon the liberating power of the Gospel, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, then we will become useless signposts. While we might point people in the direction they should go, we will fail to lead them to the vital source that enables them to make the journey.

CONCLUSION

Do you see the radical difference between the Law and the Gospel? Do you see the difference between serving in the "new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code?" Certainly, the law of God has its place. It helps us to understand the holiness of God, to see our own true sinfulness. But the law was also given to lead us to Jesus Christ. This does not stop when we become Christians but is the ongoing function of the law in the believer's life. It is only as our eyes turn to Jesus, in faith, that we grow to know the love that compels us to walk in the newness of the Spirit.

If we are ever to see church planting movements, the Gospel, and not the Law, must have its rightful place at the center.

If we are ever to see church planting movements, the Gospel, and not the Law, must have its rightful place at the center. "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." May God give us eyes to see *our* true need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ and a heart to believe that all of our needs are met in Him.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- Do your preaching and counsel to others usually focus upon the law, because you think that it empowers people to change?
- What are the purposes of the law and the Gospel in the Christian life?
- Why is the law powerless to produce holiness within us?
- How does faith in the Gospel enable us to live in newness of the Spirit?
- What is legalism? Do you think that it is a denial of the Gospel's power and putting trust in the law? Why or why not?

- What does it mean that we are “not under law” in Galatians 5:18, though we are still called to obey God’s commandments?

ACTION PLAN

- Review Table 8.2, “New Way vs. Old Way.” Prayerfully and honestly evaluate your own obedience to God. Do your actions show that you serve through faith in the Gospel or do you serve under the law?
- On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions:
 1. What is the goal of my ministry to others?
 2. What ministry style will I use to reach this goal?
 3. How can I personally model the change I am seeking in others? What changes do I need to make in my own life and ministry?

SOURCES

Long, John Wade, Jr. “Lesson 14: Law vs. The Gospel in Family Relationships,” in *Sonship for Africa, Version 1*. Oreland, PA: World Harvest Mission, 1999.

SPIRITUAL
CHARACTER

LESSON 10

Repentance As a Way Of Life

☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help the trainee understand how a life focused on the Gospel leads us to a lifestyle of repentance and faith. The Gospel should create faith in our hearts so that we will be truly honest about our sin, able to release it in repentance before God and experience the joy of God's great grace and mercy.

☛ Main Points

- True repentance involves being honest about our sin instead of making excuses about it or denying it.
- True repentance does not involve penance since penance shows a lack of trust in God's forgiveness.
- Sincere and humble believers ought to repent whenever the Holy Spirit reveals sin.

☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should ...

- Understand that a life focused upon God's grace should lead to an honest dealing with sin and a joyful, continual, and complete surrender to the Lord.
- Grow to have a lifestyle that is increasing in the knowledge of God, repenting more deeply of sin, and discovering the true riches of God's grace found in Jesus Christ.
- Become one of the chief repenters in his congregation and a minister of grace as he himself experiences the great grace of God.

☛ Appendix

10A "The Sinner's Place" by Stanley Voke

☛ Suggestions to Trainers

Use personal examples and stories to show how repentance has impacted and deepened your own spiritual life and how God honors those who are repentant.

INTRODUCTION

We have been learning about our adoption by God and how this should affect our thinking and functioning like sons instead of orphans. Our adoption, which has brought us into a new relationship with God, should then lead us to focus upon the Gospel and not simply the law. From this we learn not only what we are supposed to do as Christians, but we also experience the motivation and power to truly grow in holiness. We also talked about life in the Spirit and how this produces a far greater holiness than if we bound our life to the law, because the Spirit changes our hearts and not simply our behavior.

Heart changes require first the breaking of the old heart. This happens in the repentance that we experience at salvation. And what we discover is that God continues this work in our sanctification by breaking our hearts in order to make them new. As Proverbs 6:23 says, "Corrections of discipline are the way to life." Here we discover God's way to life-reproof, which corrects the wayward heart, responded to in humility. This is not only the way which introduces us to the life God offers us in Christ, but it is the way of life continually leading us back to the grace of God which again and again renews our hearts.

It is this way of life that we now consider. If we could capture the central idea of this lesson, we might say, "Repentance is the way of life."

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE REPENTANCE

Now for us to get a picture of what true repentance is and the fruit that it produces in our life, turn to Psalm 51. Here we find one of the most graphic descriptions of genuine repentance. This is David's psalm of confession, as his own heart has become broken over his sin. From this psalm we are taught the traits of true repentance, the reason why repentance must be a way of life, and also the blessings of this life of repentance.

A. Acknowledge Your Sin

The first trait of true repentance is a humble acknowledgment of our sin. David confesses in verse 3, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me." One of the great diseases of sin is that it blinds and deceives the heart. David lived under this deception for nearly a year, until Nathan the prophet confronted him with his sin through a story. But the moment that Nathan reproved David, David responded by humbly confessing, "I have sinned."

Example

Once a pastor had a temper that would periodically flare up even during meetings with fellow church leaders. When this pastor admitted to a friend that he was praying that God would give him self-control, the friend wisely stated: "Brother, you are praying about the wrong thing—your problem is not a lack of self-control, your problem is with anger. If God gave you self-control you would not be any better because you would only use it to hide the sin which is anger."

This pastor had problems facing his sin and in such a condition could never truly repent and change. In Psalm 32, David recounts the time when he was aware of his sin, but refused to acknowledge it (v 3), and here we see the key difference between awareness of sin and repentance of sin. He refused to acknowledge that what he did was wrong. Sometimes, we simply don't see our sin, but often times we know we have sinned, but our heart refuses to admit that what we have done is truly wrong. We often make excuses, such as, "The person deserved what I did to him." or, "I couldn't help it, I lost control of myself." Through these excuses, we escape from honestly facing our sin and acknowledging our wrongdoing. But the repentant heart sees and admits the sin that has been committed. It owns up to the sin, and acknowledges that what we have done is truly wrong.

B. Realize The "Sinfulness Of Sin"

The second trait of a repentant heart is that it realizes what sin truly is. David confesses in Psalm 51:4, "Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight..." Obviously, David had sinned against other people, but a repentant heart realizes that our greatest offense and our greatest guilt rest before God, because the essence of all sin is placing ourselves above God. Sin is like throwing God down to the ground and seating ourselves upon His throne. A truly repentant heart grieves over such an arrogant attitude.

Example

At a Christian youth camp, a teenage boy and girl were caught in an immoral situation. They were both terribly embarrassed and when they were taken to the office of the camp to be sent home, the girl began to cry uncontrollably. After about ten minutes of listening to this sobbing the counselor asked her, "Why are you crying like this? Is it because you were caught and you are afraid of what your parents will say? Or is it because you realize that what you have done is against God and you are sorry for how you have offended Him?" Immediately, the girl stopped crying, because she realized that she hadn't even thought about her wrong before God.

For the truly repentant heart, great remorse comes from the realization of what sin truly is. We realize the sinfulness of sin. We have dishonored God and exalted ourselves above Him. This is the greatest shame to the one who knows that God is his Creator. It is also a great shame to those

who know the incredible love of Christ. Though He is our Creator, He humbled Himself by dying on the cross to rescue unworthy creatures like us. Knowing God's incredible love, the repentant person is crushed by the realization that he has violated and abused this amazing love.

This kind of remorse leads us to confess to God along with David, "you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge." Whatever God's judgment will be upon my sin, He is blameless and I am worthy of the judgment. A sense that we deserve God's just judgment comes from a repentant heart that knows what its sin truly is.

So true repentance sees and acknowledges the sin. It also understands the sinfulness of sin, as it is committed against God.

C. Be Brokenhearted Over Sin

In true repentance, the heart is broken and contrite. There is a brokenness over sin. Psalm 51:17 says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." Here we are told that God does not delight in the outward expressions, which can become cheap imitations that don't reflect the true attitudes of the heart. In Israel's day, an animal sacrifice was often being made while the heart was never truly repentant, and God was repulsed by this outward show (Isa 1:10-15).

God does not delight in the outward expressions, which can become cheap imitations that don't reflect the true attitudes of the heart.

A broken and contrite heart is one that has been crushed and brought low. It does not soar on high, being filled with pride. It takes the low place, the sinner's place, as it grieves over pride, which had no basis, and rebellion which wrongfully usurped the supreme Creator. He alone is over all things. It is a heart that is subdued and made tender by the grief of our failure to love the greatest Lover of our soul.

D. The Dangers Of Apathy And Penance

All of us know how we struggle with the issues of the heart. Sin deceives us so that we easily become phonies, and our outward expressions are often empty containers lacking the true desires of our heart. Let us be aware that while it is easy for us, on the one hand, to not sense the true "sinfulness" of sin. On the other hand, it is easy to turn our repentance into a penance by which we try to pay the penalty of our sin through our own suffering. Both are just as repulsive in the eyes of God, because both are full of arrogant presumption. To be apathetic about sin is to belittle our sin and to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. But to try to make ourselves worthy of God's forgiveness through our penance is to fail to humbly acknowledge our true need for God's grace and a Savior who alone paid the terrible penalty of our sin and who provides the only righteousness acceptable in the eyes of a perfectly holy God.

...to try to make ourselves worthy of God's forgiveness through our penance is to fail to humbly acknowledge our true need for God's grace.

The great danger for the "religious" person is to despise the apathy, but not the penance, because he doesn't see the arrogant presumption of penance. He thinks that he is expressing his unworthiness, but his deceived heart in reality is expressing arrogance in the worst degree. He is assuming that his suffering for sin will make him acceptable to God. Here again he is making little of his sin, little of the holiness of God, and little of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, while he is making much of himself.

Someone might say, "Well, I am a Protestant. I don't do penance for my sin." Do you really think so? How long do you weep over your sin and beat yourself inside for the wrong you have done? For hours or days? Do you sometimes feel that God cannot truly forgive you, because your sin is too terrible? Do you sometimes try to do something to make up for your sin so that you think that God now accepts you? These are forms of penance and are not true repentance, and if your repentance doesn't produce the "fruit of repentance," maybe it is because you are not repenting, but simply doing penance.

In true repentance, the heart is broken and it is humbled (brought low). But if our sorrow leads us to become preoccupied with our sin and our unworthiness, then our repentance is turning into penance. A wise Christian used to advise people, "For every one look you take at sin, take ten looks at Christ." This is good advice for us as well, that our repentance may not become a practice of penance which leads to a lifestyle of misery and self-suffering for our sin.

True repentance is a way of life because it creates within us a renewed heart for God as we see our sin and acknowledge it. True repentance is a way of life because our heart is broken and humbled and made to love God again. But true repentance has its counterfeits, as does everything else in this world. Therefore, we must let God's Word once again instruct us, that we might not fall into the snares of something that looks like repentance, but does not bear the fruit of true repentance.

II. TRUE REPENTANCE AS A WAY OF LIFE

To live a life characterized by repentance the following concepts should be understood:

A. The Father is Waiting to Forgive Us

Most people will not be honest enough to acknowledge their sin unless they are certain that they will be able to bear the punishment. Children may hide important information from their parents out of fear of punishment. We can be the same way with God and others when we are guilty!

We have nothing to fear when we repent of our sin. We cannot bear the punishment for our sin. Jesus Christ already has! So that "there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Ro 8:1). We can be honest about our sin since we know that God is waiting to forgive us (1Jn 1:9, Heb 4:16).

God invites us to the deep wells of His grace, that we might not be afraid to sincerely draw near to Him in all His holiness. God knows that honesty and transparency grow best in the soil of unchanging love, and this is what He offers to us. So God has established a new covenant.

Christ has fulfilled the law that grace may be given in full. God has created a new heart in us, so that sin no longer rules. Instead sin becomes an old, despised master as we grow to love God.

God knows that honesty and transparency grow best in the soil of unchanging love, and this is what He offers to us.

B. Repentance is an Honest Admission of our Real Problem

The idea that repentance is a way of life seems strange to some Christians, because it is easy to think that we are no longer, as Luther put it, "real, great, hard-boiled" sinners. Notice David's admission as he comes to have a repentant heart: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps 51:5). Certainly, this is an important statement, which speaks of the seed of sin that is inherited from each generation since Adam and Eve committed the first sin. But David is not concerned with giving us a theological statement on original sin here. Rather, this is an honest admission of his real problem, and it would do us well to take to heart his sober confession.

A lifestyle of repentance is an important part of our Christian walk, because our problem with sin is very real and very deep. Even after the Apostle Paul had become a Christian and had known the Lord for more than 20 years, he admitted his struggle with sin. In Romans 7:15 he says, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." Sin is not just isolated behavior patterns of wrongdoing. Rather, it is a part of our fallen nature and an integral part of our natural attitudes, beliefs and behavior deeply rooted in our alienation from God. This captures the real problem that we have with sin, and therefore our need for ongoing, deep-down, heart-breaking repentance. If we are to experience deep, ongoing renewal in our spiritual life, we must also soberly admit our real problem with sin.

Sin is not just isolated behavior patterns of wrongdoing. Rather, it is ... an integral part of our natural attitudes, beliefs and behavior deeply rooted in our alienation from God.

C. God is Committed To Working In Us

Only when we understand our real problem with sin will we be encouraged with the next verse in Psalm 51: "Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place" (v. 6).

God had created in David a heart that knew the truth again, as David's heart was broken over his sin. He says in Psalm 32:2 "Blessed is the man ... in whose spirit there is no deceit." God had taken away the deceit of sin in David's heart, and his repentance was the fruit of God's work.

Be encouraged that in spite of our real problem with sin, God is at work to produce truth and wisdom within us. Our times of deep repentance are really the work of God creating truth in our inner being and wisdom in our spirit. Therefore, we should open up our hearts for God to freely do this work within us. We need His help. If we are sincere about walking in the truth, then we can pray as David did: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there be any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). It is not easy to really want our hearts to be broken, but it is through this brokenness that we walk in truth and wisdom.

III. BLESSINGS OF TRUE REPENTANCE

The truths in these lessons focus upon our new relationship with God based upon His grace, and a life of freedom and power. Usually when we think about grace and freedom, we get nervous about the fruit which all of this "liberation" might produce. Does teaching grace encourage sloppy Christian living? The answer is 'no,' it does not encourage sloppy Christian living. On the contrary, teaching grace results in people so in love with the Father that they want to obey His every command.

The Bible teaches the blessings of a repentant heart. David asks that God would respond according to His loving-kindness in restoring what he had before he had sinned. David anticipates that he would experience God's grace again (v1), that he would be clean from his sin (v2), that he would have joy (vv. 8, 12), that his sin would be erased so that God does not see it anymore (v9), that he would have a right spirit (v10, 12) and that he would have the Holy Spirit (v11).

We can be certain that God will do this for us, that these are the blessings of repentance promised to us, because we are told in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ." All the promises by God are "yes" to us who are in Christ. In all the ways in which David asks God to respond to his repentance, we find promises or principles which assure us that this is truly how God will respond to our repentance.

In the end, in verse 17, David expresses the final and greatest of these blessings when he says as a statement of fact, God "will not despise a broken and contrite heart." We may question His pleasure in us at times, but God will never turn away from a heart that is broken over its sin. This is always the way back to God, and we will always find a welcome when our heart is broken over our sin. He delights in this kind of heart and will draw this heart near to Himself.

The nearness of God is the great reward of a life of repentance. Jesus tells the repentant Christian in the Laodicean church I will "come in and eat with him and he with Me" (Rev 3:14-20). This speaks of the intimacy that we will know as our hearts continue to be broken over sin and we enter into a deeper fellowship with God. This happens as we make repentance a way of life.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson we have been talking about David the king of Israel. The fact that David was a king did not mean he was exempt from repenting. On the contrary, his leadership position meant he needed to model true repentance to all Israel. Wise pastors and church planters teach their congregations to repent. In fact, leaders should be among the first to admit their struggles with sin. Furthermore, they ought to be willing to repent of their sin to offenders. When the leader can do this, a congregation or fellow ministry associates can be more intimate with God as well.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What is true repentance?
- What are the dangers of the heart after we see our sin?
- What is the difference between repentance and penance? Define both.
- How can I recognize when my repentance has turned into penance?
- List the blessings of repentance requested by David in Psalm 51:1-2, 7-17. Write the Scripture reference that states the promise or principle that makes these blessings sure to us who are in Christ.
- Do you feel that God rejects you when you have repented of your sin? Why do you sense this rejection?
- Do you think that you should be the “chief” repent in your church? Why or why not?

ACTION PLAN

Read “The Sinner's Place” by Stanley Voke (See Appendix 10A).



The Sinner's Place

BY STANLEY VOKE

"Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

The hardest thing for anyone is to take the sinner's place. So hard in fact that many never take it at all, while others, having once been brought there, do not care to come there again. None are by nature fond of the sinner's place. Yet if we do not come there, we cannot really know Christ or taste the sweetness of God's forgiving grace. If we avoid it, we might as well say "we have no sin" and so deceive ourselves.

TAKING THE SINNER'S PLACE

The sinner's place is where we accept without excuse that we are sinners. We may admit only one sin such as jealousy or pride; we may be convicted of something that seems small, but in so doing we have come again to the sinner's place—though we may have been Christians for many years. Behind each sin God may show us things more serious until not one but many things are admitted and we are brought to admit the whole radical evil of our nature. A man once confessed he had stolen a rope. He brought it back. The next day he returned, this time bringing a cow he had been unwilling to admit was on the end of the rope! When we take the sinner's place, we admit the truth about ourselves—the whole truth.

The sinner's place is where we take blame. We stop excusing ourselves and saying, "I was not really myself when I did that." Instead we bow our head saying, "Yes, Lord, that was me; that is what I am really like." We no longer blame our nerves, our circumstances, or other people. Should someone point out some fault or criticize us, even unkindly, we do not argue and justify ourselves or try to explain things away. We even admit to the critic that if he knew us as we really are he would find much else to criticize. We save endless time and breath when we come quickly to the sinner's place. Indeed things would be different in many a church if the members met regularly there at the sinner's place.

This is the place David took as, when Nathan challenged him, he bowed his head saying, "I have sinned." Here Job stood and cried, "Behold, I am vile," and Isaiah said, "Woe is me! For I am undone." Here the publican prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner"; here Peter fell at the feet of Jesus saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man." In this place, the prodigal son confessed "Father, I have sinned and am no more worthy." Paul often knelt in the sinner's place and many a saint has watered it with his tears. If we have not come here, we have not yet begun with God (2Sa 12:13, Ps 51:4, Job 40:4, Isa 6:5, Lk 18:13, Lk 5:8, Lk 15:18).

We do not like the sinner's place for we are afraid it will hurt our pride. So we fight, argue, put others in the wrong, excuse ourselves, and in fact do anything rather than take the sinner's place where God awaits to forgive and set us free.

AVOIDING THE SINNER'S PLACE

Often, we avoid this place because we will not call sin, sin. We talk of shortcomings, failures, weaknesses, frailties, faults, disabilities, propensities; anything but sin. A rose by any other name is just as sweet, and sin by any other name is just as evil—to God. The trouble is we make our own definitions instead of accepting God's. In the Scripture, sin is anything short of the glory of God, anything that misses the mark of moral perfection or crosses the line of God's will, anything that is twisted from the plumbline of Divine righteousness whether it be in motive, desire, intention, instinct, thought, habit, look, word, deed, reaction or relationship. If done heedlessly or in ignorance, it is still sin and to call it something else needing neither repentance nor forgiveness is to avoid the sinner's place.

We can refuse to see sin as sin. Maybe we are active people who have no time to bother with such trivialities. We have our positions and programs to maintain. Like Naaman, we are busy winning our laurels while we cover our leprosy. We address meetings, chair committees, take on jobs, give money to this and that—in fact do anything—except confess ourselves spiritual lepers who need to wash and be clean. We are as those in Jeremiah's day who rushed like horses into battle but never stopped to repent or say, "What have I done?" We are so very busy—too busy ever to stand in the sinner's place (Jer 8:6).

We may avoid this place by assuming the role of correctors. With our doctrines neatly tied up, we are evangelical experts with a keen sense of theological smell. We love to correct but not to be corrected. Like the Pharisees of old we keep ourselves out of the sinner's place by putting others in. We are so full of knowledge that we have no room for a broken and contrite heart. Yet even Henry Martyn, great saint as he was, recorded in his diary, "I have resolved never to reprove another except I experience at the same time a peculiar contrition of heart!" He found he needed to live in the sinner's place.

We may avoid this place by making our security in Christ a pretext for non-repentance. We are assured of our salvation, yet somehow we are no longer convicted of sin. We are like the small boy who, when sent from the table to wash his hands, returned with a big smile and the astonishing remark, "Well, they've had such a wash this time they'll never need to be washed again."

We are by faith sons of God and citizens of heaven. But we are still sinners as well. We still need to wash at "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" (Zec 13:1). Grace will never lead us into sin, but it will ever convict us of it, and sin thus revealed will always lead us back to grace.

It is possible to avoid the sinner's place by misapplying the blood of Christ, speaking of it as "covering" or "protecting" as did the blood of the Passover lamb. The sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, however, was for sin. It is an *atonement*, not simply a *protecting* agent. If therefore we need it, we do so as sinners coming for cleansing, not as sinless ones needing only to be secured from evil outside ourselves. When we speak only of the blood protecting us, we are avoiding the sinner's place.

A student of Spurgeon (a well known English preacher) once preached before him on "The Whole Armor of God." A conceited young man, he dramatized his message, putting on the armor piece by piece, until, having fortified the whole, he waved the sword of the Spirit and cried triumphantly, "And where is the devil now?" Mr. Spurgeon leaned forward and said, "Young man, he's inside that armor!" We must watch that we do not let Satan in by forsaking the sinner's place. Our hearts are deceitful above all things and, like the mythological Proteus, will adopt any guise to hide their true nature. Beneath our spiritual phraseology and church reputation we are but poor sinners, who need to be cleansed every day in the blood of Jesus.

FINDING GRACE IN THE SINNER'S PLACE

Is it not strange that the place we sinners avoid is the very one the sinless Savior took? Surely if He were the Son of God He would have come down from the Cross! Miracles, mighty sermons, even resurrection itself we could expect of such a One, but not a baptism in Jordan with publicans and harlots, or a criminal execution with murderers and thieves! Yet this is where He came, for His face was set towards this place from all eternity.

There on the same level a sinner met Him that day. Unlike his comrade who died blaming others and cursing God, this dying thief admitted guilt and found forgiveness. Peace and paradise came to him as he took the sinner's place and found Jesus there. This is the paradox of grace. He who insists he is right will be pronounced wrong, while he who admits he is wrong will be declared right. The righteousness of God is only given to those who stand in the sinner's place.

Here and here alone is the place of true peace, for here we cease our strivings and find our God. Here is rest of heart and heaven's door. Here we cast away our pretense, and admit what we really are. Here we come to Jesus to be cleansed by His precious blood. Here the Holy Spirit fills and holiness is found. Here are the springs of revival. This is where the whole church needs to come again and again. It is the place of truth and grace and freedom—the sinner's place. When were you last there? In fact, are you there now?

PRAYER

PRAYER

LESSON 5

Prayer and Fasting

☞ Lesson Purpose

To take a fresh look at the roles of prayer and fasting in the church planting process.

☞ Main Points

- Prayer is essential to the accomplishing of the spiritual work of church planting.
- Fasting was a biblical method of intensifying prayer in both the Old and New Testaments.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When he has mastered the content of this lesson, each participant will ...

- Know biblical teaching on prayer and fasting.
- Be consistent in his or her dependence on God through prayer and fasting.
- Pray and fast for the church planting task.

INTRODUCTION

As church planters are involved in the many activities necessary to see a new church planted, it is easy to neglect spiritual disciplines. If we attempt to do spiritual work in the flesh, discouragement may set in as the desired results are not forthcoming. At this point the church planter needs to stop and take a fresh look at the role of prayer and fasting.

I. THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF PRAYER

God has revealed Himself to be omniscient: He knows all things. God is also omnipotent: He is able to do all things. Why then should we pray? If something is God's will, won't He just do it? Or if we do not pray, does that somehow impede the all-powerful God from working?

A. Old Testament Examples—God Is Waiting For His People to Pray

a. *Exodus 3:7:*

The Israelites were in captivity in Egypt, and God appeared to Moses and said, "...I have heard them crying out...and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them...."

b. *Exodus 32:7-14*

Israel had turned away from God and made a golden calf to worship. God said to Moses, "Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." But Moses prayed to the Lord, reminding him of his promises. "Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened."

c. *2 Chronicles 7*

After Solomon built the temple, he prayed, dedicating it to God. God responded by sending fire from heaven to consume the burnt offering and sacrifice. And his glory filled the temple. He told Solomon, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for

sacrifices.” Furthermore, he promised that “if My people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.”

B. New Testament Examples—There Is A Relationship Between Action Taken In Heaven And Our Prayers On Earth

a. James 5:13-18

In this passage, the apostle James talks about the prayer of faith and confession of sin. He says, “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (v. 16). James then goes on to cite the example of Elijah who prayed for no rain for three and a half years. God responded to Elijah’s prayers by withholding the rain. Then Elijah prayed for rain and God sent it.

b. Luke 6:12-16

Just before an important decision (the choosing of the twelve disciples), Jesus went up on a mountain to pray and continued to pray through the night.

c. Matthew 26:36-44

As Jesus approached His death, He prayed in agony, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” The second time Jesus cried out, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” Jesus cried out a third time, praying the same thing.

d. Matthew 6:5-18

Jesus taught His disciples to pray. Even though the “Father knows what you need before you ask him,” (v. 8). Jesus encouraged the disciples to ask for their daily needs to be met, to be kept from temptation, and for the Father’s will to be accomplished on earth as it is in heaven.

e. Matthew 7:7-12

Jesus, in speaking to His disciples, tells them, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Jesus encouraged the disciples not to be afraid to express their needs and desires in prayer to the Father.

C. Some Conclusions Regarding the Essential Nature Of Prayer

God can do anything that He desires to do, but it seems that He has determined to wait, to postpone His work until His people express their agreement in prayer before He acts. From the examples and teachings of Scripture, it appears that God has linked Himself to our prayers, choosing to accomplish His purpose through these prayers.

God respects man’s will and He desires man to exercise his will in union with God’s will and in opposition to the will of Satan. Prayer is the expression of our desire for God’s will and is one way we work together with God in accomplishing His purposes. Prayer is not a battle to convince and compel God to change His mind to suit our own pleasures. Rather, through prayer we discern His will and then bend our own will to God’s desires and purposes. Therefore prayer has the dual purpose of:

- Expressing our thoughts and desires to God
- Discerning His will for us

II. THE ROLE OF FASTING

Fasting is our deliberate abstinence from some or all food or drink for the purpose of undistracted prayer. Also there may be times of withdrawal from activities and the fellowship of friends for a time in order to devote one’s self more fully to fellowship with the Lord—to seek Him and His will. **Fasting is a spiritual discipline, not a commandment.** Therefore, if a person has medical problems or for some

other reason cannot fast, that person should not be made to feel guilty or be accused of sinning. Fasting is done in some cultures and religions as a ritual or tradition. The function of biblical fasting is to focus one's undivided attention on the Lord. It should never be done merely as a ritual.

A. The Teaching Of Christ

Jesus taught fasting and fasted himself (Mt 4:2). His disciples may not have fasted while he fasted while with them (Mk 2:18-19). However, even this text clearly states that Jesus expected that the disciples *would fast after He was taken up to heaven*. He also taught His disciples regarding fasting in prayer. In a context of teaching about prayer, twice Christ said about fasting, "When you fast...do not be as the hypocrites..." (Mt 6:16-17). Note that He said "when" not "if," as if this were a regular practice of the disciples.

B. The Example Of The Early Church

In the book of Acts, we see prayer, fasting and church expansion all going hand in hand. As the church relied upon the Lord, the Gospel advanced.

1. Acts 13:1-3

As the leaders of the church in Antioch ministered (prayed) unto the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit came to them with instruction and guidance. The expansion of Paul's ministry and the expansion of the church into Asia Minor and Europe began with prayer and fasting.

2. Acts 14:23

Paul and Barnabas committed the elders of the new churches into the Lord's care with prayer and fasting. Through prayer and fasting, Paul and Barnabas gained the courage to release control of these elders and how they would lead their churches into the Lord's hands.

C. The Nature Of Fasting

Christ taught that to receive heaven's answers we need to ask, seek and knock (Mt. 7:7). Each word indicates a deep intensity of seeking. Deliberate fasting reveals a yearning desire, a persistent burden of the heart that is greater than the desire for physical food. The motivation for fasting seems to be two-fold. The believer enters into a more intense seeking of God for the dual purpose of:

- Spiritual strengthening
- Advancement of the kingdom of God.

As shown in the instruction of Christ and the example of the early church, fasting is an expected and a vital aspect of prayer.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- Have you ever spent time in prayer and fasting? What was your experience like? Did you sense a spiritual strengthening or see God answer your prayer in a special way?

ACTION PLAN

- Read Matthew 6:16-18.
- Describe how the "hypocrites" looked as they fasted. Why did they do this?
- Describe how a person should look when he fasts.
- How can we keep our fasting from becoming a ritual?
- Plan and experience the spiritual discipline of fasting. Below are a few ways that some Christians do this. You may wish to follow one of these, but the form is up to you.
 - Abstain from some food and drink for a specific time.

- Abstain from all food but drink juices and other fluids for a specific time.
- Abstain from a specific food but not all food for a specific time.
- Set aside one day a week/month that you will fast.
- Make a list of specific things for which you will pray when you fast.
- Record in your spiritual journal your experiences during your fast. How did you feel? What did you learn about yourself? About God?

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PRAYER

LESSON 6,7

Concert of Prayer

PRAYING TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL

☞ Lesson Purpose

To provide opportunity for the church planters to have united prayer for themselves and for other church planters throughout Central/Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

☞ Main Points

It is important to pray for the spread of the Gospel beyond our local area.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When he has mastered the content of this lesson, each participant will ...

- Know how to better use biblical prayers as a model for his praying.
- Be strengthened through the prayer of others.
- Pray not only for the local church planters, but also for church planters working in other countries.

☞ Suggestion to Trainers

Lead the trainees in praying through the prayer of Paul in Colossians 1:3-14, keeping the instruction time at a minimum so that most of the time can be spent praying.

It is suggested that trainees pray for church planter trainees in other countries who are going through the same training program. The countries where this is presently happening are Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine. For current information, contact the Alliance office in Budapest.

INTRODUCTION

One of the best ways to pray is to use biblical models. For this concert of prayer, follow the prayer of the Apostle Paul for the Colossians given in **Colossians 1:3-14** as your outline for praise, worship, and prayer. Note that this prayer begins and ends with thanksgiving to God (cf. Fig. 6.1). The fact that this is a common biblical pattern stresses the importance of praying *with thanksgiving*. We will follow the same cycle in this concert of prayer. We will progress from thanksgiving, to the Gospel, to knowledge, and back to thanksgiving again.

I. THANK THE FATHER—COLOSSIANS 1:3-5

Read together verses 3-5: *"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the Gospel that has come to you."*

A. Thank the Father for the saints

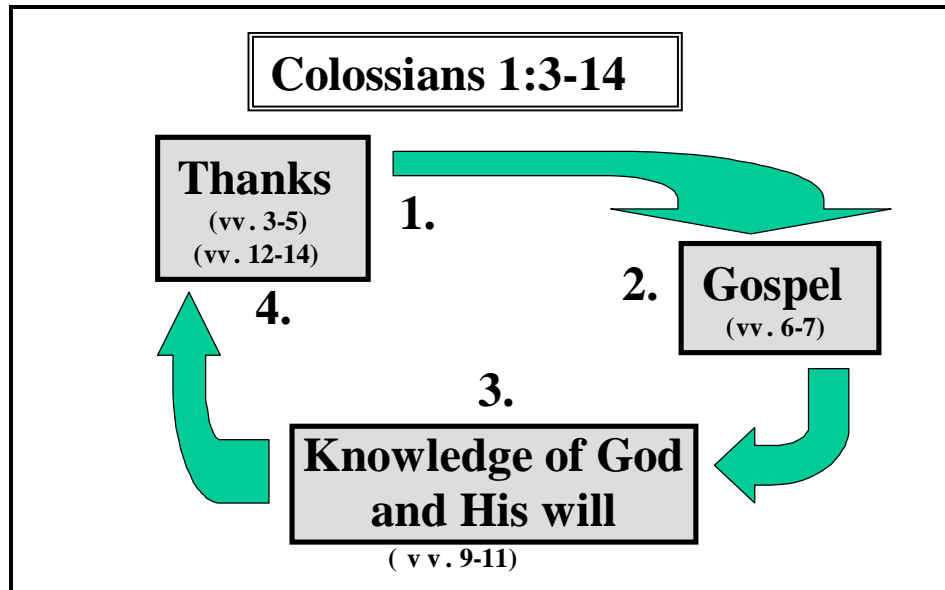
- in this training (specifically, by name).
- in your church.
- in your life: those who have had a spiritual influence in your life.

B. Thank the Father

- for the love He has shown to you.
- for the faith He has given you.
- for the hope that you have in the midst of a hopeless world.
- that the Gospel came to you.

Note: Be specific in your prayers. Thank and praise the Father for specific instances in your life where God has shown you love, faith, hope, and when you received the Gospel.

Figure 6.1 The Prayer Cycle



II. PRAY FOR THE GOSPEL TO BE HEARD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD—COLOSSIANS 1: 6-7

Read together verses 6 and 7: "...the Gospel that has come to you. All over the world this Gospel is producing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit."

- A. Pray that the Gospel would bear much fruit in the lives of people you have witnessed to (Be specific in your prayers).
- B. Pray that the Gospel would bear fruit in the places where others are planting churches. (The trainer will have a list of countries where Church Planter Training is going on now.)
- C. Pray for other missionaries that you know, that their ministry would result in much fruit.
- D. Pray that God would call more faithful ministers to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

III. PRAY THAT GOD WOULD FILL YOU WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL—COLOSSIANS 1:9-11

Silently read verses 9-11: "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him

in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience..."

A. In the spaces below, list the reasons that Paul prayed that they would be filled with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. What were the intended results? The first two are completed for you.

1. *That the believers may live a life worthy of the Lord*
2. *That the believers may please God*
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

B. Using the list you completed in part A above, pray these things for your fellow-participants in this training.

IV. GIVE THANKS TO THE FATHER—COLOSSIANS 1:12-14

Read together aloud verses 12-13: *"...and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

- A. Praise the Father for bringing you into His kingdom.**
- B. Praise the Father that you no longer live under bondage to Satan.**
- C. Praise the Father that you have been redeemed.**
- D. Praise the Father that your sins have been forgiven.**
- E. Praise the Father that you can call him "Abba" or "Daddy."**

LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP

3

LESSON

Spheres of Leadership

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help the trainees identify where they need to focus their leadership development efforts.

☞ Main Points

- Church planters need to make training of new leaders a high priority.
- Effective leadership training requires that a church planter spend more time and effort with those who will become leaders and multiply the ministry.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Be convinced that leadership training should be a priority for his or her time and effort.
- Know how to use the concept of 'Spheres of Leadership' to help plan leadership training efforts.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most difficult decisions that leaders face is how to use their time. Demands are endless. There are never enough hours to get everything done. What must be done, and what can wait? The answers are not simple, but there are some general principles. One of the most important guidelines is that new leaders must be trained in order for any ministry to grow and expand. This is especially true with the planting of churches. Without ongoing development of new leaders, the process will stagnate and die.

Every church planter should be involved in the development of new leaders. But even then, there needs to be some kind of guidance concerning which leaders to train, and how much time to invest in each one. Jesus is the best example of how to maintain this balance.

I. THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Jesus came to earth in order to pay for our sins, and to establish His Church. This Church would be His instrument to preach the Gospel to all nations. Considering the huge task that faced Jesus, it is truly amazing that He chose to spend His time as He did. He could have done incredible miracles every day, and spend all His time preaching to the multitudes who came to see them.

Indeed, Jesus did many miracles, but not daily, and not nearly as many as He could have done. Furthermore, He clearly chose to spend most of His time training twelve men rather than the multitudes. Instead of reaching as many people as possible, Jesus trained a handful of leaders who would reach others. The results were incredible. Although the powerful Roman Empire viciously persecuted the young, new Church, it survived and grew until Emperor Constantine himself became a Christian. Clearly Jesus' unusual method works.

Instead of reaching as many people as possible, Jesus trained a handful of leaders who would reach others.

A close look at the ministry of Jesus shows that He seems to have dealt with four distinct groups of people. These groups were:

- *The Three* – Jesus repeatedly took Peter, James and John apart from the other disciples and showed them more about His nature and purpose. Examples include Matthew 17:1, Mark 5:37, Mark 13:3, and Mark 14:33. As we look to the Book of Acts, we see that these three played a much more prominent role in the development of the Church than did the other disciples.
- *The Twelve* – The twelve apostles enjoyed a special relationship with Jesus. They were chosen for this honor from among the many disciples that followed him (Lk 6:13). Although the other disciples would play an important role in the new Church, the twelve (except for Judas) would provide the leadership. They were therefore a priority for Christ's time and effort.
- *The Disciples* – As we have seen above, there was a larger group of 'disciples' who were not chosen to be among the twelve. This group also left their homes and lifestyles in order to follow Him (Lk 14:27). The total number apparently changed often. On one occasion, many of them left Jesus (Jn 6:66). In Luke 10:1, the group was large enough for Jesus to select seventy-two of them for special ministry. After His resurrection, He appeared to more than 500 (1Co 15:6). And a core group of 120 devoted themselves to prayer as they waited for the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 1:15).
- *The Crowds* – Large numbers of people followed Jesus, listening to His teaching and waiting to see His miracles (Mt. 4:25; 13:2). We know that they numbered up to 5000, counting only the men (Lk 9:14). Some of them believed, and some did not. The people included in them ranged from disciples to Pharisees who wanted to catch Jesus in some fault.

Figure 3.1 Spheres of Jesus' Leadership

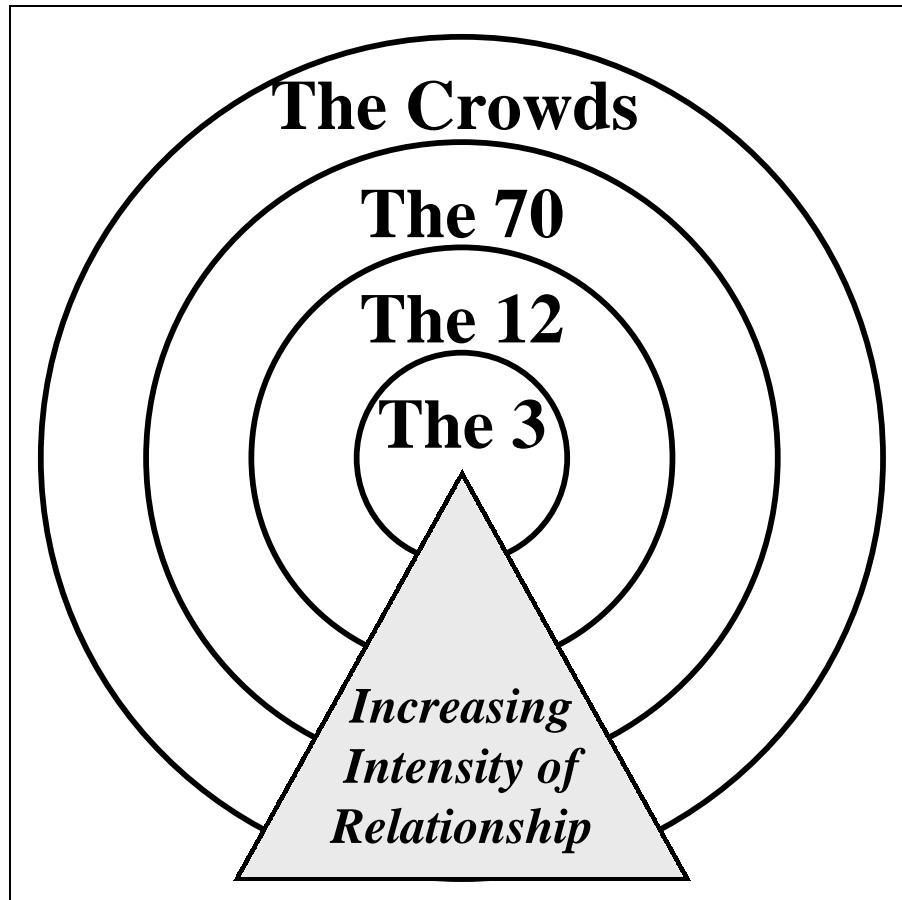


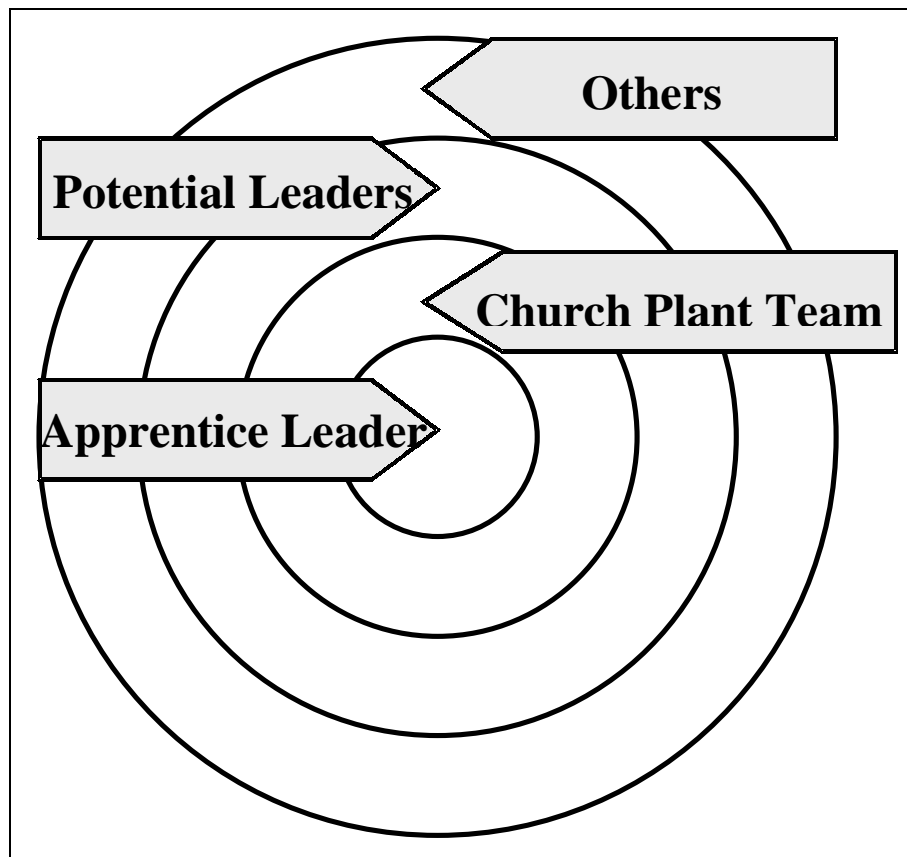
Figure 3.1 illustrates these various groups that followed Jesus as a series of spheres. The intensity of the relationship increases as we move from the crowds in the outer circle toward the inner circle composed of Peter, James and John.

As we look at Jesus' ministry, He seems to set a higher priority on the formation of the spheres nearer the center. As we move from the outer to the inner circle, He spent more time, revealed more truth, and expected more in return.

II. THE CHURCH PLANTING SPHERES OF LEADERSHIP

Church planters should also follow the example of Jesus by focusing their leadership training efforts on the appropriate people. If you were to draw out your relationships as spheres, it might look something like Figure 3.2. On the 'outside' would be the general group to whom you minister—including both believers and unbelievers. The next level in would include those believers who seem to have potential as future leaders. Further in would be the church planting team—those with whom you are working to plant the church and who are already involved in the ministry. The center would be the person (or perhaps 2-3 people) with whom you are working most intensely to prepare him or her for leadership.

Figure 3.2 Church Planters Spheres of Leadership



As you look at Figure 3.2, there are several key points that you should notice:

- The closer one is to the center, the more time and effort you should spend developing them for leadership.
- You should be working to some degree with *everyone* in your spheres, since you cannot be sure who will or will not become a good leader in the future.
- Ideally, those in the outer spheres will continually move to the inner ones as they grow and mature, and as the apprentice leaders are released for ministry.
- Because you spend most of your time with the inner spheres, the other people with whom you work need to be carrying on the ministry to the 'outer' spheres so that they are not neglected. You will be the 'equipper' and they will be the 'ministers.' This model is biblical (Eph 4:11-12).

- Apprentice leaders will most likely be members of the church planting team that makes up the next spheres. This is similar to Peter, James, and John who comprised the inner Three, but were members of the Twelve.

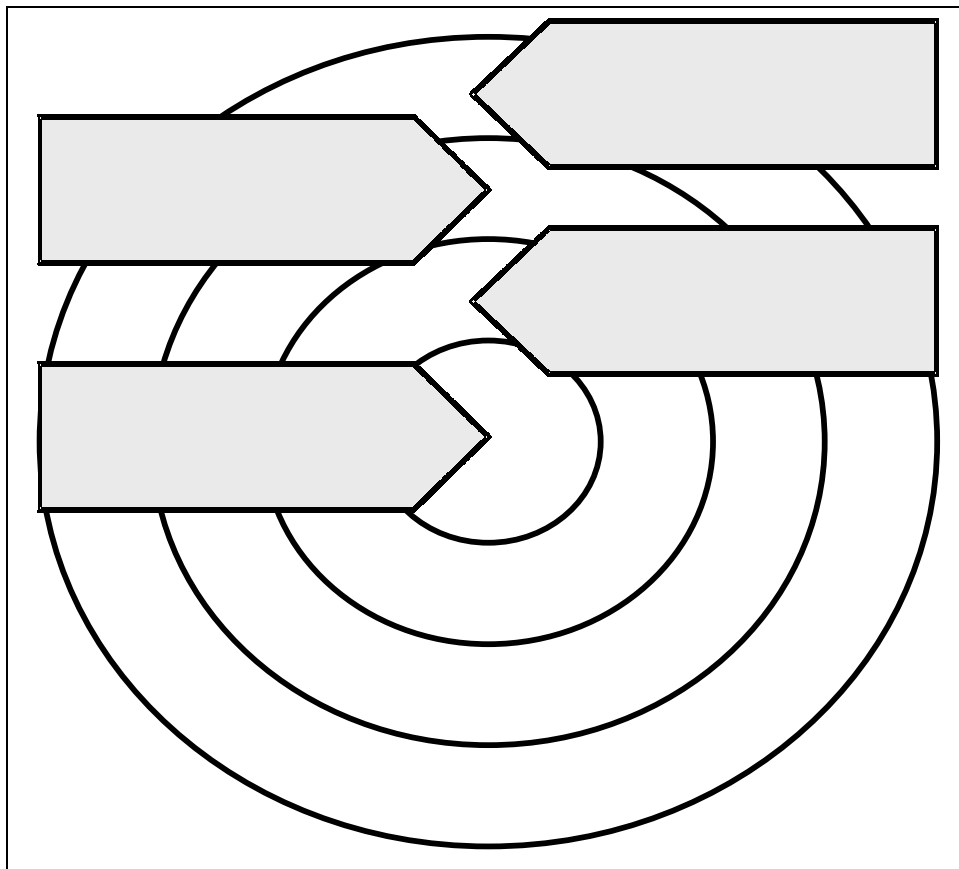
III. YOUR SPHERES OF LEADERSHIP

What about your situation? Who would fit into your spheres? Take a few minutes and fill in Figure 3.3 with the names of the individuals and groups to whom you minister that would best be described by each of the spheres of leadership.

You may have a formal church planting team, and you may not. The ideal situation would be to begin a new church plant as a team, for the reasons already explained in this material. Unfortunately, the ideal is not always possible. If you already have a team, the spheres should be easy for you to fill in. If not, consider the following ideas and fill it in the best you can:

- If you don't have a 'formal' church planting team, perhaps you have an 'informal' one. Is there a small group of committed individuals with whom you are working closely with the goal of planting the new church? Consider them your team, even if it is not 'official.' But as you lead them using the principles in this material, you might want to discuss the possibility of forming a more organized team in the near future.
- Sometimes you have to begin a work alone, such as in a new area with no known believers. If this is your situation, you can only fill in the outer circle, but you should start planning now how you will train new believers and move them up through the levels as soon as possible. Your situation is far from ideal, and it is doubtful that you will be very successful in planting the new church unless you can begin to find people for the inner spheres.

Figure 3.3 Your Spheres of Leadership



- If you have doubts about whether people should be in a 'higher' circle, write their name in with parenthesis around it. This will remind you to spend the necessary time to evaluate these people,

and to develop learning activities to see if they are indeed faithful. If you find that they are not, you can then remove them from that circle.

- Don't worry about having a lot of people in the inner spheres. Jesus was only able to intensely disciple three—Peter, James, and John. Don't be concerned if you are not able to accomplish more than the Lord. Having only one apprentice is better than having none. And it is much better to have only one and train him or her well, than to train several poorly.
- If you just can't think of anyone who might be in the inner spheres, you need to begin serious, specific, intense prayer that God would raise up leaders from within the new church plant.

Now that you have filled in your spheres, think about how you use your time and energy. If you have people at every level, you should be concentrating your time near the center. Are you? How much more time do you spend with those in the inner spheres than the outer ones? What kind of activities do you do with them? Are you consciously developing leadership and ministry skills in them?

Assuming that you are now spending enough time with the leaders and potential leaders, are the outside spheres being neglected? You will not have enough time and energy to minister to them alone and still develop leaders. It is imperative that you learn to delegate ministry to those who work with you. You need to be an equipper and resource person for those who are doing that ministry. How are you doing in that?

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW, AND APPLICATION

- How long will it take for a new believer to move through the spheres to the inner circle? That is about how long it will take to establish the church. Is this an acceptable time?
- How high a priority is leadership training in the eyes of most pastors in your area? How will this help or hinder church growth and the planting of new churches?

ACTION PLAN

Use your completed Figure 3.3 to develop a plan to help those in each circle develop as leaders. Then critically evaluate your plan to see if it is possible for you to implement it. Will you have enough time to spend with the 'inner' circle? How much? How often? Will someone minister to the 'outer' circle? Who? When? How? Make any needed adjustments to your plan, and then discuss it with your mentor. Then do it.

LEADERSHIP

LESSON 4

Introduction to Teamwork

WORKING WITH OTHERS

☞ Lesson Purpose

This lesson explains how working together with others in a church plant can increase the effectiveness of the church planter by complementing his abilities.

☞ Main Points

- Teamwork is more effective than working alone.
- Teamwork involves a group working together on a common task.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Understand the benefits of including others in ministry versus working alone.
- Understand the biblical basis for teamwork.
- Be committed to teamwork for effective church planting.

☞ Suggestions to Trainers

This lesson about teamwork relates to both formal church planting teams, and also to more informal groups of believers working together to plant a new church. It would be helpful to ask if any of the trainees are working on formal teams, and then decide which kind of teamwork would be the most helpful focus for your trainees.

INTRODUCTION

A typical church leader may find his congregation wandering aimlessly, even with his very clear direction. He might say to himself, "I can't get the congregation moving, even though I'm using every ounce of energy I have. I have to keep driving the people constantly just to keep the things done that we have going now. If I stopped pushing, our church would simply be adrift." How sadly true these words are for so many churches. Strong direction from strong leadership has, over the years, lulled many congregations to sleep. They begin to move only when they are pushed, and to do only as much as they are instructed to do (Adapted from Kilinski, pp. 159, 160).

"Work alone" leaders, like the one described above, believe the only way to lead is to use personal influence and charisma to motivate, push and persuade the masses. For someone who takes this approach, success is limited to the number of people that he can influence and the extent of his personal ability and creativity.

I. WHAT IS TEAMWORK?

Teamwork involves working together with others on a task (such as planting a church), rather than doing it alone. As such, teamwork requires an agreed-upon goal that the group is working to accomplish. By doing the work together, the members of the group (or team) make use of the varying gifts and abilities of each member, as well as the increased amount of time and effort each can contribute to the task.

Teamwork involves working together with others on a task, rather than doing it alone.

Teamwork might take the form of a formal ministry team, with a focus on starting a new church. In this situation, there would normally be a recognized team leader, and perhaps some kind of official

agreement spelling out the task and the responsibilities of each member. This kind of arrangement has many advantages. Roles are clearly defined, and so is the goal. Usually, there is a strong system of accountability that keeps each team member effectively contributing to the common goal. However, teamwork should not be limited only to such formal situations.

Even when a formal 'team' does not exist, or when cultural issues hinder a team's formation, teamwork can and should be used. Almost any difficult task is easier when a group works on it together. This is especially true when the task is a new church plant, where countless man-hours are needed to evangelize, disciple, and edify potential church members. One person attempting such a task alone usually gives way to frustration and exhaustion, rather than to the reaching of the multitudes. Teamwork is a better way.

Almost any difficult task is easier when a group works on it together.

Even informal groups working together to plant a church will function more smoothly if there is one person who is recognized as the 'leader.' Hopefully, that leader will be functioning as a servant-leader, building up the other members, rather than "lording it over" the group. This lesson focuses on that "leader" and how he can create an atmosphere that fosters teamwork. There are several characteristics common to both formal and informal teamwork:

- The ministry vision (goal) is determined by the group.
- Decisions are made by the group.
- Problems are owned by the group.
- The members of the group are mutually accountable to one another.
- Each member uses his or her strengths to contribute to the successful completion of the task.
- Someone is recognized as 'the leader.'
- The group accomplishes more than the individuals could do alone.

II. BIBLICAL BASIS FOR TEAMWORK

A. We Were Created to Be 'Together'

God calls his children to work together. We see this principle as early in the Bible as creation itself. God first created Adam but soon declared "It is not good that man should be alone." God then created Eve to be a "suitable help mate for him."

Solomon, in all his wisdom, also understood that we need each other.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

If one falls down, his friend can help him up.

But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

Also, if two lie together, they will keep warm.

But how can one keep warm alone?

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

B. Leaders Should Not Work Alone

Moses had enormous responsibilities as the leader of the Israelites enroute to the Promised Land. Moses accomplished much and was faithful as a leader, and yet, if we examine his faults, we notice that he worked alone too much. We do occasionally see Joshua and Aaron at his side, but more often we see Moses acting as the sole individual responsible for the multitudes. There were times when this became too much for Moses and he felt himself to be a victim of the people (Ex 17:4; Nu 11:10-14).

When Moses was reunited with his father-in-law Jethro in Exodus 18, we see that Jethro was very impressed with all the God had done through Moses (Ex 18:1-12). But when Jethro noticed that Moses was the sole judge and leader for all the people, he immediately told Moses that what he was doing was "not good." Moses apparently thought that serving the people alone in this way was commendable. But he needed help to lighten the workload and make sure that the work was done properly. So Jethro set up a plan by which Moses could share this responsibility with others (Ex 18:17-26). Later in a similar situation, when Moses was sad about the rebellion of the people, God saw that Moses needed support and established the 70 elders to help 'carry the burden' (Nu 11:16-17).

Moses serving the people alone was "not good."

C. Working Together Is the Normal Pattern for New Testament Ministry

We see teamwork again at several points in the New Testament. Jesus called His disciples and worked with them as a group. When Jesus introduced them to ministry, he multiplied their efforts by sending them out 'two by two' (Mk 6:7, Lk 10:1). Peter went with *other Christians* to evangelize in Caesarea (Ac 10:23). The Holy Spirit set apart Paul and Barnabas as the first missionary team (Ac 13:2). After the first missionary journey, this team multiplied into two (Ac 15:36-41). Paul had an open door for ministry, yet he held off from taking the opportunity because he was alone at the time (2Co 2:12-13). When leaders were appointed in the early church, normally a group of elders was appointed to lead each church (Ac 14:23).

The reasons for the biblical emphasis on teamwork is obvious: in the multiplicity of counselors there is great wisdom (Pr 15:22), and no one person has all the gifts (Eph 4, 1Co 12). We need one another. Ministry today should benefit from the advantages of teamwork. As few as 2-5 people working together can drastically increase the growth of the new church. In your church plant, look for those who seem to have a vision similar to yours, and ask them to pray about joining you in ministry.

Teamwork can dramatically increase the growth of the new church.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK

A. A Common Vision and Understanding of the Task

A group of people cannot move together if they are not going in the same direction. Teamwork requires that each member knows the goal towards which the group is working. Some formal teams have a purpose statement, which in one sentence explains why they work together. In other situations, the purpose statement of the church could be the common vision that keeps a church planting team working together.

If you have not taken the time to discuss and agree on a goal with those you work with, do so as soon as possible. This process in itself can be a very valuable experience. As you talk about the purpose of your group, the personal passions, desires and preferences of each member may become clearer. These desires may not be made known otherwise. As the unique passions and desires of team members are discovered, consider how they can be incorporated into an overall vision. Often you will find that God has brought together just the right "mix" of gifts and abilities in order to enable you to accomplish the task.

Incorporate the passions and desires of group members into an overall vision.

However, when people working together have incompatible approaches or conflicting goals, working together is not always possible. In such a case, either the members must give up particular desires, or they form a separate team, as Paul and Barnabas did in Acts 15:36-41.

Review your common goal on a regular basis with your group. Do not assume that each member understands it (or remembers it!), so that it does not have to be revisited.

Here are some examples of purpose statements:

- Our team exists to plant a healthy, multiplying church in _____.

- Our group exists to minister to alcoholics in _____ in such a way that they will find salvation from their sin and freedom from their addiction.
- We are working together to facilitate the birth and development of a saturation Church planting movement in _____.
- Our group exists to plan and lead meaningful worship when believers gather at _____ Church.

B. Time Spent Together for Prayer and Planning

The participation of group members is most valuable when people know what is happening and can adequately communicate ideas, needs and desires to one another. This can be accomplished by meeting together weekly (or more often) and doing the following things:

1. Pray Together

Nothing binds people together in unity as much as prayer. Effective church planters and church planting groups are committed to prayer. They pray together for personal needs, ministry goals and also for the lost with whom they have contact.

2. Discuss Individual Ministries

Teamwork requires taking time to hear what individual members are doing. Hearing first hand how other team members are contributing can help the team grow closer, build morale and teach ministry skills.

3. Plan Together

Planning together can be a very valuable experience. Some leaders make plans and then tell their group what they are to do. When group members are inexperienced or immature, they may need the leader to temporarily do this. But more often, the leader should involve those working with him in the planning process. People are most committed to the things that they themselves have been involved in creating.

The leader should involve those working with him in the planning process.

Planning maximizes the potential of teamwork. This planning could involve: 1) looking at the common task, 2) determining what the group needs in order to reach its goal 3) identifying ministry resources 4) developing strategies for reaching goals.

4. Edify and Equip Each Other (As Needed)

A good leader will facilitate the development of the ministry skills of each member of his group. He will set aside time to help them to be more effective in preaching, evangelism, or caring for the sick. Reviewing the ministry of the recent past may provide the teachable moment when someone is willing to learn.

If the group that you lead does not have regular meetings, then consider starting them according to the pattern above.

C. Relationships Characterized By Love

Teamwork assumes a willingness to harmonize and work together. Group members need to possess a willingness to be open about themselves. Closeness is gained by acceptance, shared experiences and time. Therefore, mutual respect, understanding, encouragement and an emphasis on serving one another are key elements to teamwork.

Group members need to possess a willingness to be open about themselves.

In order to achieve this kind of closeness, relationships among the group members must be based upon a special kind of love—God's love. This love does not love another person because of his personality, looks, ability or intelligence. It is motivated by God's infinite and unconditional love for us. When we apply this kind of love we encourage and build up one another as Paul says to the

Thessalonians (1Th 5:11). Jesus Christ is the model for the leader who wants to learn to “consider others better than themselves” (Php 2:1-8).

One test of love is the ability to handle conflict. Conflict is normal, but when there is disagreement, it must be acknowledged and discussed. Groups that love one another have the confidence to discuss even things that they do not agree on. They recognize that each member is important to the group and will not let disagreement destroy their relationship.

D. Clear and Diverse Roles

Many people in ministry look for people exactly like themselves to join with them in church planting. This is a big mistake, and it ignores the fact that we are a body with many parts, and many different gifts (1Co 12:12-31). A variety of people can better accomplish complex tasks. For example, a group planting a new church together might need people responsible for the following:

A variety of people can better accomplish complex tasks.

- Evangelism
- Discipleship
- Worship
- Finances/facilities
- Assimilation of new members
- Cell group ministry
- Ministry training
- Care for the sick
- Hospitality

Teamwork demands that members understand each other's responsibilities. If members do not know who is responsible for certain areas, then frustration levels are bound to rise, and the ministry will suffer. If no one is in charge of worship, the group might find itself scrambling each worship time, since no one knows the plan for the service. When no one is in charge of finances, members may not have the funds necessary to purchase evangelistic literature when it is needed.

Teamwork is most effective when each member knows his or her particular role, and is placed in situations that build on his or her strengths. When this happens, the result of the group's efforts multiply, because every member is working to their maximum potential. A primary responsibility of the group leader is to see that this happens.

Teamwork is most effective when each member is placed in situations that build on his or her strengths.

E. Honest and Open Communication between Members

A major barrier to good communication is the tendency to evaluate and to judge without really listening. When a group is practicing teamwork, they seek to understand others before giving advice or sharing their own opinion. This kind of communication shows love and respect for the other person.

This kind of communication happens only when we take the time to understand problems before offering a solution. One good rule of thumb is to always restate a problem or the opinion of another before responding. Restating gives a chance for feedback and correction. It also shows understanding and respect.

When communication problems arise among your group members, remember the following:

- Ask questions to clarify the thoughts, feelings or opinions of others.
- Recognize and admit your personal desires, agenda and ambitions.
- Maintain unconditional acceptance even when you do not agree.

If the conflict is interpersonal, remember:

- Speak only to the individuals who are involved in a situation or issue (Mt 18:15).
- Do not enter into gossip or slander (2Co 12:20).
- Watch your words (Jas 3:1-12).
- Bless, and do not curse (Ro 12:14).

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What advantages are there for church planters to work together with others, rather than working alone? What are some disadvantages to this approach?
- Teamwork requires a common vision. What are three things you can do as a leader to help those who work with you formulate and remember a common vision?
- Sometimes meetings are seen as “boring” and a “waste of time.” What kinds of meetings would be a waste of time, and what kinds of meetings would be beneficial to a group working together to plant a new church?
- In your particular context, what roles are necessary to start a new church (e.g. evangelist, discipler, etc.)? Is it necessary to have all the roles present before you start a church?

ACTION PLAN

List four key tasks that need to be accomplished in your church planting task. Consider to whom you might assign responsibility for each task, based on the designated gifting and strengths of others believers who might be willing to help. Then decide how you might recruit and train the person for that task. Then, do it.

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LEADERSHIP

LESSON 5

Team Development

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to explain how a Christian leader can form a church planting team and develop the character and abilities of the members.

☞ Main Points

- The key to team formation is commitment to a common task, such as planting a new church.
- A leader's first responsibility is to develop the character and abilities of the team.
- Teamwork doesn't just happen—it evolves through four stages.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Know the basic steps to form a church planting team.
- Understand that the role of a team leader is to develop the character and skills of each team member.

☞ Suggestions to Trainers

Although the material in this lesson concerns developing the members of a church planting team, it is applicable to a cell group leader, who also must strive to develop his or her cell group members in similar ways. It is also valuable for a pastor who seeks to develop members and other leaders in his church.

INTRODUCTION

The advantages of planting a church as a team have been discussed in previous lessons. Perhaps you already have a team. Maybe you don't, but would like to have one. You might be undecided and would like to know more about how a team would work. This lesson helps to address those issues.

In many ways, the success of a church planting team hinges on the leader. Often, it is the responsibility of the leader to recruit the team members. And while a church planting team should work together to make decisions about vision, task and purpose, there still must be one person, the leader, who is responsible to help them strive toward their vision and reach the goals they have set. This lesson will assume that you are that person who will form and lead the team in the successful planting of a church.

I. FORMING YOUR TEAM

Even if you already have a group of people working with you to plant a new church, you may or may not have a team. Much has been written about the essence of a team. There is also a tremendous amount of research on how to lead a team. The majority of this research is secular, and while it offers helpful ideas, is not sufficient to a good church planting team. As you assemble a team for the spiritual task of church planting, you will need to seek individuals who have three basic characteristics:

- Commitment to the goal of planting a church.
- Godly character.
- Agreement to maximize strengths through clear roles.

It is desirable, but not necessary, that potential team members have all these characteristics. If they are lacking in some of the traits, they might be able to grow in those areas during the church planting process. Your role as a leader will be vital in these kinds of situations. You will need to be aware of the weaknesses and encourage growth regularly. If you are successful, your team can model the fact that all believers are growing and maturing—none of us is perfect. This might make team members more approachable and sensitive to the new contacts that you will seek to win.

On the other hand, planting a new church is a serious undertaking. There might not be time or energy enough to sort through known weaknesses in the team as you are working to evangelize the lost and make disciples of them. Jesus did not pick perfect men as His disciples, but He also spent three and a half years changing their lives before they were ready. How much time do you have? The presence of immature members on the team could possibly cause great harm through ungodly actions or attitudes. Therefore, you will need to evaluate both the strengths and weaknesses of each potential member carefully and prayerfully before you make a decision.

If you are still forming a team, evaluate these qualities in each potential member carefully. If you already have a team that includes some members who are weak in the three qualities listed above, you should make it a priority to begin helping them to overcome them. Failing that, you will need to consider asking them to leave the team.

A. Commitment to the Goal of Planting a Church

The importance of a common goal can hardly be overstated. This seems logical. In the sporting world, for example, ‘successful’ teams are often composed of people that might not be particularly compatible in any other situation. In fact, they may not even like one another. But a strong commitment to the goal of winning the game can often help them overcome their differences and work/play together.

If a group of unbelievers can demonstrate such cooperation and sacrifice for the sake of sport, how much greater might be its effect on a church planting team? If each member of your church planting team maintains a strong and vital commitment to seeing the church planted, they will be much more understanding and flexible in their ministry relationships. This strong commitment might already exist, or you might have to help them develop that vision. Either way, you will also have to help them continue to *maintain* that commitment.

B. Godly Character

Consider for a moment the disciples that Jesus chose. They were hardly an educated or ‘capable’ group. Jesus evidently looked for another qualification. You should do the same. What was the qualification? When the disciples were faced with choosing men to help them, they looked for men “full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). They apparently did not care about education, age, ability, experience, or the other characteristics that we might consider important. Rather, they valued godly character.

Paul he told Timothy to choose “faithful” (Gk.*pistos*)² men (2Ti 2:2). In the same verse, he says they will be “able” to teach others. The word “able” or “capable” is a translation of the Greek word *ikanos*³. This translation has led some to emphasize education or ability, in contrast to Acts 6. A study of the usage of *ikanos* shows that a better translation would be “worthy.” Consider the same word in Matthew 3:11—“whose sandals I am not fit (*ikanos*) to carry.” Do you think John wasn’t “able” to carry sandals, or that he was not “worthy?” In Matthew, *ikanos* is translated as “deserve.”

This means that Paul agrees with the apostles that godly character is the most important issue. Without godly character, we are not “worthy” of serving the Lord. It should be the primary quality that you look for in a

Godly character is the most important issue.

² ΠΙΣΤΟΣ
³ ΙΚΑΝΟΣ

team member. God will bless such choices. Whether your team members are men, women, or both, the same biblical principle would seem to apply. This does not mean that training, ability, or experience are of no value. But these things are secondary to a godly, Spirit-filled life.

C. Agreement to Maximize Strengths through Clear Roles

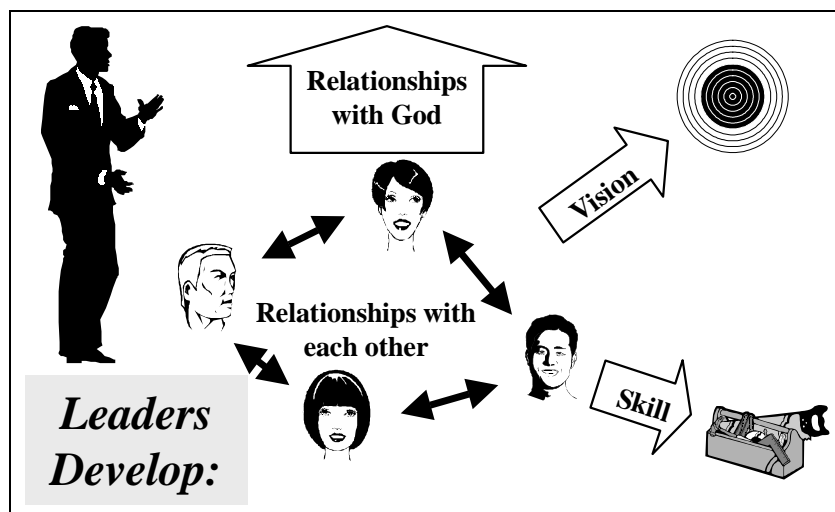
A church planting team should represent the church it seeks to plant. The biblical model is a body, with its diversity working together in unity (1Co 12). This image of the body illustrates the advantage of the different team members having complementary abilities and spiritual gifts. A good church planting team will have this diversity. There might be an evangelist, a counselor, a shepherd, a teacher, someone to show mercy, etc. Each is important. There should probably also be diversity in gender, age, and personality. The exact balance will depend on the needs of your situation and the available members. Look to diversity as an advantage rather than a weakness.

Like the body, this diversity is valuable only if guided toward the common goal. It must have a head. In the same way, a team must have a head, or leader—probably you. The emphasis is on guiding the members into ministry, rather than “lording it over them.” This ‘headship’ should be *functional* rather than *positional*. Make sure that the team agrees to be led.

II. LEADING YOUR TEAM

The specific responsibilities of a leader will be related to the purpose of the team he leads. The following objectives reflect the responsibilities of a leader in the context of starting a new church. As you lead your team, strive to do each of the following activities.

Figure 5.1 Leaders Develop Their Team



A. Develop Your Team Members' Relationships with God

Be a pastor to your team. Offer spiritual support when they are in need spiritually. This assumes that you know each of the team members well enough to know when they have spiritual needs. Spend time with them, and do not be afraid to ask them "hard questions" about their walk with the Lord and struggles that they may be having.

The spiritual health and growth of each member of your team will be directly related to their understanding of God's Word and their ability to put biblical truths into practice in ministry and in their everyday lives. Pray for their spiritual health and growth. If they do not have one already, help team members to develop a personal discipline of Bible study and prayer. Pray that they will discover and develop their spiritual gifts, and then actively look for ways to give them opportunities to do this.

B. Develop Your Team Members' Relationships with Each Other

Teamwork requires that team members understand and trust one another. If there are relationship problems in your team, the ministry of the team will suffer. You will need to help team members develop and sustain trust and love for one another. Keep the following goals in mind as you do this:

If there are relationship problems in your team, the ministry will suffer.

- Help the team members understand their temperaments.
- Help the team members understand their relational strengths and weaknesses.
- Help the team members develop positive attitudes towards differences.
- Identify relationship tension areas.

C. Develop Team Members' Vision for Ministry

Many church planting situations are difficult. In these cases, your team needs to see progress or they will get discouraged. This is especially true in the early stages, when the foundation is being laid, and a little later, when there may only be a few converts. As the leader, look for ways to help the team see the big picture, the vision (the Z!), so that they will be inspired to be more dedicated to the task (Gal 6:9).

Do not assume that the vision and goals are understood by every member of the team. People in most teams tend to lose sight of the vision if not constantly reminded of it by the leader. Keep the vision out front, and whenever possible challenge the team to think just a little bigger, so that they do not become satisfied with less than what God intends for them.

D. Develop Your Team Members' Ministry Skills

Most people avoid ministry if they do not have the skills required to carry out the task. Many people do not evangelize or study the Bible because they feel that they do not know how. Be willing to take time to improve the ministry skills that your team will need to plant the new church. Practice inductive Bible study together. Talk about and demonstrate several different ways to do evangelism.

Be willing to take time to improve the ministry skills of those working with you to plant the new church.

When training people for ministry, do not assume that good example and general instruction are sufficient. Some people need direct and personal contact (1Th 5:14). As you teach ministry skills remember the following:

1. Prepare your heart and mind before you advise

Spend time in prayer, asking God to give you wisdom in working either with the entire team, or with one member. Put together a concrete plan for what skills you want to teach, and the different ways in which you might be able to do this. Think about what was helpful for you when you first learned how to do different types of ministries.

2. Look for teachable moments (Pr 25:11 "A word aptly spoken")

The time to instruct is when:

- People are not threatened.
- You are not angry or frustrated.
- The other person recognizes his or her need for help or support.

III. UNDERSTANDING YOUR TEAM

Your team will not immediately or automatically function the way you might desire. Every team goes through a process of growth and maturation. The chart in table 5.2 describes four common phases that teams normally go through as they grow and mature together. It is essential for the leader to be able to identify where his or her team is in regard to leadership, common purpose, relationships, roles, flexibility,

communication and spiritual life. Each of these areas represents an important aspect of the overall health and maturity of a church planting team.

Table 5.2 Four Phases of Team Development

	1. IMMATURE TEAM <i>Leader-centered</i>	2. YOUNG TEAM <i>People-centered</i>	3. LEARNING TEAM <i>Process-centered</i>	4. MATURING TEAM <i>Purpose-centered</i>
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leaders make most of the decisions Directive (telling) style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions are still made by the leader but more input is given, more options are considered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Becomes more participative as members work towards the purpose Decisions are made by the team efficiently and effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leader is flexible in style, adapting to situation Some leadership is task-driven, so that those with skills assume temporary leadership roles Tasks are delegated
Common Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No shared understanding of what needs to be done Confused purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team still lacks unity of purpose but becomes aware of lack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose is discussed and clarified in the minds of team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness becomes the focus Progress becomes pertinent Internalized
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little or no understanding of others ... their strengths, weaknesses, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus is on getting to know and understand others, their strengths, weaknesses, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love and loyalty among the members is developing Members have become less defensive and more open to input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pride in team membership Weakness is accepted & accounted for Commitment to helping others reach their full potential
Specified Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well-defined on individual basis Not yet clear how roles fit with the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The matching of strengths & situation is discussed but little is done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roles are clarified—strengths are matched to situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Division of labor is apparent but with concern for the whole task
Flexible Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rules, processes & procedures imposed from the top or outside 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problems are faced more openly Risky issues are discussed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team explores different approaches & alternate routes Focus in on efficiency There is agreement on how things will be done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual initiative is encouraged Flexibility becomes the keynote with both strategy and method
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little effective communication Defensiveness Mistakes are covered up Self-centered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication is more open and effective Self-centered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open, task-oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication is characterized by trust, openness, honesty, cooperation and confrontation
Dynamic Spiritual Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prayer is routine Faith walk not owned as a team experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team meets regularly to pray for common needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpersonal relationships are measured against the Scriptures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prayer is a natural, first response to new problems Obedient faith is stimulated Spiritual warfare entered into by the team

In an ideal situation, a team of Christians working together would be at the same level in all areas. However, in reality, they may be very immature in terms of leadership and specified roles, but more mature in the area of relationships and communication. This is more realistic to expect.

This chart has a two-fold purpose. One, it can be used by the leader to help identify where his or her team is in terms of development and maturity. Second, it can be used to help the leader to see how the team needs to develop further, and how to tell when they have reached a higher level of development.

For example, in the area of leadership, a team might let the leader make all the decisions and always tell them what to do. Using the chart, the leader sees that

A leader should identify where his or her team is in terms of development and maturity.

the team members need to participate more in making the decisions. He or she can then think of several ways to ask for input, request others to help, etc. in order to help the team grow and mature. This process can and should be repeated for all the areas that are listed.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- How does being a leader of a team that is planting a church differ from being a leader in general?
- The responsibilities of a leader are focused on developing character, vision and ministry skills in the members of his or her team. Why bother with all that when there is a job to be done (i.e. plant a new church)?
- In your own words, describe the role of a leader as it relates to the task to be accomplished and the members of the church planting team.
- What can happen to a team which matures in some areas but remains immature in other areas?
- Is a leader able to help his or her team develop and grow, or is this simply a "natural" process which will happen on any team that spends enough time together?

ACTION PLAN

- Using the chart in table 5.2, "Four Phases of Team Development," determine at what level your team is currently in each of the listed areas. On a separate piece of paper, make a list of each area (leadership, purpose, relationships, etc.) and write down where your team is at (phase 1, 2, 3 or 4).
- Look at the chart to see what would be some characteristics of a team that is more developed in each of these areas. For each area listed on your paper, write down at least three concrete, measurable things which you can do in order to help your team to develop and mature in this area.
- Begin to implement your ideas, and after two months, review this chart and repeat this exercise. In what areas did your team grow? In what areas did it stay pretty much the same? What other ways can you try to help your team continue to grow and develop in these "static" areas? Review your ideas and insights with your mentor.

SOURCES

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CELL GROUPS

CELL GROUPS

7

LESSON

Cell Group Discussion Dynamics

☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to equip the cell group leader with the skills necessary to lead meaningful times of discussion in the group.

☛ Main Points

- The goal of cell group discussion is to involve the group members.
- The group leader should be aware of common discussion problems.

☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Understand communication skills which are necessary for the cell group leader.
- Know the principles of developing good discussion questions.
- Practice identifying and resolving problems that arise during the cell group discussion time.

☛ Appendix

7A Cell Groups: Sample Discussion Questions

☛ Suggestions to Trainers

Although the purpose of this lesson is to equip a cell group leader to lead times of good discussion, the discussion itself is not the ultimate goal in a cell group. A time of meaningful discussion between group members encourages fellowship, strengthens relationships, and provides a means for learning and applying biblical truth. By learning how to lead discussion well and avoid communication problems, the cell group leader will be able to build trust and commitment between group members and motivate the group to fulfill its purposes.

Note that Leadership lesson 8 “Styles for Interaction” in manual 4 complements this lesson in the area of how to communicate well with others in a cell group.

Plan to spend at least 20 minutes of class time for the “Handling Discussion Problems” exercise at the end of this lesson.

I. LEADING DISCUSSION IN A CELL GROUP

The value of good discussion time in a cell group cannot be emphasized enough. It is through discussion that the members learn more about each other and grow closer to one another in Christian love. Discussion of the Bible is a vital part of the process of discipleship and growth in the life of a believer. Cell groups add the dynamic of interactive discussion that is missing in a large group meeting. The Holy Spirit uses these discussions between believers and unbelievers in order to draw people closer to Jesus.

The role of the cell group leader is to facilitate meaningful discussion and to model to the members of his group how to listen, ask good questions, and avoid problems that might arise. In this way, the leader continues to help the members of the cell group grow and mature in their faith and in their ministry skills.

The cell group leader facilitates meaningful discussion and models to the group members how to listen, ask good questions, and avoid problems.

This lesson is designed simply to teach a form, or method, for leading times of discussion in a cell group. Trust, commitment and strong relationships should be the outcome of group discussions, not the ability of the leader to “put on a good show.” Each trainee should think about group communication and interaction in light of his own culture, and then use appropriate discussion skills which will build trust between the cell group members. The following keys to good communication are simple and easy to use:

A. Listen

One of the most important skills of the leader in discussion is **listening**. Listening involves both physically and emotionally focusing on the person who is talking. Remember that your body language speaks louder, perhaps, than your words. Maintain good eye contact, and don’t be preoccupied with other things while someone else is talking.

B. Ask

Often, people who are more extroverted will tend to do all the talking in a cell group. If this happens, **ask others** in the group their ideas or opinions. Don’t let one or two people control the conversation.

C. Clarify

Sometimes you will need to **clarify** something that has been said. “Max, what did you mean when you used the word ‘saved’?” Do not assume you understand what someone has said, without restating what you think she said in your own words. Or, ask her to restate her thought in a different way. “Lena, I’m a bit confused—could you explain that differently?”



D. Justify

It can be helpful to ask people to **justify** their comments. Ask why they feel that way, where they find that idea in the passage of Scripture being studied, etc. “Vladimir, I don’t come to the same conclusion as you did from these verses of Scripture. Could you help us better understand your point of view?”

E. Extend

Sometimes you will need to **extend** the discussion by asking if anyone has more to add, or asking how what has been said relates to a previous thought.

F. Redirect

When someone in the group is talking only to the leader, **redirect** his or her questions or comments to others in the group. “Bob, I can understand why you would feel that way. Laura, what is your impression of Bob’s suggestion?” If the discussion is always between the leader and only one other person in the group, the rest of the people have nothing to contribute and feel left out. Communication in a group should go back and forth between the members of the group, and not just one way from the leader to each group member.

G. Summarize

At several points in a discussion, it can be helpful to stop and **summarize** what has been said. Point out main ideas or contributions that individuals have made. This will help keep the focus of the discussion on the main topic, and provide a sense of accomplishment to the group members.

H. Affirm

Remember to **affirm** the group members by recognizing and appreciating what each person is saying. Thank them for their contribution to the discussion. “Lisa, I want you to know that I appreciate that you shared your thoughts on this with us.” Even if the comment which a person

made requires amending, the speaker is important and should be acknowledged for their willingness to contribute to the discussion.

II. DEVELOPING GOOD QUESTIONS

The questions you ask in your cell group can greatly enhance the relationships between members and can facilitate the discovery of truth in God's word. Questions that are well thought out will encourage people to share about themselves, their thoughts and their feelings.

A. Fellowship Questions

Questions are an important part of building personal relationships between members in the group. Appendix 7A, "Sample Discussion Questions," contains examples of questions that will help the members of your group get to know each other better. It is important that you learn how to format your own questions that relate to the lives of the people in your group. Ask questions that will enable members to share about themselves things that would not easily be seen by others: *"What is something that you are worried about?" "What is one change that's coming for you in the future? How do you feel about it?"* These types of questions encourage people to talk about their inner thoughts and feelings, which builds a caring and supportive atmosphere in the group.

It is important that you learn how to format your own questions that relate to your life and to the lives of the people in your group.

Ask questions that can be answered in 2-3 minutes: *"Could you please share one area of struggle that you are working on this week?"* In the early stages of a new group, occasionally ask questions that will let members affirm one another: *"What one good thing can you say about at least one other person in our group?"*

Fellowship questions are simple and yet strengthen relationships in a group. They do not require negative answers (e.g. don't ask, *"What is your worst fault?"*). Everyone in the group is able to answer fellowship questions, and they help members get to know and love one another. These types of questions ask people to share from their heart, not give opinions on issues.

B. Bible Discussion Questions

The questions you ask during the Bible discussion time will be slightly different from those you use during fellowship time. You will want to develop questions that will guide the group through an inductive study of a portion of Scripture. When your cell group is still very new, your questions will be an example to them of how to study inductively.

As the group grows and matures, you will want to have them begin to ask the questions that will give them insight into God's word. You can do this formally by requesting one of the members to lead the study in one of the meetings. Or, you can do this informally, by simply asking the group for ideas as you go through a passage of Scripture together. You might ask things like, "What could we ask about these verses in order to observe carefully what has been written?" or "What kinds of application questions can you think of to relate this passage to our everyday lives?"

Remember, the focus during a Bible discussion time is not simply Bible knowledge, but to discover truth in God's word which will result in changed lives.

One possibility is to take one or two meetings and develop a Bible discussion lesson as a group. Not only would this teach the members of the group how to develop good questions, but it would help to further prepare them for future ministry, especially those who will become leaders of cell groups themselves.

When a cell group leader uses good Bible discussion questions, he or she models for the group how to lead a Bible discussion time. These lessons provide guidelines and practice for leading Bible discussion times in a cell group. Remember, the focus during a Bible discussion time is not simply Bible knowledge, but rather the ability to discover truth in God's word which will result in changed lives.

III. DISCUSSION PROBLEMS

Every group will have some members who like to talk and some who are more quiet. Some people can get off track and talk about anything besides the topic at hand. Others like to argue in order to prove their point. As a cell group leader, you will soon find that problems will arise in the discussion time. How you handle those problems is important to the growth of the group as a caring community, as well as the personal growth of each group member.

A. Types of Discussion Problems

1 *Someone is talking too much / Someone is not talking at all*

These are perhaps two of the most common problems during a time of discussion. How do you tactfully ask someone who talks too much to be quiet and let someone else contribute to the discussion? When someone is talking too much, affirm that person's comment and then direct the discussion to someone else in the group. "Tom, that's a good point. How about someone else who has not shared yet? Are there other ideas? Jim, you have been quiet tonight, what do you think?" The leader can also choose to sit beside the talkative person, so he or she is able to make more eye contact with others in the group and encourage them to share.

Sometimes the only way you will get shy or quiet people in the group to talk (at least initially) is to ask them questions directly. "Janet, what are your thoughts on this verse?" Again, the leader can also sit across from a quiet person in the group (assuming the group is sitting in a circle) so that he or she can encourage them to share through eye contact and body language.

You might also have someone in your group who has been a Christian for a while, and who knows the answers to many of the questions during the Bible discussion time. The problem is, this person also gives all the answers before the others have time to think about it or venture their own answers. In this case, it can be helpful to talk with this person privately and enlist his support to help you include the rest of the members of the group into the discussion. Maybe this person is a potential apprentice leader whom God is wanting you to mentor.

2 *The speaker is being too general or vague*

Sometimes people find it difficult to express what they really want to say. You can help them focus their idea or main point by asking for clarification. "Can you give us an example of that point? Your general idea is good, but I wonder if we can bring it into sharper focus. Does anyone know of an example of something like this?" Or you might need to rephrase in your own words what was said, in order to make it more clear and understandable.

3 *The conversation has gotten away from the topic at hand*

Keeping the group members on track can be one of the most difficult aspects of leading the discussion. People have a tendency to talk about what they know, even if that is not what you are studying or discussing. "Karen, that's an interesting point, and perhaps we can talk about it (or do a Bible study on it) at another meeting." Or, you could say "Karen, that's an interesting idea, but it does not really relate to tonight's topic." You could then ask the group members a question which relates to the topic at hand, in order to get them back on track.

4 *There is a question which the group and the leader cannot answer*

This happens more often than you might think. The worst thing to do is to give a vague or general answer, so it appears that you know something you don't. Your group needs to know that leaders don't know everything. If no one in the group is able to answer the question, then as leader, tell them you will do your best to find out and let them know at the next meeting. Make yourself a note to do this so that you will not forget.

5 *Two or more members get into an argument*

First, arguments in your cell group are not always bad. They can help to clarify what is being said, and they can help the group think through a passage of Scripture or a topic at hand. However, there is a difference between healthy debate and angry confrontation. Your role as a

leader is to carefully monitor the conversation and stop it if things become too heated. "Ivan, Sergei, I think we all understand both of your points of view, but we need to move on. Perhaps you can discuss it more after our meeting."

Sometimes arguments are not angry, but have no single or quick solution. Two people can argue two points of view for a single portion of Scripture, with no progress toward a solution. In this case you also need to stop the debate and get back on track with what you are studying or discussing.

6. *Someone is always joking around*

Some people enjoy telling jokes or being witty, and in reality, they can be very funny. God may have given your group a person who has a good sense of humor and the ability to find something funny in almost any situation. In the right context, these people can be very beneficial to your group, since they can help to "break the ice" when things either get too serious or boring.

However, if this person is constantly making jokes and wanting to be the center of attention, he soon becomes a problem. Take him aside privately and let him know how much you appreciate his ability to "help" when things get slow or uncomfortable, but make sure you set limits on what is and is not appropriate behavior. Often he does not realize that he is causing a problem. Do not imply that he is the problem, but rather that it is harder for the others in the group to concentrate or participate when he is always being funny.

7. *Someone is either not paying attention, or is preoccupied with something else*

If someone appears bored or not interested in the discussion, try to get him or her involved by asking them questions directly. "We've not heard from you yet, Sharon. What do you think?" If she is obviously preoccupied with something else (knitting, shuffling through papers, etc.), try to get her involved in the current conversation by asking her enough questions so that she doesn't have time to do whatever else it is she is doing. However, if this is something she constantly does, you might need to talk with her privately and share how her behavior is disrespectful to the others in the group.

There is one other thing to consider in this situation. Perhaps the discussion really is boring! If boredom seems to be a problem in your group, it would be wise to discuss this with your apprentice leader, or with someone in the group whom you trust, to learn what topic is more relevant for the group.

8. *Two members are constantly having a "private" conversation between themselves*

There are several ways you might be able to get them to stop. One would be to ask them to share what they have been discussing with the group (assuming they are talking about the topic at hand). Another would be to ask them more questions directly, so that they have to stop talking with each other in order to talk with the group. If it becomes a constant problem, you will need to talk with each of them separately and privately about how their conversations are disruptive to the group.

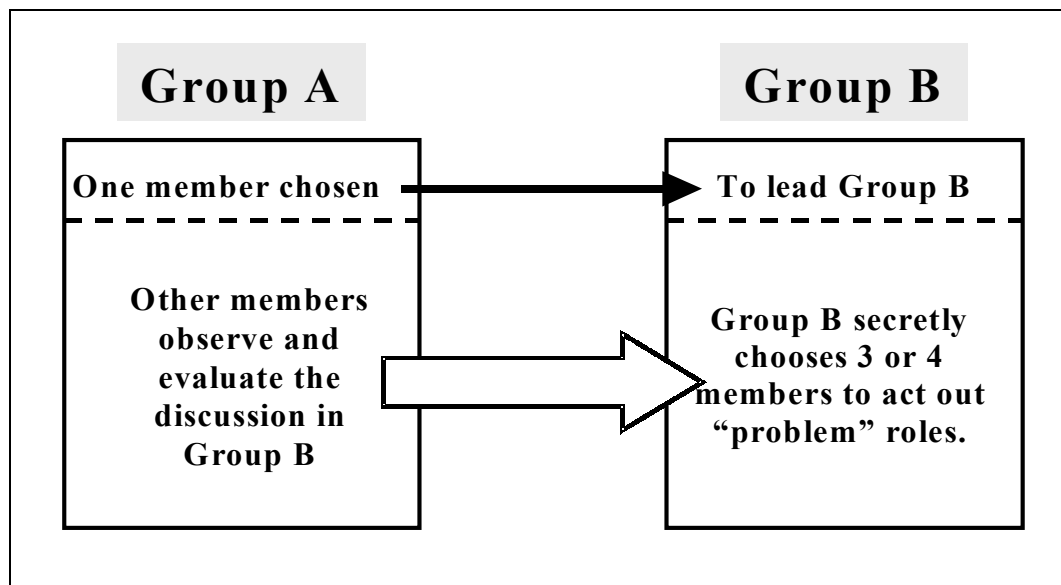
B. Exercise: Handling Discussion Problems

Divide the trainees into two groups, Group A and Group B. Group A chooses one person from their group to "lead" Group B. While they are choosing, Group B secretly picks no more than 3-4 people to act out one of the roles listed below. For a period of about five minutes, Group B is to discuss the topic "The Role of the Church in Improving Society" (or any topic they want). Group A observes. Figure 7.1 illustrates how to arrange the two groups.

The "problem" people in Group B should act out their roles accordingly, and the leader from Group A must try to solve the problems as they occur. Remember, the "normal" people must also contribute to the conversation, and not just the "problem" people! At the end of five minutes, Group A may guess which people played which roles. Both groups should evaluate how the leader attempted to handle the problems which arose.

Group B now chooses someone to lead Group A, while Group A secretly chooses 3-4 people to act out the problem roles, etc. The activity continues as long as time allows.

Figure 7.1 Discussion Exercise



Problem Roles:

- The shy person who does not talk
- The "jokester" who is always being funny
- The chatterbox who talks all the time
- The busy person who is preoccupied with something else
- The two friends who carry on their own private conversation
- The two friends who get into a heated argument
- The person who always wants to talk about something else
- The person who is always very vague and unclear
- The person who gives a sermon instead of a short answer to a simple question

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What communication skills do you consider to be most important for the leader of a cell group? Why?
- What types of discussion questions would be appropriate for a new group, or a new person who has come into an existing group? What types of questions would not be appropriate in these situations?
- During the "Handling Problems" exercise, in what ways did the "leader" handle the problems well? In what ways did the "leader" poorly handle some problems?

ACTION PLAN

- Spend some time developing sample questions to use for a new cell group. What could you use to help new members get to know one another?
- Next, develop some questions you could use to help the group grow deeper in their relationships. What topics or areas of life would you discuss?
- Finally, develop some questions that would encourage the group to reach out to the people in their circle of *oikos* relationships. What could you ask that would motivate them to build relationships and share Christ?



Cell Groups: Sample Discussion Questions

These discussion questions are best suited for use during the fellowship time of a cell group meeting. They differ from the “ice breaker” questions in Cell Group Appendix 2A (Manual 2) in that they are designed to go deeper in understanding oneself and others in the group. They are best suited for use in a cell group where the members are already comfortable with one another and where there is some level of trust.

The questions have been organized into four areas, representing four types of relationships a person can have in their life.

THE FOUR RELATIONSHIPS:

I. RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

1. When was the first time that you were aware that God loved you?
2. What are your strongest convictions about God?
3. What do you think is the one thing God is trying to say to you?
4. What one thing would you want God to hear you say to Him?
5. What single question would you most want God to answer for you?
6. Describe someone you know who you feel knows God intimately.

II. RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

1. Draw a crest or coat-of-arms as it best describes you, and explain it to the group.
2. What would you do if you knew that you could not fail?
3. What would you most like to do over the next five years if there were no limitations?
4. Who is the most interesting person you have ever met? What did you like about him or her?
5. What is your most satisfying accomplishment? In your early life? In recent years?
6. Share your three strongest points.
7. What is your happiest memory (at various ages)?
8. Describe the most significant event in your life.
9. Describe the characteristics of the “ideal person” to the group.
10. Who, besides your parents, has been most influential in your life?
11. What gift would most bless you?
12. Whose approval do you need the most?
13. In whose presence are you most comfortable? Why?
14. If you had what you really wanted in life, what would you have?
15. Briefly list your long-range and short-range goals.

16. Describe the most exciting, creative person you have met.
17. What will people say about you after you die?
18. List some creative, helpful ways to begin and to end a day.
19. In what do you trust the most?
20. Who has most changed your life?
21. What are the two best books you have ever read (besides the Bible)?
22. How do you like to spend your spare time?
23. What makes you feel most impressed?
24. What makes you most worried, anxious, or afraid?

III. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

1. Describe the person who means the most to you, and tell why.
2. Who is the first person who really understood you?
3. What kind of person do you find yourself confiding in the most?
4. What makes a person a good listener?
5. Are you the kind of person others confide in? Why?
6. How do you feel this group has listened to you (corporately and individually)?
7. What makes a good marriage?

IV. RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD

1. What would you most like to be known for by the world around you?
2. What is most needed in our society?
3. Describe your feelings about injustice in society. What most concerns you?
4. What is the most important thing you can do about that injustice?
5. What is the most obvious need in society?
6. What will you do to change your church, your community, or your job for the better?

CELL GROUPS

8

LESSON

Caring for People in a Cell Group

☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to enable the cell group leader and the members of the cell group to be able to discern and genuinely care for the needs of people.

☛ Main Points

- Relationships are the key to meeting needs.
- Meeting needs is an important part of cell group life.

☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Understand the components of building relationships: love, prayer and time spent together.
- Know how to discern needs of the members in the group.
- Learn how to meet the needs of those in the group or people to whom the group is reaching out.

☛ Suggestions to Trainers

Plan to spend at least 10 minutes of class time on the “Care for People” exercise at the end of this lesson. Note that there are not “correct” and “incorrect” responses to the situations given. The goal of the exercise is to help the trainees understand that love expresses itself through action when needs arise in a cell group. By thinking through some of the given situations, the trainees will be better equipped to handle similar situations in their own cell groups.

I. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Natalie had been attending her cell group for several months. She liked the people in the group, and although she didn't know any of them very well, she enjoyed going to the meetings once a week. Natalie's husband, who did not come to the group, recently lost his job. Their money was running out, and Natalie was very worried about what they were going to do as a family. She wanted to say something to the group, but she was embarrassed and did not want to bother them with her problems. Soon after that, she stopped coming to the group meetings, and the members sometimes wondered out loud, “Whatever happened to her?”

What is wrong with this situation? Maybe Natalie should have spoken up and at least asked her cell group to pray for her family. But the real problem is a lack of genuine relationships in her cell group. She did not know the people in her group, and they did not know her. One of the purposes of a cell group is to provide the fellowship, nurturing and encouragement that Christians are to give to one another. But without caring relationships, this will not happen.

A cell group provides an excellent setting for relationships to grow and develop. It will take time and effort to really get to know the members of your group, but effective “people” ministry requires these close personal relationships. Until you build trust between yourself and the people in your group, you cannot truly minister to their deepest needs.

Effective “people” ministry requires close personal relationships.

In the same way, you want the members of your group to develop relationships between themselves. You need to model the process of building relationships, as well as provide opportunities for this to

happen in your cell group. In order for relationships to grow and develop in a cell group, three components are necessary: love, prayer and time spent together.

A. Love One Another

Relationships with fellow believers must be based on the “agape”⁴ love of 1 Corinthians 13. This type of love does not love another person based on his personality, looks or intelligence. Love continues to love, even when no love is shown in return. Love is motivated by God’s infinite and unconditional love for us. The Bible says, “We love because he first loved us...And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1Jn 4:19,21).

How is love expressed in a cell group? People feel loved when they are accepted and have a sense of belonging in the group. Love is present when members feel that people care for them. Love is shown when someone has a problem and the group (or individuals in the group) help him or her. Love is evident when visitors come and see a difference in the relationships between the believers in the group. Christian love between the members of a cell group is shown by actions, and not only by words.

B. Pray for One Another

Sincere relationships with fellow believers require prayer, especially with those believers who are “difficult” to love. As a cell group leader, you need to pray and ask God to give you an honest love for each member of the cell group. Think about each person and pray for him or her. Pray for your relationship with each and your ability to minister to each person. Pray for the spiritual growth of each member and that each member will discover and use his or her spiritual gifts. Pray that each person will be an effective witness to the people in his or her network of relationships. Pray also for each member’s personal needs and struggles. As you pray for each person in the group, your love for them will grow and your relationship with them will deepen.

In the same way, encourage your group to pray for one another. Plan times in the cell group meetings when people can share both personal and ministry-related problems or needs. Then spend time praying for one another.

C. Spend Time Together

It takes time to build relationships. You must plan to spend time with the people in your group outside of the cell group meetings. You can invite them to have a meal with you, join your family for a walk in the park, or simply spend evenings together in their homes or at yours. The activity is not as important as the time that you spend with them. Trust is developed in a relationship when people see that you are genuinely interested in them, in their family and in their interests. When problems come into their lives, the trust that has developed between you will allow you to minister to them. You can also let them know that you are thinking about them and praying for them by calling them or sending them quick notes or letters.

You must plan to spend time with the people in your group outside of the cell group meetings.

It is also very healthy for the cell group to gather occasionally for special events outside of the cell group meetings. This will help to deepen and strengthen the relationships between the group members. These activities can be very informal, such as having a picnic together or going cross-country skiing. They can also be more structured, such as working together on a project to help one of the group members or someone in the community (e.g. repairing a roof, helping with the garden of an elderly person, etc.). If the members of your group have been praying and meeting with unbelievers who would not feel comfortable coming to a cell group meeting, these are also excellent events to which they can be invited. This gives them a chance to meet with other Christians in an enjoyable, non-threatening environment.

⁴ αγάπη

II. DISCERN PEOPLE'S NEEDS

Cell groups provide a marvelous environment in which to minister to people's needs. Often, as the group grows and matures, members will feel comfortable sharing needs and looking for help. But there will always be some members who will not openly share their needs, especially when the group has first formed, or if they are new to the group. As the cell group leader, you need to be aware of some indicators that signal a problem or need. You can also help the group to learn how to discern these clues so that they can ask about needs and minister one to another.



There are several factors which will help you and the group determine if needs exist which are not being expressed. Once you get to know someone, often his or her facial expression or tone of voice might indicate a problem. Sometimes, his comments or answers to questions during the Bible discussion time can reflect spiritual or emotional problems. How does this person feel about himself? How does he feel about God? This might also be evident when he prays.

Sometimes while prayer requests are being shared, people will "hint" at a problem without actually disclosing it. The group should tactfully ask for more details, so that they can help meet the need. Sometimes a person's inappropriate behavior during the group meeting will indicate that there is an underlying problem. Instead of the leader simply taking him aside and asking him to stop, the group can begin to ask questions and probe to see if there are deeper, underlying reasons for his behavior.

Don't ignore the Holy Spirit as He helps you discern people's needs. As you pray and study the Scriptures personally, learn to rely on His guidance as you seek to minister to the members of your group. Don't forget that in order to discern needs, you need to watch for them! Sometimes we get too busy with all the "details" of our ministry and forget that the most important thing is the people with whom we are involved.

Sometimes we get too busy with all the "details" of our ministry and forget that the most important thing is the people with whom we are involved.

III. CARE FOR NEEDS IN YOUR CELL GROUP

If your cell group is going to be the caring, nurturing community of believers that God calls it to be, members must learn how to love one another and "carry each other's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). The leader of the cell group needs to set the example by caring for others in ways that show love and concern.

A. Respond to Needs

When a member of the group has a need or problem:

- Strive to understand the problem and to empathize with him. "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1Co 12:26). Demonstrate that you care for him as an individual. Take the time simply to listen to his need. Imagine how you would feel if you were in his situation.
- As a group, pray about a solution. We need God's wisdom, not our own. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (Jas 1:5). Doing this as a group helps to strengthen relationships and to give the group a feeling of solidarity.
- As a group, look to the Bible for answers. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2Ti 3:16-17). The better your group knows their Bible, the more they will be equipped to minister to people's needs. This is also an opportunity to demonstrate how the Bible is applicable to the problems of everyday life.
- Consider what the group can do spiritually, emotionally, or materially to help. Sometimes all that can be done for a hurting person is to pray, offer encouragement and let him know that you care. If a material need can be met, the group should decide what they can do to help.

Obviously needs don't exist only within the group—if someone has a friend with a problem, the group can decide if and how they could help meet the need. This is one of the best ways for the group to reach out with the love of Christ in a tangible way.

Sometimes problems are an issue of sin in the life of one of the group. If someone in the group has sinned against another member, Jesus' instruction in Matthew 18:15-17 should be used as the method to address the situation. If someone in the group has fallen into sin, the group needs to "restore him gently" (Gal 6:1). Holding one another accountable to our walk with Christ is an important aspect of the fellowship of believers in a cell group.

How should the group respond when someone misses a meeting? Someone from the group (not necessarily the leader) needs to contact this person the next day to let him know he was missed. Perhaps he is ill, or has some other problem. Again, the group should decide what they can do to help. When people don't come to the meetings, don't ignore it. Go after them! Let them know that the group cares!

Caring for one another is a mandate that all Christians have. However, some problems, especially severe emotional problems, are serious enough that professional help should be obtained. As this person works with a specialist, the group should continue to pray for and encourage him or her.

B. Exercise: Care for People

Following are several scenarios of some situations you might face in your cell group. In class, discuss each situation and suggest ways that the cell group could help. There are not necessarily "correct" and "incorrect" responses to these situations. The main point is that love expresses itself in action – different people might react in different ways.

- Katrina: You receive a phone call from Katrina the morning after your most recent cell group meeting. She tells you that she is not going to attend the meetings any more, but she is very vague about the reason why. As you think about it, you remember that Katrina spoke very little during the fellowship or discussion time, and left without talking to anyone after the meeting was over. What would you do?
- Olga: During one of the meetings, the group members have been sharing personal prayer requests. When it is Olga's turn, she looks at the floor and says quietly that everything is fine, thanks. During the prayer time, you are not sure, but suspect that she is crying. What would you do?
- Andrew and Maria: A married couple, Andrew and Maria, have been coming to your group for almost a year. During that time, their attendance has been sporadic, at best. Lately, during the group meetings, it is obvious to the group that there is some definite tension between them. You suspect perhaps they have a problem in their marriage, but don't feel that you know them well enough to ask them about it. What would you do?
- Michael: Recently, one of the group members invited a co-worker named Michael to the group. During the Bible discussion times, he asks a lot of questions and wants to learn more about Jesus. However, Michael has a very irritating personality, and he is constantly insulting people (apparently without realizing it). His presence has disrupted what used to be very enjoyable meeting times. For several weeks now, he has not attended the meetings, and to be honest, most of the group members are relieved that he is no longer there. What would you do?

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- In 1Th 2:8, Paul writes, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." Why was "sharing their lives" an important part of Paul's ministry?
- Review the story at the beginning of this lesson about Natalie. What should have happened differently in her group, and how might have the group helped her?
- Should a cell group be quick to help with financial needs? Why or why not?

ACTION PLAN

- Write down two or three ways that your cell group can grow in their love for one another. Write down several activities that your cell group can do to pray more for one another.
- Write down two ideas for ways that your cell group could spend time together outside of a regular meeting. Plan to do this sometime during the next three months.
- Encourage the members in your cell group to share needs, concerns and problems with the group, and look for ways the group can help.

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CELL GROUPS

9

LESSON

Training New Cell Group Leaders

☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to provide practical guidelines for existing cell group leaders to train new cell group leaders.

☛ Main Points

An apprentice group leader must be chosen, prepared, and released.

☛ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Know the importance of having an apprentice leader in his cell group, and know how to choose an apprentice.
- Understand the process of preparing an apprentice for leadership by involving him or her in all areas of ministry.
- Understand the process of releasing an apprentice to lead his own cell group.

☛ Suggestions to Trainers

The in-class exercise “Whom to Choose When No Choice is Obvious” contains several scenarios of cell group leaders who are having a difficult time choosing an apprentice leader. Remember that there is not one correct answer for each of these scenarios. The purpose of the exercise is to help the trainees think in practical terms of choosing an apprentice, and to deal with situations which may be similar to what they will face in their own cell groups.

Cell Group lesson 10 in the next manual provides an opportunity for cell group leaders to discuss questions and problems which they are having in their groups. Remind the trainees to make a list of these questions and problems to bring with them when they receive Manual Four training.

I. CHOOSE AN APPRENTICE LEADER

A. The Importance of Apprentice Leaders

A biological cell in the human body, by its very nature, will reproduce itself. The definition we have chosen for a cell group, which sets it apart from other groups, is that a cell group also multiplies. However, whereas a cell in the body is able to multiply on its own, a cell group cannot multiply without someone to lead the new cell which is formed.

The overall philosophy of cell group ministry is that cells are only a building block, or smaller part, of a larger ministry strategy to start new churches. There are many methods and approaches to using cell groups in order to start churches, and the groups themselves are often an integral part of the church planting process.

Without new leaders to begin new cells, it is obvious that this process breaks down. Where do you find new cell group leaders? From within the cells themselves! One of the first tasks of a cell group leader is to prayerfully choose and develop an apprentice leader. The process of cell group multiplication becomes a reality only when new leaders are chosen and disciplined.

Where do you find new cell group leaders? From within the cells themselves!

B. The Process of Choosing an Apprentice

Cell group leaders are to entrust the teachings of Christ to “reliable men who will be qualified to teach others” (2Ti 2:2). These are people who are not only able to become leaders, but who are also able to repeat the process and train other leaders themselves.

We have many examples from the Bible of mature believers who spent time and ministered with those who were less mature in their faith and ministry experience. The well-known exhortation from Paul to Timothy can be seen in some of the examples we have in the New Testament: Jesus with his disciples, Paul and Timothy, Aquila and Apollos, Paul and Silas, etc.

What are the requirements for an apprentice cell group leader? Every mature cell group leader should have the following three aptitudes: character, experience, and skills. Of these three aptitudes, only character is required for someone to begin the process of developing as a cell group leader. Experience and skills will come in time, as the cell group leader discipled his apprentice and involves him in various areas of ministry.

The issue of character is very important. The apprentice should be growing in Christian character, as listed in the qualifications for overseers and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:2-12. If these character traits are evident, this person can be considered a “candidate” to become a cell group leader. The goal of our search is not a perfect person, since that person doesn’t exist. Rather, we want a person who is diligently pursuing growth in these areas. Spiritual character is discussed in detail in the spiritual character track of this training program. You can use it as a guide for encouraging the development of your own and your apprentice’s spiritual character.

The timing for choosing an apprentice leader is important—not too early, and not too late.

The cell group leader should spend much time in prayer before choosing an apprentice leader. He should pray for guidance and wisdom from the Holy Spirit as he makes a decision. Selecting someone as an apprentice leader is no small matter, and the cell group leader must seek confirmation from the Holy Spirit about the choice he is making.

The timing for choosing an apprentice leader is important. The cell group leader cannot make the choice too early, when perhaps he has not had sufficient time to observe and get to know the members of his group. On the other hand, the apprentice leader cannot be chosen at the last minute, when the cell is ready to multiply and the leader realizes that he needs a new leader to help. Sufficient time must be spent with an apprentice leader in order for him to learn and grow in his experience and skills in the cell group. The cell group leader must prayerfully decide when to choose his apprentice and begin modeling ministry with him.

C. Exercise: Whom to Choose When No Choice is Obvious?

Cell group leaders often struggle with the important decision of whom to choose to be an apprentice leader. It is helpful to observe the example of the Apostle Paul as he traveled and started new churches. As we look in the book of Acts, Paul and Barnabas did not install leaders in the new churches until their second missionary journey. They did not immediately appoint elders to lead these churches.

1 Timothy 3:1 says, “Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.” 1 Peter 5:2 says, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.” Leadership is to be appointed to the person who “sets his heart” on it and is “willing” and “eager to serve.” Spiritual maturity is a prerequisite for leadership, but an apprentice leader must also earnestly desire to serve the Lord.

In class, discuss the following situations:

1. *Scenario:* Michael has recently started a cell group in his neighborhood. His goal is to start enough reproducing cell groups so that several new churches can be planted in his city. He has invited several friends and family members, and the group has met for several months already. Everyone in the group is a new believer, and no one seems mature enough to be an

apprentice leader. Michael has prayed about it, but he is unsure what to do. Can he choose a new believer to be his apprentice leader? What would you suggest to him?

2. *Scenario:* Peter has started a cell group with the help of two other believers. These other men have been Christians for several years, but neither of them has much ministry experience. Peter thinks he should wait a long time before choosing one of them to be his apprentice leader, so that they will have lots of opportunity to watch him as he runs the cell group. What do you think of his approach? What would you suggest?
3. *Scenario:* Eugene started a cell group in a community with a very high unemployment rate. The group attempts to help the men in the community find work, as well as introduce them to the Bible. Eugene asked the first few men who came to invite other friends who were out of work. The response was overwhelming, and the group grew to 15 people in one month. Eugene knows that the group should multiply when it reaches 15, but this obviously cannot happen since none of the members are even believers yet. He is worried that the group will continue to grow, and he doesn't know what to do. What advice would you give him? What do you think of his strategy? Is there anything you would have done differently?

II. PREPARE YOUR APPRENTICE FOR LEADERSHIP

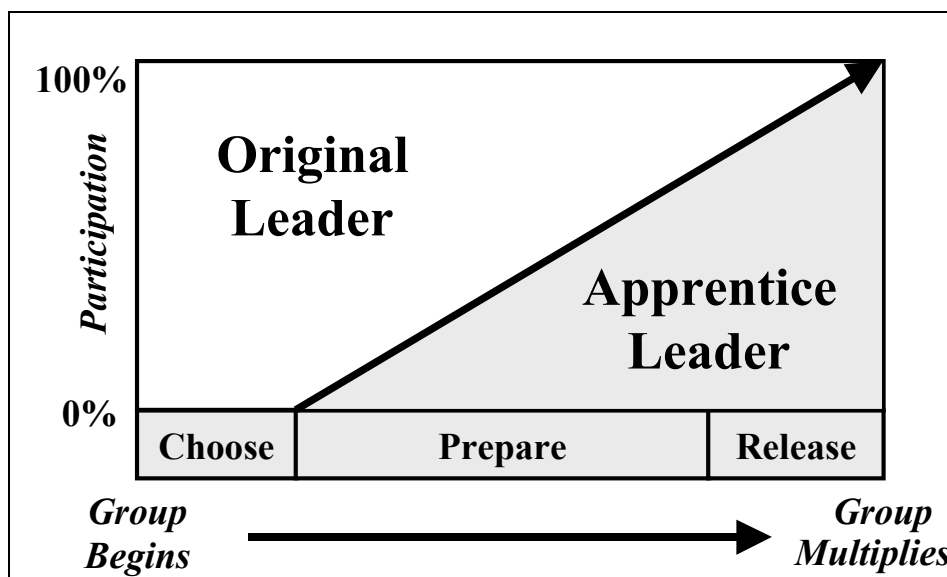
A. Involve Your Apprentice with You in All Aspects of Ministry

Once you have chosen your apprentice leader, you must make a conscious effort to involve him in everything you do with regard to the cell group. Everything that you used to do on your own, you must now attempt to do with your apprentice leader. Explain everything, more than once, until you are sure that your apprentice understands it well enough to pass it along to another new leader.

You should begin involving your apprentice with the preparation and running of each cell group meeting. Discuss in advance what you are going to do in each meeting, and explain why you are taking this approach. After each meeting, discuss what you both learned from that meeting. Then plan the next meeting together. Discuss problems in the meeting, such as someone dominating the conversation, and how the issue was (or wasn't) resolved. This increasing involvement of the apprentice is illustrated in Figure 9.1.

You must make a conscious effort to involve your apprentice leader everything you do with regard to the cell group.

Figure 9.1 Developing an Apprentice



Once your apprentice is comfortable with the various aspects of planning and running individual meetings, you can begin to help him develop an understanding of the bigger picture and philosophy of cell group ministry. Discuss your church planting goals and explain how the cell groups are a part of your church planting goals. Help him understand the life cycle of a cell group, and discuss at which phase your group is currently.

Of course, this process of involving your apprentice with you requires a significant investment of your time and effort. But in the process of discipling, there are no shortcuts. Investing your life in the life of another requires commitment, perseverance, and a lot of help and encouragement from the Holy Spirit.

B. Evaluate your Apprentice

As a cell group leader, you know all too well that you have strengths and weaknesses as you carry out your ministry. In the same way, your apprentice will excel in some areas of ministry, while making mistakes or struggling in other areas of cell group leadership.

You should discuss with your apprentice the things that he does well. This will provide encouragement and confirmation of his calling to be a leader. It is also beneficial to talk with him, in love, about areas in which he needs to grow. A cell group apprentice can have lots of ministry experience and yet lack good ministry skills. As you disciple your apprentice, you need to help him to see where and how he can improve as a leader. When you see an area of need, offer constructive ways to improve. In other words, don't simply point out the problems; offer suggestions on how he can correct problem areas.

As you model ministry with your apprentice, ask him also to share with you areas where he thinks you might have room for improvement. None of us is perfect, and quite often we have shortcomings or weaknesses that we don't even realize. The beauty of the discipling relationship is the ability to help each other towards deeper Christian maturity and growth. By discussing and evaluating together your strengths and weaknesses, you are demonstrating the value of team work. Church planting is best done in a team of people who can help to compensate for one another's strengths and weaknesses and help one another grow towards deeper Christian maturity.

Church planting is best done in a team of people who can help to compensate for one another's strengths and weaknesses.

C. Pray For and With Your Apprentice

As you disciple your apprentice and model ministry for him, take time to pray for growth in his character, his experience and his skills. Pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to comfort, encourage and guide him. Pray also for your ability to disciple him and to be an example of a cell group leader for him.

It is also important to pray with your apprentice. Make time to spend together in prayer as you plan meetings and evangelistic events. Pray together about individuals in the group, about their needs and the people to whom they are reaching out. Pray for each other regarding areas of struggle or other personal needs. Attempt to instill in your apprentice the tremendous importance that prayer has in all areas of cell group ministry.

III. RELEASE YOUR APPRENTICE FOR MINISTRY

A. Give Vision to Your Apprentice

One of the most important steps in releasing your apprentice leader is to continually give him a vision for what could happen through his life and ministry. Ministry skills training without vision is like preparing to go on a journey but having no destination in mind. Your apprentice needs to understand that the potential end result of his ministry could be many, many new churches started through his cell group ministry. He needs to see how what he is learning and doing right now fits into this larger "end result" vision. The realization of what God can do through His imperfect people

can be a tremendous motivation for your apprentice leader. Take time to ask your apprentice what his own vision is for the work God is calling him to do. Evaluate whether or not you are helping develop his vision. Make sure your apprentice understands that he has an important role in helping to fulfill the Great Commission.

B. Delegate Ministry to Your Apprentice

As your apprentice grows in his understanding of the various aspects of cell group ministry, you need to begin to delegate more and more responsibility to him. In general, you want to first model ministry for your apprentice, explaining what you did and why. Then, perform the ministry together with your apprentice (such as planning for a meeting or leading the Bible discussion time). Now allow your apprentice to perform the ministry on his own, with your encouragement and supervision. Objectively explain strengths and weaknesses you observed, and provide constructive suggestions for improvement. Finally, allow your apprentice to perform the ministry without any involvement on your part. When he reaches the point of being able to completely run the cell group meeting, you might want to "be busy" from time to time so that he gains confidence in his abilities without your being there.

This process of delegation starts small, but eventually you want your apprentice to have many experiences in leading a cell group without your involvement. It is the only way that he will be truly prepared to lead a group of his own, trusting the Lord Jesus to guide him in that leadership role.

Realize that delegation is not always easy for the cell group leader. Giving up the authority and responsibility for your group is hard to do. What if the apprentice doesn't do a good job? What if he or she makes lots of mistakes? What will the group think, and how will they react? The cell group leader must step out in faith as the apprentice takes on more and more responsibility. He must decrease as the apprentice increases. To some leaders, it feels like they have "lost" their job and they are now unemployed. Share your feelings with your apprentice during this time, so that he will be prepared to deal with it when the time comes for him to turn over his group to a new leader.

C. Release Your Apprentice to Start a New Cell Group

As your cell group continues to reach out and grow, the time will come when it is ready to multiply into two cell groups. As this time approaches, discuss with your apprentice an overall ministry strategy for his new group. What are his goals for starting a church, and how will his new cell fit into this larger ministry strategy? Perhaps his cell group will be a building block for the same church as your group, or perhaps his group will help start a different church. The important part is that your apprentice understands the larger strategy and where his cell group fits into that strategy.

Encourage your apprentice to develop a prayer support team to pray for him before, during and after the beginning of the new cell group. Help him to understand how to prepare for the very first meeting, since he may not have been a part of that process when your group was started.

During the final month before your cell group is ready to multiply, completely turn over the ministry of the cell group to your apprentice. In this way, the members of the cell group will have confidence in him as a new leader when two groups are formed from one. Finally, stay close and be available to help your apprentice with his new group. Don't "abandon" him to swim in the deep waters alone. Pray with him and hold him accountable to select an apprentice of his own from the new group. Continue to encourage him as he leads his own group.

(The process of multiplication in a cell group will be discussed in detail in lesson 11, "Cell Group Multiplication" in Manual 4.)

D. Begin the Apprentice Process Again

After your cell group has multiplied into two groups, your former apprentice leader will now be working with some of the people from your original group. This means that the original group can begin again to actively reach out and draw in new people. This also means that you again need to prayerfully consider who will be your next apprentice leader. This process of finding, discipling, and

releasing leaders is an effective method to see new groups started, to see people come to the Lord, and to fulfill the Great Commission through new churches.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What are the qualifications for an apprentice leader?
- If no one in your cell group appears to qualify as an apprentice leader, what are some concrete ways that you can develop leaders from within your group? What would you need to do to make this happen?
- What would you do if you prayerfully chose an apprentice leader and he or she refused?

ACTION PLAN

- If you have not yet chosen an apprentice leader from within your cell group, pray about it and then do it. If no one seems qualified, select someone to disciple and develop into a leader.
- Begin to involve your apprentice in ministry with you, and actively delegate more and more ministry to him.
- From time to time, evaluate your apprentice, and ask your apprentice to evaluate you in regards to your ministry with the group.
- Pray for your apprentice leader.

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EVANGELISM

EVANGELISM

LESSON 8

Relational Evangelism

"GREATER LOVE HAS NO MAN..."

Lesson Purpose

To underscore the need for and strategic importance of building friendships with unbelievers

Main Points

- Jesus actively sought to develop friendships with sinners in order to win them.
- God's desire is for Christians to *go* and seek the lost rather than *meet together* and invite the lost to come to us.
- There are costs and benefits to befriending unbelievers.
- The Gospel is communicated best when we have a relationship with the unbeliever.

Desired Outcomes

When they have mastered the content of this lesson, participants will...

- Determine to befriend non-Christians for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Suggestions to Trainers

This final lesson on evangelism is designed to maximize the emotional impact of key Scriptures regarding our relationship to the lost. It is important that people have time to grapple with the Luke 15 passage and its contemporary value for them personally. Let them consider it in silence for a time and arrive at their own answers to the questions posed in section I B.

Your passion to reach the lost must be evident, personal and practical. Include examples of how someone reached you or how you have brought someone to faith through friendship.

INTRODUCTION

WARNING! This lesson could change your life. If you understand and apply its message, your ministry could become immeasurably richer, fuller and more satisfying. It is also true that if you are applying the teaching of this lesson, you may be misunderstood by Christian friends who think you will be contaminated by the world. But remember, Jesus Himself was called a "friend of sinners" (Mat 11:19). It will be worth the risk to be like Him.

To see a saturation church planting movement established in your country, meaningful saturation evangelism must occur. Strategic priority must be given to reaching people ... individuals with faces and problems. Relationships build faith, faith builds fellowships, and fellowships reach nations!

Proceed with caution, but proceed in faith.

I. BEFRIENDING NON-CHRISTIANS

A. Three Parables: One Lesson—Luke 15

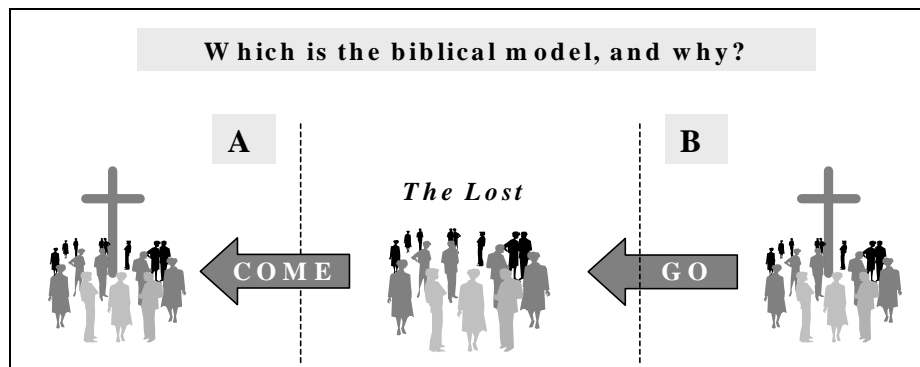
The Pharisees were upset that Jesus spent time with sinners. They felt that a righteous person could not and should not associate with sinners. This would contaminate the righteous person. Their logic seems reasonable, but it was wrong. In response to this issue, Jesus told the stories of the lost things that are recorded in Luke 15. The point of all three stories is the same. When a coin

or other possession is lost, we seek it and rejoice when we find it. But God values lost people even more than these things. So should we.

B. What lessons can we learn from the parable?

- Who did Jesus address in this parable according to verses 1 and 2?
- What causes the most rejoicing in heaven according to verses 9 and 10?
- Which is more important to God—a group of ninety believers faithfully worshipping Him—or the repentance of one sinner (v. 9,10)?
- Was the complaint of the older brother justified (v. 29-30)? Did it match the heart of the father?
- Which concerned Jesus more: the approval of the religious or the salvation of the lost?
- Can you perceive yourself in the parable of the lost son? Which character are you most like? Which character do you want to be?
- What is the prevalent attitude in our churches toward outreach to the lost? Do our churches resemble the Father or older brother more? Are you willing to take a different stand, if necessary, to befriend and reach the lost?
- What types of efforts will be necessary to reach people where you live?

Figure 8.1 Seeking vs. Inviting



C. What about the other verses in the Bible?

Luke 15 clearly teaches that our priority should be to go out and seek the lost. Jesus clearly spent time "eating and drinking" with sinners in order to win them. How do we harmonize these facts with the verses such as:

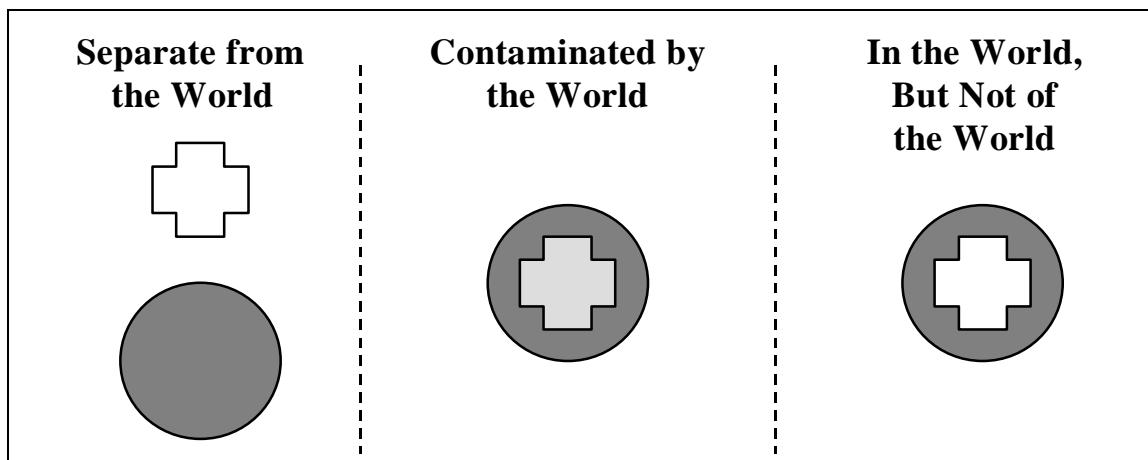
- 2Co 6:14 No fellowship between light and darkness.
- 1Jn 2:15 Don't love the world.
- 1Co 15:33 Bad company corrupts good morals.

It is indeed true that too close a relationship with an unsaved person can lead us astray. Our closest friends should be believers. For example, Jesus' closest friends were the twelve apostles, Mary and Martha, Lazarus, and other disciples. At the same time, though, Jesus also reached out to establish relationships with sinners. He went to their homes and to the places where they were. "Loving the lost" is not the same thing as loving the world. And preaching "Repent!" is not the same thing as a relationship. Paul clearly told the Corinthians that he did not intend them to avoid sinners (1Co 5:9-11). According to Paul, it is wrong to associate with an immoral *believer*, but not with an immoral *unbeliever*. This is a shocking statement, but nevertheless, it is true.

Certainly we need great wisdom to discern how close our relationships with unbelievers may be. However, the Pharisees erred on the side of excessive caution, and many churches and believers today seem to follow their example—rather than the example of Christ. We must have relationships with unbelievers that are close enough to cause them to trust us to explain the Gospel

to them. The solution is not to withdraw from believers—but rather to be careful to keep our own righteousness as we “eat and drink” with them.

Figure 8.2 Three Views on Friendships With Unbelievers



II. FOLLOWING CHRIST IN FRIENDSHIP

Jesus didn't just tell stories. He backed up these parables by offering sincere friendship to needy people. The Scriptures comment on the nature of Jesus' friendship.

A. Romans 5:6-8

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

B. John 15:13

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

C. Mark 10:45

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

What is the thrust of these three passages of Scripture? What proofs of friendship did Christ offer? How can we convincingly demonstrate friendship and love to those outside the Body of Christ?

III. COUNTING THE COST

A. The Cost of Befriending Non-Christians

- It will cost you time.
- It could cost you your reputation "friend of sinners" (Lk 7:34).
- It could cost you emotional anguish and pain.
- It will cost you inconvenience.

B. The Benefits of Befriending Non-Christians

- You gain a friend—one with a different perspective.

- You gain an opening to the Gospel, not only for your new friend, but for his circle of friends, and potentially theirs as well.
- You gain an advocate among unbelievers for your faith.
- You gain the hope of new brothers or sisters in Christ, future co-workers in the task of reaching your community and nation.

IV. LIFE EXPERIENCES CONCERNING FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

Spend the remainder of the lesson time sharing illustrations and personal examples about the importance of friendships in evangelism from your own lives.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- How could I begin to establish communication with non-Christian acquaintances in my community?
- How could I initiate relationships with non-Christians in my community?
- Am I willing to count the cost to step out and reach others who are currently beyond my reach with the Gospel?
- What happens to a church planting movement if fervent, on-going evangelism breaks down?
- Jim Elliot, a missionary martyr to the Auca Indians of Ecuador, once wrote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Was he right? How do his words relate the task of winning others to Christ?

ACTION PLAN

- Pray for divine encounters with non-Christians. What are ways in which you can initiate relationships with non-Christians in your community? Ask for boldness to walk through the doors He opens. Pray for insight to see them.
- Will I count the cost and demonstrate faith to befriend five non-Christians in my community this month to eventually win them to Christ?
- Seize the day! Be a friend and win those friends to Christ! Incorporate them into your Bible studies, fellowship and ministry outreach. Make them a part of the team!

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DISCIPLE MAKING

DISCIPLE MAKING

1

LESSON

Introduction to Disciple Making

Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the strategic place of disciple making in the overall church planting process.

Main Points

- Disciple making is the responsibility of the church.
- Disciple making is the heart of the church's life.
- Disciple making is critical for the growth of the church.

Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Understand the biblical basis for disciple making as it relates to the Great Commission.
- Have a greater personal vision for and commitment to the disciple making task.
- Understand God's ultimate purpose and how that relates to the disciple making task
- Understand how effective disciple making will contribute to his success as a church planter.

Suggestions to Trainers

The discipleship lessons in Manuals Three and Four fit together. It is recommended that one trainer lead the entire discipleship track. If more than one trainer is needed, the trainers must have close coordination. Prior to beginning a cycle of training the trainer should read through the entire track (all six lessons, including action plans) to gain an understanding of the unique approach to content.

INTRODUCTION

Disciple making is essential to church planting and is the responsibility of the local church. Churches reproduce because disciples reproduce themselves in the lives of others through disciple making. If evangelism is spiritual obstetrics, disciple making is spiritual pediatrics. In the process of raising children, it is not our desire to raise children who will be perpetually dependent and immature. In the process of disciple making we assist our brothers and sisters in Christ to grow to full spiritual maturity, partnering with God in the process of mutual edification and sanctification. Though disciple making is the task of the local church, it may be accomplished in a variety of ways. Rather than propose a rigid program of disciple making, this series of lessons will help you to understand the function of disciple making in the church planting task and to think through how to effectively accomplish that function in your own church planting ministry.

I. THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Disciple making was at the heart of Jesus' ministry while He was on earth. The Gospels give a clear description of how Jesus chose certain people to follow Him, trained them, and released them to carry on His mission. The Bible calls these people "disciples", which means learners, followers, or apprentices. In the Great Commission Jesus reveals that disciple making is at the center of His purpose for His Church until His return.

"**All** authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Therefore, going, make disciples of **all** nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them

to observe **all** that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you **all** the days, even to the end of the age" (author's literal translation of Matthew 28:18-20).

Disciple making is the very heart of the Great Commission. The dominant word which ties this passage together is "All": All authority, all nations, all things (that I have commanded you) and all the days. In the Greek, "going", "baptizing" and "teaching" are participles. Only the verb "make disciples" is in the imperative tense. With these simple yet profound words, Jesus gives His Church both her main assignment until He returns and the promise upon which her success is guaranteed. In the remainder of the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul, we see how the early church lived out its obedience to this command.

A. The assignment

The main emphasis is placed on the central command to "make disciples." Note that the command is to make disciples, not just converts. The three related participles reveal three important aspects of the disciple making process:

1. *Going*

The original Greek could easily be translated 'as you are going' or 'having gone.' It assumes that those who obey the Great Commission are "going." Disciple making is to be a natural part of going about our lives. Jesus did not make disciples in the sterile isolation of a classroom, but in the context of going about life. His disciple making was integrated, rather than isolated. His disciples are to follow His example, taking the initiative and not waiting for people to come into the church.

2. *Baptizing*

Baptism is the public testimony that the individual has placed his faith in Christ. The Great Commission indicates that baptism is 'into' the Trinity. From this we learn something of the nature of the disciple's new identity. One of the amazing qualities of the Trinity is the community which the Father, Son and Spirit share. In a similar way, a believer is baptized into the covenant community, the community of believers which shares the same kind of unity as the Trinity (Jn 17).

3. *Teaching*

As members of Christ's covenant community, the Church, and as those who have pledged submission to His lordship, Christians must learn how to live accordingly. Note carefully what is to be taught. The verse does not say the goal is to teach commandments, rather, the goal is to **teach obedience** to all that Jesus commanded. There is a tremendous difference between teaching commandments and teaching obedience. To simply inform people of Christ's will for them does not accomplish Christ's purpose. We must teach (and encourage and enable) people to obey. Note also that they are to be taught to obey "all that I have commanded." This means we must teach them to obey the whole will of Christ, leaving nothing out. We must not be satisfied with the partial obedience which can so easily become the norm. Rather, we must constantly search the Scriptures, asking ourselves, "Have we obeyed everything which is written here? And, "How can we obey each command more faithfully?"

Finally, we are to persevere in these three things "to the end of the age", i.e. until Jesus returns for His Church. With these words, Jesus shows that these instructions are for the whole Church until He returns, not just for the twelve disciples. This brings disciple making and church planting into an essential partnership. Church planting requires disciple making to mature the young church. Disciple making requires church planting to bring new believers into the process of becoming disciples.

B. The promise

The assignment just described may seem overwhelming. However, as we go to make disciples, baptizing them and striving to teach them to obey all that Jesus commanded, we can go with confidence. We are assured of our ultimate success because Christ now has **all authority** and has

promised to be with us **in all days** to the end of the age. Christ Himself is the guarantee of success, as we abide in Him, depending on His authority and presence (cf. John 15:4-17).

The Apostle Paul, sitting in jail, wrote with assurance to the Philippian church (Phil. 1:6), "... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Because He recognized that God was at work and that God's Spirit was resident in believers and the believing fellowship, he knew his work was not in vain. That's good news for us as we embark on a discussion of disciple making.

II. DEFINITION OF DISCIPLE AND DISCIPLE MAKING

A. A Disciple

A disciple can be defined as one who has placed his faith in Christ and, through baptism, has identified himself as a follower of Christ and as a member of Christ's Church. As a member of Christ's covenant community, he has pledged submission to Christ and is striving to live a life of obedience to the whole will of Christ. This obedience is not merely an external conformity to Christ's will, but springs from a heart of love, faith and hope. The disciple's growth in obedience is a lifetime process. The Scriptures describe a disciple as one who will "deny himself and take up his cross and follow (Christ)" (Mt 16:24). The disciple serves others (Mt 20:25-28). He has a supreme love for Christ (Lk 14:25-27). People will know that he is a disciple of Christ by his love for others (Jn 13:34-35). His life will bear the fruit of the Spirit (Jn 15:8).

B. Disciple Making

Disciple making can be defined as the process by which the Church, depending on the authority and presence of Christ, takes the initiative...

- to lead people to faith in and submission to Christ,
- to incorporate them into Christ and his covenant community, the Church, through baptism
- to lead them into a life of obedience to the whole will of Christ.

Leading people to faith in and submission to Christ we often refer to as evangelism, which you have studied earlier. For the purpose of this part of your training, we will also assume that they have already been incorporated into Christ's covenant community through baptism, and are part of His Church. In this part of the course we turn our attention to leading them into a life of obedience to the whole will of Christ.

III. GOD'S CALL TO MAKE DISCIPLES

A. To Prepare the Bride of Christ

As we examine Scripture, we see that God's great goal in history is to glorify Christ by making Him head over everything. We also see that Christ will be presented with a "bride", made holy and blameless, who will be "his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Eph 1:23). Christ will rule supreme, yet He will not exercise His authority alone. He will rule in union with his Bride, the Church. In church planting, evangelism focuses bringing people to be a part of the Bride; and disciple making focuses on preparing the Bride for her relationship with Jesus, her Lord.

Thus, the Church is an essential part of God's eternal plan. All that God is doing now is designed to create this holy community, a people for this special purpose—to be truly one with Him and each other, to be participants in the very life that characterizes the Trinity. The unveiling of the Church, and her presentation to her husband, Christ, is the final, climactic event recorded in Revelation. Throughout eternity the perfected Bride and the Godhead will delight in and rejoice in one another. The Church will finally bring to God the glory He deserves, reflecting His holy character and worshipping Him "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:23). By His grace, God has ordained the Church as the means He will use to fulfill this purpose. **In summary, Christ's command to make disciples is**

His call to take part in the creation of God's holy community, a perfect and holy bride set apart for Christ.

B. To Make The Bride Worthy Of the Bridegroom

All that we are and all that we do must be evaluated in light of God's "calling" to take part in the creation of God's holy community, the Church. Our success in disciple making is measured by how well we are preparing a bride worthy of Christ. Are the things we are doing now preparing a bride who is worthy of Christ? Consider these questions:

- Are we equipping people to grow in union with God and with one another? Are we leading them to live lives that manifest that divine love which reflects this union?
- Are we equipping people to grow deeper in their faith and hope in Christ?
- Are we equipping our disciples to minister effectively to others, to build others up in Christ?
- Are we equipping people to be Christ's ambassadors, calling others to become part of God's holy community and thereby enlarging Christ's Bride?

IV. HOW DISCIPLE MAKING CONTRIBUTES TO CHURCH PLANTING

Disciple making lies at the very heart of church planting. Your success in establishing new churches will depend not just on winning new converts to Christ, but in making true disciples who obey Him more and more faithfully.

The planting of churches is in reality the establishing of communities of disciples where none had existed before. The initial phase of church planting involves leading people to faith in and submission to Christ. As seen in the discussion on the Great Commission above, conversion is the first step in making disciples.

It must always be remembered that conversion for conversion's sake is never the goal. Conversion must be understood as simply the first step in a lifelong process. Disciple making leads these new converts to an ever deepening understanding of Christ's will for them and builds them up in such a way that they obey more and more fully. This deepening understanding and obedience comes from hearts of love that are growing in union with Christ and one another. In other words, true "community" is created when disciple making is done properly. If church planting involves the establishing of new "communities" of disciples, then disciple making, as we understand it here, is absolutely essential.

Another vital aspect of enabling your new converts to obey Christ is equipping them for ministry. Disciple making includes enabling your converts to fruitfully serve others, employing the spiritual gifts God has given them. Thus, disciple making leads to the rapid multiplication of co-workers in the ministry. Among these new co-workers will be those who will join in the church planting task. This rapid multiplication of co-workers is one of the most critical factors in the establishment of a church planting movement.

V. BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND

As you put together a comprehensive disciple making plan for your church planting effort, you need to work through three critical steps:

- Understand your disciple making goal.
- Understand the present spiritual condition of your people.
- Develop a plan how to help your people grow from where they are now toward your disciple making goal.

Your concern here is to identify what your disciple making goal is and to allow that goal to shape what you are doing now. God is the one who determines the goal. Our responsibility is to clearly understand what God is calling us to be and do and then to respond in faith and obedience. Any planning we do is nothing more than our obedient response to God's revealed purpose. We plan because we want to obey God with all our heart and mind. We plan because we **intend** to obey and order our lives

accordingly. Such planning is always done in conscious dependence on God. It is birthed and maintained in prayer.

With regard to disciple making, your goal is lives of obedience to the whole will of Christ. Your beginning point is the present spiritual condition of the people you are discipling. Finally, you must develop a strategy how you are going to help your people grow from where they are now towards the goal of obedience to the whole will of Christ. You must find a practical way to help them understand more deeply what it means to live as members of Christ's covenant community and enable them to live accordingly, i.e. to live in obedience to the whole will of Christ. Disciple making occurs in no set place or time. It is a dynamic, multifaceted process and can be accomplished through a variety of settings and people. (Refer to Discipleship Lesson 5, "Forms for Disciple Making.")

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What is wrong with evangelism without discipleship?
- What difference would an effective disciple making ministry make in establishing a new church? ... in establishing a church planting movement?
- Is it possible to plant a church without a good emphasis on discipleship? Why or why not?
- In what different contexts/formats could the church work toward making disciples?

ACTION PLAN

- Describe what kind of disciple making goals your church presently has in place.
- List the disciple making goals you think you should have.

DISCIPLE MAKING

LESSON 2

Your Role in Making Disciples

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL DISCIPLE MAKING

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to review key considerations for success in making disciples.

☞ Main Points

- An effective disciple maker is one who is continually growing himself in faith, hope, and love.
- An effective disciple maker models faith, hope, and love to others.
- An effective disciple maker focuses on the essential core of faith, hope, and love.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Understand why his own on-going spiritual growth is critical to making disciples.
- Be fully convinced of the strategic importance of investing himself in prayer and preparation and in quality contact time with believers for their progress as disciples.
- Understand the need to focus on people development, not program accomplishment, and to model and promote creativity and flexibility in disciple making.
- Understand the tremendous potential long-range impact of his current disciple making on multiplying fellowships and generations of believers.

☞ Appendix

2A Characteristics of Christian Love

I. GROW SPIRITUALLY

Airline safety instructions tell us that, in the event of an emergency, adults are to put on required safety equipment prior to assisting others in the same process. This is because if we are incapacitated due to neglecting ourselves, we will be unable to assist others in need. This instruction is not selfish but pragmatic. It also applies in the realm of discipleship.

Your own spiritual growth is absolutely essential if you are to become an effective disciple maker. What you learn in this training is just a small beginning. Deepening your own spiritual life must be your number one priority.

A. Develop Spiritual Discernment

In the end, your ability to discern the spiritual condition of your people will depend on your own level of spiritual maturity. No training program or book can replace that. The more mature you are, the deeper your own personal experience and understanding of faith, hope and love, the more clearly you will be able to discern their presence or absence in others. The deeper you have grown, the more clearly you will understand what the real spiritual issues are in your disciple's lives, from God's point of view.

Spiritual discernment comes through having your heart, soul, and mind conformed to God. This means you begin to look at things the same way God does. What God loves, you love. What God rejects, you reject. What causes God to rejoice causes you to rejoice. What causes God to mourn causes you to mourn. God's cause is your cause. His goals are your goals. His values are your

values. Spiritual discernment comes from sharing a deep fellowship with God as you share all these things with Him in prayer.

Growth in spiritual discernment creates a hunger to grow in your knowledge and understanding of God. You will desire to be open and honest with God, not to hide anything from Him. You will want to give God all you are and all that you have. You will rejoice at every opportunity to serve Him. You will consider it a joy and privilege to make sacrifices for His sake. Nothing will matter more to you than to walk with God in this way, to experience His intimate fellowship.

B. Learn What Produces Spiritual Maturity

Your understanding of what it takes to grow spiritually depends on your own struggles and victories in these areas. If you have not grown yourself, then you have no practical experience of what “works” and what doesn’t. The deeper you have grown, 1) the more clearly you will understand what direction you need to take so your people will continue to grow, and 2) the more clearly you will understand how to deal with the spiritual barriers in their lives.

C. Develop Spiritual Influence

The demonstration of spiritual growth in your own life will be the single greatest “eye opener” for your disciples. Their understanding of these things will deepen as they observe you. On the other hand, if they see that you are all talk but reality doesn’t match what you say, they will quickly lose motivation. They may also lose respect for you as a spiritual leader, destroying your ability to influence their lives. You will talk, but no one will listen.

II. DEMONSTRATE CHRIST-LIKE LOVE FOR YOUR DISCIPLES

It is absolutely essential that you love your disciples with Christ-like love and that you demonstrate this love to them in practical ways. If they know beyond all doubt that you love them greatly, then they will be much more open with you, they will be much more open to be influenced by you, and they will be more willing to overlook your weaknesses and mistakes. They will learn what it means to love others by the way you love them.

A. What Does It Mean to Love Your Disciples?

It has to do with your desires—what your heart truly wants. **To love one another means to desire one another.** You long for true fellowship with one another (Heb. 10:24-25). You want to spend time with each other (Php. 4:1, 1 Th. 2:17-18).

It has to do with your joys—what your heart rejoices in. **To love one another means to rejoice in one another** (Php 4:1; 1 Th. 2:19-20; 3:9; 2 Co. 7:14-16).

You desire to be with other brothers and sisters so that you may rejoice in one another. You enjoy each other and enjoy being together. You rejoice in the image of your beloved Savior, which you see in even the most humble and broken people. You rejoice when you recognize the Father’s work in the other’s soul, as a mother rejoices over her infant’s first words or first steps. You accept and appreciate others for who they are. You notice and rejoice in other’s good qualities and accomplishments. You are patient with other’s imperfections and failures.

It has to do with the orientation of your heart and mind—with whom your heart and mind identify. To love one another as Christ loved you means to be of one heart and mind (Ro. 12:10,15; Php 1:27, 2:1-5; Heb. 13:3).

The basis of your oneness with others is your oneness with Christ. If what is in Christ’s heart and mind is in you and others, then you share the same heart and mind. In Christ you share the same point of view, the same values, the same purpose, the same suffering and burdens, etc.

If you are one in heart and mind with others you no longer think in terms of just “me” or “mine,” but rather of “us” and “ours.” Your joys are their joys and your sorrows are their sorrows. Your need is their need. Your success is their success and your failure is their failure. When you are blessed, they are blessed. Your problems concern them and they want to help you in any way they can to

face or overcome them. Your goals are of special interest to them. They long to do whatever they can to help you achieve them. They want to give you the opportunity to help them as well. They long to bless you and be blessed by you. They want to know and understand you better. And they long for you to know and understand them better too.

B How This Love Manifests Itself in Your Life

The Bible is filled with descriptions of how this love should manifest itself in your life. When this kind of love is present, it will profoundly affect what you do, as described, for instance, in 1 Corinthians 13. Look at the expanded version of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 in Appendix 2A, "Characteristics of Christian Love."

You are commanded to love all men. You are to express this kind of love to everyone with whom God brings you in contact to the degree you can. However, you are limited. You don't have the time or resources to show the same amount of love to all. There must be priorities. God is first. Then God has put others in your life with whom you are to experience this kind of relationship in more depth, such as your family, your brothers and sisters in your local church, etc.

C. Some Practical Suggestions for Demonstrating Love for Your Disciples

- **Spend time with them, to rejoice in them and to show that you are of one heart and mind with them.** Look at the characteristics of love for others which are described in Ro 12:10-21, Php 2:1-8 and 1Co 13:4-7.
- **Pray together.** Pray about problems being experienced and answers being given to situations. Ask God to show you how to demonstrate such love to the people He has given you, in ways to which they will respond and grow.
- **Study together.** Read books together and share the things you're learning. Study the Scriptures together, applying them to everyday problems.
- **Be creative.** Use time creatively to accomplish multiple purposes. Work together, play together, have meals together. Surprise growing believers with your sincere, intense interest in them.
- **Be available.** It's important that your disciples know you are available for answering questions and counseling concerning doubts that arise in everyday life.
- **Seek suggestions and support from other Christians.** If you are weak in this area (i.e. demonstrating love), seek the support you need in order to make progress.

III. FOCUS ON THE REAL SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF PEOPLE, NOT ON PROGRAMS

A. Keep Things Simple

Maintain the focus on the simple core, i.e. on love, faith and hope. The rest will flow from these three. The most basic of all is love. If your disciples fail to maintain their love for God and others, the Holy Spirit will be grieved and quenched. When this happens, the Spirit is no longer able to witness to their spirits that they are children of God. They can easily begin to lose both faith and hope. They can easily lose confidence that God really accepts them, and perhaps even doubt that they are saved. If they reach this point, all your comforting words will not help. You must recognize the work the Holy Spirit wants to do in their lives and cooperate in that work with Him. Help the person resolve any sin issues. Don't give false comfort. Help them see God's ultimate purpose for them and how He is working it out in their lives.

B. Enable Them To Keep Their Proper Priorities

Don't overload your people with programs and activities. Give them the freedom to drop out of activities that are less important so that they can maintain their priorities without becoming overworked.

C. Be Patient

New believers have a long way to go. Their whole interior life must be renewed: how they think, their values, and their desires (Ro 12:2).

You must continue to give them hope when they fall. Their natural tendency will be toward despair. You need to be like a parent who encourages his child when the child has failed. Give them time to come to their senses. Encourage them. Never give up on them. They must know that you believe in them and that God can and will forgive. They must know that nothing they do can stop you or God from loving them. If you fail to communicate these things, they will be in great danger of losing hope and giving up.

IV. AIM FOR REPRODUCTION AND MULTIPLICATION

Regardless of what kind of “form” or structure you use for disciple making, you must find ways to multiply those who are involved in the disciple making task. You cannot personally disciple everyone. Your resources are limited and you need to get others involved in the task for their benefit and growth. You must plan how you will multiply co-workers for ministry on the large group, small group, and one-on-one levels.

In general, you will need to provide the following kinds of support to those whom you are equipping for the disciple making task:

- Opportunities to observe people who are doing the kind of ministry for which they are being prepared.
- Instruction and practical training in critically important skills.
- If needed, help in developing a practical strategy to do what is needed.
- Appropriate opportunities to practice what they are learning, with helpful feedback.
- Practical advice and support as they develop confidence and skill.

V. FREQUENTLY EVALUATE YOUR MINISTRY AND BE READY TO MAKE NEEDED CHANGES

Is each person receiving what is needed in order to live a life of love, faith and hope? Is each person growing in love and unity with God and each other? Is each person being effectively used by God to build up the Body of Christ and his/her own family? Is each person being effectively used by God as His ambassador to the world? What changes need to be made in order to enable each person to make real progress in each area?

Don't waste time maintaining a program just for the sake of having a program. Your goal is that every ministry activity serves the purposes mentioned in the previous paragraph. Always ask yourself if your “forms” are effectively serving the “functions.”

VI. LEARN, LEARN, LEARN!

Keep setting the pace as a disciple. Don't stop asking questions. Discover what resources are available to help you grow and help you help others grow in Christ. Ask others what tools are available and helpful in disciple making. If some resource is needed but not available, create it and share it with others.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- How could these concepts apply to the raising of our children for Christ?
- Discuss the following statement: “People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.” If this is true, how might it impact the ways we minister to others?
- What good tools are available in your language? What tools should be translated or created to meet your needs in disciple making?

ACTION PLAN

- Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 and reflect on the characteristics of Christian love in Appendix 2A. Select three to five specific situations in which you need to apply characteristics of love. In your spiritual journal write how you applied these characteristics and the results.
- Compile a list of discipleship materials available in your language or the target language of the people you are seeking to reach in your church plant.

DISCIPLE MAKING
APPENDIX

2A

Characteristics of Christian Love

(1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7)

As you read through this list ask God to show you specific situations in which you need to apply these characteristics of love.

Love is patient

- Love endures injuries without giving in to anger or bitterness nor seeking to retaliate.
- Love trusts God to work in the life of his brother, leaving judgment in the hands of God, yet longing over his brother who has lost his way.

Love is kind

- Love yearns to bless the other, desiring only the best for his brother, sympathetically understanding his brother's weaknesses, and responding to injuries with deeds of kindness.
- Love always manifests a spirit of tenderness and compassion for his brother, no matter what that brother has done, caring intensely for the struggles and sufferings of his brother and does all he can to help his brother bear them.

Love is not jealous

- Love is not resentful that others have benefits or advantages which he does not have, and is even willing to sacrifice his own position and influence for their sake.
- Love rejoices in the success and progress of others and encourages them onward, not looking at others as rivals for position or influence, but rather as partners in the Gospel to be served. Love always asks, "What can I do to help them be even more useful servants of Christ?"

Love does not brag and is not arrogant

- Love never points to himself as being better, "more righteous", wiser or more gifted than others, seeking to draw attention to himself; but is eager to give credit, praise and approval to others.
- Love, acknowledging his limitations, is always open to the instruction of others, eager to be helped by others to have a deeper understanding of God's Word and to live in faithfulness to it, and is deeply concerned about the impact his words and actions have on his brother.

Love does not seek its own

- Love is not concerned with self-gain, self-justification or self-worth, but rather is concerned only for the good of the community as a whole, willing to give up for the good of others even those things to which he is entitled.
- When disagreements arise (which are not clearly issues of sin), love is willing to look at things from the other person's perspective and submit to proper authority and the expressed will of the body. Love does not react in a way that destroys the unity of the body. Rather, love humbly and gently seeks to communicate his convictions in a way that preserves the unity of the body and honors those in leadership.

Love is not provoked

- Love is slow to be offended or to become angry, hardly noticing when others do him wrong.
- When love is wounded, he never strikes back, seeks revenge or utters threats; instead, love returns good for evil.

Love does not take into account a wrong suffered

- Love never keeps track of the sins of others or dwells on the faults of others.
- Love quickly forgives every offense, whether the offender repents or not, and refuses to dwell on them later.

Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness

- Love does not enjoy pointing out or discussing the wrongs of others or speaking of a brother to others in a judgmental or unloving way.
- Love protects the reputation of his brother, never spreading rumors and gossip, but tries to stop them.

Love rejoices with the truth

- Love yearns for truth to prevail in every situation, even when it is very painful to do so, or even if that means oneself is proven wrong.
- Love yearns to know the truth, to walk in the truth, to embrace the truth, to uphold the truth of God's Word, desiring for God to examine his words, deeds and motives so that God may reveal to him anything which is not pleasing to God.

Love bears all things

- There is no sin so big that love can not forgive and respond in kindness.

Love believes all things

- Love is always willing to give his brother the benefit of the doubt, to always interpret the other person's words and deeds in the most generous way, and to conclude that his brother has done nothing wrong.
- Love is reluctant to judge the motives behind his brother's words and deeds, knowing that only God truly understands his brother's heart.

Love hopes all things

- Love always hopes for the best; and without being gullible, he is eager to forgive and give a brother a second chance.
- Love always hopes for the full recovery of a brother who has fallen, hoping and praying for God to be merciful to him.

Love endures all things

- Love never reaches its limit, coming to the "breaking point."
- Love never says, "That was the last straw!"

DISCIPLE MAKING

3

LESSON

Know Your Goal, Know Your People

Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to clarify the goals of disciple making and how to discern the spiritual maturity and effectiveness in ministry of one's disciples in light of those goals.

Main Points

- A good disciple maker understands the biblical criteria for growth in obedience in spiritual maturity and effectiveness in ministry.
- A good disciple maker discerns the spiritual condition of his people.
- A good disciple maker has a specific goal in mind for his people.

Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Know the primary biblical criteria for spiritual maturity and effectiveness in ministry.
- Be convinced that it is essential to focus on the heart, rather than just external behavior.
- Understand how to begin evaluating the spiritual maturity and ministry effectiveness of his disciples in the light of the biblical criteria.

Appendix

3A Faith, Hope and Love Worksheet

Suggestions to Trainers

It is helpful to have the trainees work through appendix 3A before you begin teaching this lesson.

INTRODUCTION

As stated in Lesson One, "Introduction to Disciple Making", there are three critical steps in developing a disciple making plan for your church planting effort:

1. Understand your disciple making goal.
2. Understand the present spiritual condition of your people.
3. Develop a plan how to help your people grow from where they are now toward your disciple making goal.

In this lesson we will focus on steps 1 and 2.

I. UNDERSTAND YOUR DISCIPLE MAKING GOAL

The first step in developing an effective disciple making plan is to clearly understand your ultimate goal. As stated in lesson one, your ultimate goal in disciple making is to enable people to live lives of obedience to the whole will of Christ. But what does this mean in practical terms?

A. Criteria For Spiritual Maturity—Faith, Hope And Love

As we read the New Testament, we see that Jesus summarizes the whole issue of obedience in terms of "love" (Mt 22:36-40). This assumption underlies much of His teaching throughout the

Gospels (Mt 5-7 - Sermon on the Mount, Lk 7: 36-50, Lk 11:39-46, Jn 14:21, etc.). Later, we see that Paul does the same thing (Ro 13:8-10, 1Co 13:1-13; Gal. 5:6, etc.).

The Bible consistently gives two other critical elements of the obedient life as well: faith and hope (1Co 13:13). For more information, refer to Appendix 3A, "Some New Testament References to Faith, Hope and Love." Faith, hope and love are by far the most important traits of people who live lives of obedience to the whole will of Christ. They are the only true measure of spiritual maturity. Everything else flows from these. If your disciples have these, they will soon have everything else you would desire to see in them as well. Above everything else, you want your disciples to be people of faith, hope and love.

B. Criteria for effectiveness in ministry

When it comes to ministry, love is also the key (Eph 4:15-16 and 1Co 12-14). Regardless of what kind of ministry a person may have, the goal is to build up the Body of Christ in love until the whole Body has "attained the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Therefore, a life of love, faith and hope will by necessity result in ministry to others – both believers and unbelievers. Jesus Himself said that He "...did not come to be served, but to serve ..." (Mt 20:28). We are to follow in His footsteps.

The result is that the Church will experience both quantitative and qualitative growth (Mt 13:31-32). Quantitative growth means that the church will multiply in numbers, both individuals and congregations—this affects the whole body of Christ throughout the world. Qualitative growth means that the church grows in Christ-like maturity.

II. UNDERSTAND THE PRESENT SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF YOUR PEOPLE

Once you have clarified your goal, i.e. the kind of disciples you want your people to become, you must evaluate them in light of this goal. Following are some suggested questions to help you begin. Ultimately, however, your ability to discern the maturity of your people depends on your own spiritual maturity. No list, book or training program can replace that. The more mature you are, the more clearly you will be able to discern spiritual reality in the lives of those you help. The deeper your own personal experience and understanding of faith, hope and love, the more clearly you will be able to discern their presence or absence in others. As your own "heart" knowledge of the Word of God increases, you'll be able to use the Word with more skill and insight in making disciples.

A. Focus On Issues Of The Heart, Not External Behavior

In determining the spiritual condition of your people, it is important to focus more on the issues of the heart rather than on external behavior. The presence and growth of faith, hope and love in the person's heart is the primary thing you are concerned with. External behavior (words and deeds) reveals what is in the heart (Mt 12:34-35, 15:18-20; Lk 6:43-45, 8:15). It is a waste of time to try to produce desired behavior if there is a problem in the heart. If the heart is changed, appropriate behavior will follow.

If you notice something in their behavior which is not right, try to discern the reasons and motives behind their actions. For example, let us say someone is no longer attending church services. Instead of focusing just on their behavior and putting pressure on them to attend, try to discern why they have stopped coming and minister to them on that level. There are three basic questions to ask yourself:

- What does their behavior reveal about what they believe or don't believe?
- What does their behavior reveal about what they understand or don't understand?
- What does their behavior reveal about the orientation or attitude of their hearts?

In most cases, it will be necessary to talk with the person in order to really find out what is going on inside them.

A disciple making ministry which fails to focus on the heart will produce people who may be good at external conformity to what is expected. In the meantime, little real spiritual growth will occur.

IMPORTANT: Although the orientation of the heart cannot be directly observed, it can be measured indirectly by the person's words and deeds. Learn to look for patterns of behavior which show their basic heart attitudes with regard to the following questions.

B. Evaluate Maturity In Love, Faith, And Hope

1. How To Evaluate Maturity In Love

Key questions to ask concerning how mature your people are in the area of love:

a) Love For God

- Do they desire God above all other things or relationships? Is He their number one priority in life? If not, then what has taken His place in their hearts? What do they desire more than Him?
- Do they rejoice in God above all else? Do they delight in Him above all else? If not, then what do they enjoy more than Him? What has taken His place in their hearts?
- Are they of one heart, soul and mind with God? If not, then what has taken His place in their hearts? To whom or what have their hearts and minds conformed? With whom or what do they identify? Whose values do they reflect? Are their loyalties divided?
- How consistently do they walk in this love? When they do fall, how quickly do they repent and begin walking with God again?
- Do they evidence any (inappropriate) love for this world? We must realize the seriousness of this issue. It is in fact an issue of idolatry. To whom or to what one has given one's heart is the single most important question we face in this life. Many will display divided hearts, trying to love both God and the world at the same time. Help your disciples realize the impossibility of this position (Mt. 6:24, Jas 4:4-5, 1Jn 2:15-17). Love for the world and love for God are incompatible. One or the other will win out in the end. Clear evidence of continuing love for the world indicates that their love for God is either dead or dying, regardless of how "religious" they appear on the outside. Spiritual growth is impossible until this is dealt with. See the lists which Paul wrote describing the fruit of the flesh. These are an additional indication that love of the world is present in their hearts (Gal 5:19-21; 1 Co. 6:9-10; Ro. 1:28-32; Jas 3:14-16).

b) Love For Others

- Do they desire to have true fellowship with other believers (Heb. 10:24-25) and to spend time with them? (Php 4:1, 1Th 2:17-18).
- Do they rejoice in other believers? Do they delight in them? (Eph 1:15-16, Php. 1:3-8, 4:1, 1Th 2:19-20, 3:9).
- Are they of one heart and mind with their brothers and sisters in Christ? Are they demonstrating in practical ways their unity and love? (Ac 4:32-35, Ro 12:10-21, 1Co 13:4-7, Php 1:27, 2:1-4, Heb 13:3).
- Do they love their families? Are they consistently serving their families in love, deepening their unity as a family and building each member up in Christ? (Eph 5:25 - 6:4).
- Do they have a heart for the lost? Are they consistently demonstrating love to the lost? (Gal 6:10).

2. How To Evaluate Maturity In Faith

Key questions to ask concerning how mature your people are in the area of faith:

- a) Do they understand what faith is?
- b) Do they understand God's grace?

- c) Is their faith firmly rooted in the Scriptures? Do they have an adequate understanding of the central biblical truths (Ro 10:17)?
- d) Do they have a deep conviction concerning these truths?
- e) Do they have a deep conviction that God loves them and has accepted them fully in Christ?
- f) Are they living by faith, depending on God's grace in every area of their lives?

3. *How To Evaluate Maturity In Hope*

Key questions to ask concerning how mature your people are in the area of hope:

- a) Are their hearts set on Christ and His call to them? (1Jn 3:1-3). Is this what they are really living for? (Php 3:7-14).
- b) Do they understand God's promises to them? Are they trusting God to be faithful to His promises? (Ro 4:18-24).
- c) Are they convinced that God is causing all things to work together for good for them, preparing them for the destiny He has for them? (Ro 8:28-30).

C. Evaluate Effectiveness In Ministry To Others

As your disciples grow in faith, hope and love, they should become more and more effective in ministry to others. Key questions to reflect upon are:

- Are they effectively using whatever gifts and abilities God has given them to build others up in love, faith and hope? (Eph 4:11-13, 15-16).
- Are they encouraging and enabling people to grow in union with God and with one another? Are they enabling others to live lives which manifest that divine love which reflects this union? (Heb 10:24-25).
- Are they giving their brothers the practical support they need in order to overcome the spiritual difficulties in their lives? (Refer to Disciple Making Lesson 4, "Helping Disciples Grow Spiritually.")
- Do they effectively communicate the Gospel to the lost? (1Th 1:8).
- Are they effectively leading the lost to Christ and incorporating them into Christ's Body?
- Are they encouraging and enabling other Christians to effectively communicate the Gospel to the lost by word and deed?

III PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR MAKING DISCIPLES

- **Spend time regularly with them.** Rejoice in them and show that you are of one heart and mind with them. Look at the characteristics of love for others which are described in Ro 12:10-21, Php 2:1-8 and 1Co 13:4-7.
- **Plan your time together.** Spiritual growth in discipleship doesn't happen by chance. Disciples are made, not born. Each disciple has special needs, and you need to address these needs in an organized way.
- **Share your struggles.** Sharing your struggles and being open to each others' needs is helpful for creating a bond between you and your disciples.
- **Pray together.** Pray about problems being experienced and answers being given to situations. Ask God to show you how to demonstrate such love to the people He has given you, in ways to which they will respond and grow.
- **Study together.** Read books together and share the things you're learning. Study the Scriptures together, applying them to everyday problems.
- **Be creative.** Use time creatively to accomplish multiple purposes. Work together, play together, have meals together. Surprise growing believers with your sincere, intense interest in them.

- **Be available.** Its important that your disciples know you are available for answering questions and counseling concerning doubts that arise in everyday life.
- **Seek suggestions and support from other Christians.** If you are weak in this area (i.e. demonstrating love), seek the support you need in order to make progress.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- In light of God's ultimate purpose, what does it mean to be spiritually mature? What does it mean to be effective in ministry?
- How mature do you think your people are, when measured by faith, hope and love? Where is growth most badly needed? (If you have not yet started working with anyone, apply these questions to yourself.)
- How effective do your think your people are in ministry to others in light of the above criteria? (If you have not yet started working with anyone, apply this question to yourself.)

ACTION PLAN

Complete the worksheet contained in Appendix 3A, " Faith, Hope and Love Worksheet."



Faith, Hope and Love

WORKSHEET

Below are several passages of Scripture which were addressed to various New Testament churches. Please circle each occurrence of the words "faith", "hope" and "love" in these passages, using a different color for each of the words.

Romans 5:1-5 ¹"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. ³Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

1 Corinthians 13:13 "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

Galatians 5:5-6 ⁵"But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

Ephesians 1:15-18 "For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, "

Ephesians 3:14-19 ¹⁴"For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Colossians 1:3-5, 22-23 ³"We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—⁵the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel ..." ²²"But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—²³if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant."

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 "We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. ³We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thessalonians 3:6 ⁶"But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you."

1 Thessalonians 5:8 "8But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet."

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4 "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. 4Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring."

1 Timothy 1:5 "5The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

2 Timothy 1:13 "13What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus."

Philemon 4-7 "4I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, 5because I hear about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. 6I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. 7Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints."

Hebrews 6:10-12 "10God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. 11We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. 12We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised."

Hebrews 10:22-24 "...22let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

James 2:5 "5Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?"

1 Peter 1:3-9, 21-22 "3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, 5who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." "21Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. 22Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart."

DISCIPLE MAKING

LESSON 4

Helping Disciples Grow Spiritually

Lesson Purpose

The dual purpose of this lesson is to prepare the church planter to identify the things Christians need (1) to know and do in order to live lives of love, faith and hope and (2) to prepare them to deal with the most common causes of spiritual struggle.

Main Points

- Every believer faces spiritual struggle.
- The right kind of support at the right time can prevent spiritual stagnation and encourage growth.
- “Knowing” and “doing” are essential in order to live a godly life and minister to others.

Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Understand and be able to recognize the most common causes of spiritual struggle in new believers.
- Be aware of appropriate biblical ways of addressing these hindrances in order to promote spiritual development.
- Be able to identify the most urgent things new believers need to know and do in order to live lives of love, faith and hope and to effectively minister to others.

Appendix

4A Spiritual Growth Need Evaluation

Suggestions to Trainers

Based on your own experience, fill out Appendix 4A before class and prepare overheads or posters to display the content to the class. Try to give the class a good idea of what it is they are trying to do with these worksheets.

Emphasize the material contained in Table 4.1

INTRODUCTION

As church planters, part of our task is to ensure that the new church is growing spiritually. In this session we will discuss some common causes and remedies of spiritual struggle in the lives of new believers.

I. IDENTIFY COMMON CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE

There is one more important consideration you must deal with if you are to discern and address the true spiritual condition of your people. This has to do with the major spiritual hindrances in their lives. What are the most common reasons for spiritual struggle? What keeps them from living lives of love, faith and hope? What prevents them from ministering effectively to others? In order for your disciples to grow, you must find ways to help them overcome these hindrances.

Some of the most common causes of spiritual struggle are the following:

A. New Believers Lack Understanding

- They fail to understand some key biblical truth(s).
- They don't know how to do what is needed. They are not sure what to do or how to do it (For example: share the Gospel with someone, spend time with God in His word and prayer, etc.)
- They are not sure how to become involved in ministry to others.

B. New Believers Lack The Will To Obey:

- They are forgetful or are easily distracted.
- They want to obey, but simply forget to do what they should. In the rush of the world around them, they forget their priorities and become preoccupied with other things.
- They understand the truth, but don't really believe it.
- They have allowed love of the world to overcome them or have become slaves of sin.
- They are discouraged and have given up.
- They are disappointed in God or other Christians and now are angry with them.
- Fear is holding them back.
- They lack motivation.
- If they have lost motivation, try to find out why. The cause is usually one or more of the problems mentioned above.

Table 4.1 Dealing With The Sources Of Spiritual Struggle

THE PROBLEM	WHAT THEY NEED
<p>They fail to understand some key biblical truth.</p> <p>Perhaps the person fails because he understands neither God nor God's purpose for him, because he doesn't understand what true faith is nor how to live by faith, because he doesn't understand the hope he has in Christ. Perhaps he doesn't understand God's provision for him in Christ and in Christ's Body, because he doesn't understand Christ's love for him nor what it means to truly love God and others, or because he doesn't understand what it means to be part of the Body of Christ, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correction and instruction which clearly communicates the biblical truth they fail to understand and how it applies to their lives. • Opportunities to study the Scripture in greater depth. • Encouragement to become students of the Word and instruction in the necessary skills. • Opportunities to observe people who demonstrate the meaning of that truth in their own lives.
<p>They don't know how to do what is needed.</p> <p>They are not sure what to do or how to do it. Perhaps it has to do with their personal walk with God (for example: pray, study the Bible, have a quiet time, etc.). Or, perhaps it has to do with practical ministry to others (for example: teach, encourage, lead a family devotional, give a personal testimony, share the Gospel with an unbeliever, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement to apply what they are learning. • Opportunities to observe people who are doing what is required. • Instruction and practical training in the required skills. • If needed, help in developing a practical strategy to do what is needed. • Appropriate opportunities to practice what they are learning, with helpful feedback. • Practical advice and support as they develop confidence and skill.

THE PROBLEM	WHAT THEY NEED
<p>They are not sure how to become involved in ministry to others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to see various ministry opportunities and encouragement to get involved. • People who show genuine appreciation for their efforts. • Others who are willing to let them minister to them while they are developing.
<p>They simply forget or are easily distracted.</p> <p>They want to obey, but simply forget to do what they should. In the rush of the world around them, they forget their priorities and become preoccupied with other things.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continual reminding to follow through. • Continual stimulus and practical support to do what is needed.
<p>They understand some particular truth but don't really accept it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admonishment for unbelief and encouragement to believe. • Reasons to believe the particular truth they reject. • Opportunities to observe people who wholeheartedly apply these truths in their own lives. •
<p>They have allowed love of the world to overcome them or have become slaves of sin.</p> <p>The worries of world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desire for worldly things can often be almost overwhelming. An immature Christian, and even those who are more mature, may not have the strength of will to resist (Gal. 5:17; Mt. 13:22, 1Ti 6:8-10, Jn 2:15-17).</p> <p>Sin results in spiritual death. The Holy Spirit is quenched. The person loses the will to confront his sin. He loses the will to follow Christ. He loses the desire for real spiritual fellowship and is tempted to withdraw from both God and his brothers. The person becomes sin's slave and is no longer willing or able to break free on his own (Jn 8:34, Jas 1:14-15, Heb 3:13).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical advice and close support to deal with their particular weaknesses and to avoid temptation. • Help in recognizing their sin or blind spots. • Admonishment and a reminder of the seriousness of their sin. • Encouragement to repent for specific sins. • Practical advice and close support to overcome the sin. • Close support in developing new habits. • After repentance, assurance of forgiveness. • Close support to begin walking again in the Spirit.

THE PROBLEM	WHAT THEY NEED
<p>They have become discouraged or fearful.</p> <p>In the New Testament discouragement is often the result of suffering (from persecution or loss - Mt. 13:20-21, Heb 12:3). Your people may face opposition from family, friends or the local priest. Fear of rejection or loss may discourage them from following Christ. Discouragement can also result from false expectations of what the Christian life will be like, of what God will do for him, or of what church or Christians are like.</p> <p>Discouragement may also result from his own spiritual failures. As a result, he may begin to doubt that he can make it in the Christian life or may feel that God will no longer fully accept him. He may even begin to doubt his salvation. In the end he may become so discouraged that he simply gives up. Failure in attempts at ministry may cause him to lose motivation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminders of God's promises. • Continual assurance of love, acceptance and forgiveness. • Assurance that they are not alone. • Continual encouragement to press on. • Practical help to face their fear and do what is needed in spite of it. • Assurance of God's protection and blessing for faithfulness. • Continual encouragement to hope in God.
<p>They are disappointed in God or other Christians and now are angry at them.</p> <p>Sometimes new believers have false expectations as to what the Christian life will be like. When their expectations are not met, they become angry with God. Or, when other Christians let them down, they become angry and no longer want to associate with them. Sometimes they may also blame God for what so-called Christians have done.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction to bring their expectations into line with God's Word. • Encouragement to see God's greater purpose in allowing these things in their lives. • Admonishment not to blame God for the failures of Christians. • Admonishment to forgive others as God has forgiven them.
<p>In all of the above areas:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They need brothers/sisters who are devoted to them in love (Ro. 12:10). • They need people who will pray for them and with them. • They need people who will hold them accountable before God. • They need people who will help keep watch over their hearts. • They need people who will do whatever it takes to help them overcome their spiritual problems and grow.

II. DETERMINE THE SUPPORT BELIEVERS NEED TO OVERCOME SPIRITUAL HINDRANCES

When you have identified their greatest spiritual struggles, you must ask yourself: what kind of support must these people receive in order to overcome these hindrances? What kind of help must they have in order to consistently live lives of love, faith and hope? What must they have to effectively minister to others?

At this point you must be utterly realistic. Every one of your people faces these problems. Few of them will be able to overcome these hindrances on their own. If they do not receive the right kind of support, at the right time, their spiritual lives will come to a standstill. It is your responsibility to make sure they receive the support they need.

Scripture makes it very clear that teaching and preaching are not enough. How many of the common problems noted in Table 4.1 can be overcome with instruction alone? Very few of them. The Bible talks about many other essential ministries within the Body of Christ, such as

- warning, encouraging, helping one another (1Th 5:14),
- correcting and rebuking (2Ti 4:2),
- refuting (Tit 1:9),
- turning one another from sin (Jas 5:19-20),
- speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15),
- counseling one another (Col. 3:16),
- encouraging and building each other up (1Th 5:11),
- stimulating one another to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24),
- strengthening weaknesses (Heb 12:12),
- comforting and urging (1Th 2:11-12),
- restoring one another, carrying each other's burdens (Gal 6:1-2),
- bearing with one another (Eph 4:2),
- forgiving one another (Col 3:13),
- praying for one another (Eph 6:18, Jas 5:16, 1Jn 5:16),
- confessing sin to one another (Jas 5:16),
- serving one another (Gal 5:13),
- accepting one another (Ro 15:7),
- honoring one another (Ro 12:10),
- doing good to one another (Gal 6:10).

If your disciple has truly set his heart on following Christ, he will welcome this kind of help. Talk with him about this and get his permission to help him in these ways. Thus, when it becomes necessary to help him deal with some issue, it won't come as a surprise.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- What are some of the most common reasons for the spiritual failure of new believers?
- Why do they fail to effectively minister to others?
- What are the most important truths they fail to understand or believe?
- What are the most important things they fail to do or don't know how to do?
- Which kinds of support are most critical for new believers in light of their most common spiritual hindrances?

ACTION PLAN

- Read closely Table 4.1 "Dealing with the Sources of Spiritual Struggle."
- Read and reflect on Appendix 4A, "Spiritual Growth Need Evaluation." Complete the evaluation form and answer the questions for yourself and for at least one of your disciples.



Spiritual Growth Need Evaluation

_____ (Name of person)

	Not a problem				A major problem
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Fails to understand some key biblical truth					
2. Doesn't know how to do what is needed					
3. Isn't sure how to become involved in ministry to others					
4. Understands some particular truth but doesn't really accept it					
5. Simply forgets or is easily distracted					
6. Allows love of the world to overcome him or becomes slave of sin					
7. Is discouraged					
8. Is fearful					
9. Is disappointed in God or other Christians and now are angry with him					
10. Lacks motivation					
11. Other					

1. If your disciples fail to understand some key biblical truths, which specific truths do they need to learn?
2. If they don't know how to do what is needed, what specific skills do they need to learn?
3. If they understand some particular truths but don't really accept them, which specific truths do they need to believe?
4. What forms of support do your disciples most urgently need?

DISCIPLE MAKING

LESSON 5

Forms for Disciple Making

☞ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to enable the trainees to understand some basic “forms” which can be used for making disciples and to start writing a discipleship plan designed for typical new believers.

☞ Main Points

- Disciple making is not limited to any one model; each has its advantages and limitations.
- The church planter’s main role in disciple making is to disciple leaders who will be able to disciple others.
- Developing a disciple making plan for new believers is critical to the spiritual and physical growth of the church.

☞ Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Understand four basic forms for carrying out the functions of disciple making.
- Participate in developing a disciple making plan to be used in discipling other believers.

☞ Appendix

5A Disciple Making Plan

☞ Suggestions to Trainers

Be sure the trainees understand their “Action Plan” assignment. They must bring their disciple making plans with them to Manual Four training. Complete ahead of time your own copy of Appendix 5A, “Disciple Making Plan” as if for a “typical” new believer. Prepare it to be shown on an overhead projector or poster as an example to the class.

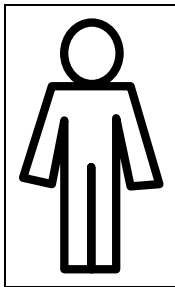
Have trainers share what they have found to be effective from their own discipleship and disciple making experiences. Invite trainees to do likewise.

INTRODUCTION

Up to now we have focused our attention on the **functions** of disciple making. We have seen that the most important **functions** serve one central purpose: to enable people to live lives of love, faith and hope. Ultimately, such lives are the result of an inner spiritual transformation, a renewing of the heart. This inner transformation manifests itself in a new way of thinking and a new way of behavior. Along the way, new truths must be absorbed and new skills must be learned. At the same time, strong support is needed so that spiritual hindrances may be overcome. Therefore, three disciple making **functions** which are among the most important are: 1) the communication of vital truths, 2) the development of essential skills, and 3) the provision of needed spiritual support.

We now face the question of **form**. What structures and methods should we adopt in order to ensure that the “functions” of disciple making are effectively taking place? There are four basic forms or structures that can be used in disciple making. These forms may be used simultaneously and are not meant to be exclusive.

I. FORM I: INDIVIDUAL GROWTH



Example: Jesus' intercessory prayer in John 17

Setting: A disciple works on his own. This includes self-study as well as doing other things on his own, such as witnessing, praying, etc.

Size: One person

Ministry Style: Self-learning

Function: 1) the communication of vital truths, i.e. deepening understanding of truths already touched on in the large group, small group and one-on-one meetings, 2) the development of essential skills.

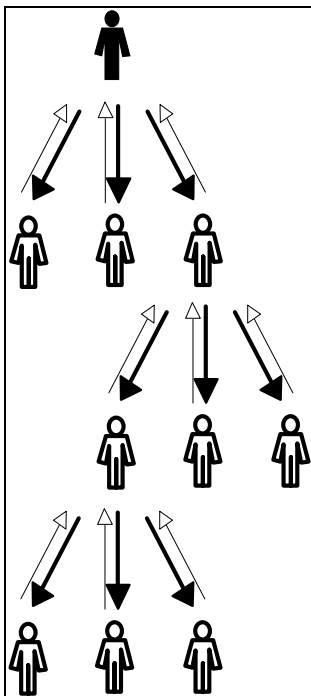
Advantages:

- A greater amount of knowledge and experience can be more quickly gained.
- Reading can be targeted at the specific needs of the person.
- The leaders are freed to give their time and energy to other ministry needs.
- The disciple can learn at his own pace and take time for reflection and application.

Limitations:

- Unless tested in some way, there is no way of knowing how much was understood or absorbed.
- There is no opportunity to observe the disciple as he is engaged in ministry so that you may give him helpful advice.
- Other kinds of spiritual support are still needed.
- Impersonal approach which models individualism and not community.

II. FORM 2: ONE-ON-ONE DISCIPLESHIP



Example: We can see Jesus using this form in conversations with Nicodemus (John 3) and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4).

Setting: A leader, or mentor, meets separately with various individuals.

Size: 2 people per meeting.

Ministry style: Mentoring.

Functions: 1) the communication of vital truths, 2) the development of essential skills, and 3) the provision of needed spiritual support.

Communication: Two-way communication. The mentor receives feedback from his disciple.

Who ministers: Mostly the mentor. However, the mentor should make it a priority to train and involve his disciple in ministry to others.

Multiplication: Every mentor should have apprentices who are learning how to disciple others one-on-one as shown in the figure above. These apprentices will learn by "observing" and "doing" under supervision. Training seminars may also be provided.

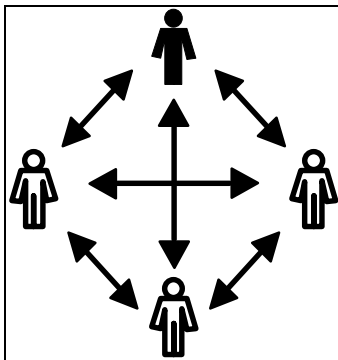
Advantages: In many cases, one-on-one contact is the only way you will find out what is happening spiritually within the person. Many new converts will grow only when individual attention is given to them.

- There is maximum opportunity to give the person the support he needs.
- Teaching and training can be targeted to the specific needs of the individual.
- There is maximum opportunity for feedback, to discern how much is understood and absorbed.
- There is maximum opportunity to help him put what he is learning into practice and to help him become involved in ministry to others.
- The leader can easily identify and train those with the potential to do one-on-one ministry with others. This leads to the multiplication of one-on-one ministry.
- This is a wonderful structure for teaching skills.

Limitations:

- One person can't meet all the spiritual needs of an individual. However, this can be countered with several different one-on-one meetings.
- A leader can have a one-on-one ministry with only a few people. Multiplication of new mentors becomes critical.

III. FORM 3: SMALL GROUP MINISTRY



Example: We see Christ demonstrating this form in his Upper Room discourse, found in Gospel of John chapters 13-16.

Setting: Cell groups, small Sunday school groups, small Bible study groups, Prayer groups, house-church groups, committees, etc.

Size: Less than 10-15 people.

Ministry style: Facilitation. The leader's goal is to facilitate the others in the group to mutual ministry. Teaching is not the only form of ministry.

Functions: 1) communication of vital truths, 2) development of essential skills, and 3) provision of needed spiritual support.

Communication: Communication is multi-directional.

Who ministers: Everyone in the small group.

Multiplication: Every group leader should have an assistant who is being trained to become a group leader. This assistant will learn by "observing" and "doing" under supervision. Training seminars may also be provided.

Advantages:

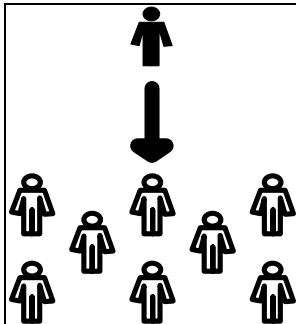
- Less qualified leaders can be used to lead the group.
- Everyone can be involved. Communication is multi-directional. Everyone has the opportunity to use and develop his ministry gifts.
- Those with teaching or other leadership gifts can be more easily identified and developed. This makes multiplication of the ministry easier.
- There is greater opportunity for feedback, to discern how much is understood and absorbed.
- It is easier to focus the teaching and training on the real needs of the group members.
- There is much greater opportunity to understand the deeper spiritual needs of people in the group and to give the kind of support they need. There is greater opportunity to help them put what they are hearing into practice.

Limitations:

- Many leaders are needed if a large number of people are to be involved in small groups (This can be offset if the small group is used as a training ground for new leaders.)

- Many people will not share their deepest spiritual needs, even in front of a small group. If the group is mixed (men and women), there may be even less openness.

IV. FORM 4: LARGE GROUP MINISTRY



Example: An example from the life of the Lord can be found in Matthew chapters 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount. Peter's sermon to the Jews at Pentecost in Acts 2 is another fine example.

Setting: Sermons during worship services, Sunday school, large Bible study groups, seminars, etc.

Size: 15, 30, even 100 people or more.

Ministry style: The leader mostly lectures.

Functions: Main focus is the communication of those vital truths that are relevant to most people in the group.

Communication: Mostly in one direction—from the leader to the listeners.

Who ministers: The leader(s). Ministry flows in one direction—from the leader to the rest of the group.

Multiplication: The leaders should be always training new people for this kind of ministry. The trainees will learn by "observing" and "doing" under supervision. Training seminars may also be provided. The most capable may be selected for more formal training.

Advantages: Fewer qualified leaders/coworkers are needed to teach a larger number of people.

Limitations:

- Few people other than the main speaker(s) have an opportunity to use and develop their ministry gifts.
- This approach is not very useful for developing future leaders. Unless other means are found to develop leaders, it will be difficult to multiply the ministry into a church planting movement.
- To be done well, you need someone who is gifted as a teacher/preacher. Often it is difficult to find enough qualified people.
- A single leader does not have all the gifts necessary to meet all the spiritual needs of the group.
- There is little opportunity for feedback, so it is difficult to know how much is understood and absorbed.
- There is little opportunity to understand the deeper spiritual needs of people in the group and to give the kind of support they need. There is little opportunity to help them put into practice what they are hearing.
- There is a tendency for most of the listeners to become passive.
- No one ministers to the leader(s).
- If this is the primary form of ministry, then most people will not mature spiritually. The leaders often become overworked because there are too few co-workers.

V. A REMINDER

As church planters your primary role in the disciple making process is to identify and disciple potential leaders. These will in turn disciple others (2Ti 2:2). As you think about the needs of your disciples, remember that people have different learning styles. For example, some people learn best in a group, others are good self-learners, still others need one-on-one attention. Part of your disciple making plan should be to evaluate how each person learns best and provide discipleship.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- In your context, which “forms” do churches most often use in discipling their people? How effective have these forms been used to provide what young disciples need? What needs are not being met? What forms do you think would be most appropriate for meeting these needs?
- What forms do you feel most comfortable using? What forms do you feel most uncomfortable using? Why?

ACTION PLAN

Using Appendix 5A, “Disciple Making Plan”, prepare a separate disciple making plan for each person that you are discipling in your church planting ministry.

You must bring your completed plans to the next Disciple making lesson, which will take place when you begin Manual Four training.



Disciple Making Plan

This appendix provides a means to help you develop a practical plan to help your disciples grow in spiritual maturity. This spiritual maturity is measured by inner personal growth, growth in relationship with God, and growth in relationship with other people. Hopefully, you have already begun thinking about which are the most important truths and skills you need to teach your people, especially new believers. You have also discussed which kinds of support are most critical for new believers in light of their most common spiritual struggles. You must now plan when and how you will teach specific truths and skills during the next twelve months, as well as how you will provide the necessary spiritual support. You will also need to think about the means for multiplying the ministry.

You should make a plan for each person whom you are discipling in your church plant. If possible, those who are on the same church planting team should work together to produce this plan.

Two worksheets for developing a disciple making plan are provided on the following pages. Complete the first worksheet, 5A.1 "What New Believers Need to Know and Do" as a general guideline for new believers in your church planting ministry. The second worksheet, 5A.2 "Individual Disciple Making Plan", is to be used once for each person you are discipling. There will be specific truths and skills that each of your disciples needs to learn. Use worksheet 5A.2 to determine how these truths and skills will be taught, and in what chronological order.

In filling out these worksheets, keep the following factors in mind:

- Determine which forms (large group, small group, one-on-one, individual) are most appropriate for the truth/concept/conviction or habit/skill you want to teach. You do not need to use all four discipleship forms.
- Often it is wise to use repetition. This means the person will be exposed to similar truths or skills several times in various forms. For example, you can preach about a certain truth on Sunday morning and then deal with personal application of that truth in small group and on-on-one meetings.
- Determine the order in which truths and skills should be taught. Often there is a logical sequence which you will need to follow.
- Issues that are most critical for the spiritual survival of each person should be dealt with earlier, rather than later.
- Decide what existing discipleship materials, if any, you want to use. After you have made your selection, you can place the appropriate lesson or chapter titles on your worksheet. In a similar way, list the materials which will be used for individual study.
- Each row in worksheet 5A.2 represents a month. You can list several subjects in one block. For example, in your one-on-one meetings in the first month, you might list a different subject to be covered each week, such as: personal time with the Lord, how to pray and how to deal with sin. On the other hand, during month six, you might decide to spend the whole month on one subject, such as, developing a personal testimony.

With your church planting team, use the following worksheets, 5A.1 and 5A.2, to identify needs and develop a plan for each person you want to disciple in your church plant. Fill in the charts with the truths and skills which will be taught.

Worksheet 5A.1 - What New Believers Need to KNOW and DO

INSTRUCTIONS:

- *List those things which new believers most urgently need to KNOW to successfully live lives of love, faith and hope and to effectively minister to others. What truths or concepts must they understand? Many of these will point beyond intellectual knowledge to convictions they should have.*
- *List those things new believers most urgently need to DO to successfully live lives of love, faith and hope and to effectively minister to others. Many of these items involve habits they should develop. Many will also imply skills they will need to learn.*

	What they need to KNOW (truths or concepts/convictions)	What they need to DO (habits/skills)
To live lives in love and unity with God		
To live lives in love and unity with their families and other believers and build them up in Christ		

	What they need to KNOW (truths or concepts/convictions)	What they need to DO (habits/skills)
To live lives of faith		
To live lives of hope		
To effectively minister to the lost		

Worksheet 5A.2 – Individual Disciple Making Plan

_____ Name of person

Month	Individual	One-on-one	Small groups	Large group
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Month	Individual	One-on-one	Small groups	Large group
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Month	Individual	One-on-one	Small groups	Large group
11				
12				

Things to think about:

- Who will teach/train/preach on the large group level?
- Who will lead the small group?
- Who will work with the person(s) one-on-one?
- How will you develop leaders so that each of the above ministries may be multiplied?
- List what support other than teaching will be provided (such as encouragement, prayer, accountability, etc.). How will this support be provided? Who will do it?

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

**SPIRITUAL
WARFARE**

1

LESSON

Understanding Worldview

Lesson Purpose

To help the church planter understand the concept of worldview and to show how deeply one's view of the world affects his own Christian life, how he does ministry, and how he interprets his ministry situation.

Main Points

- Commonly held worldviews contrast with a biblical worldview.
- Worldview effects church planting.

Desired Outcomes

When the content of this lesson has been mastered, each participant should . . .

- Be aware of the importance of having a proper worldview.
- Know the scriptural basics about the realms of God, angels, man and nature.
- The church planter will be able to examine his ministry situation in the light of a biblical worldview.

INTRODUCTION

When we speak of worldview we are speaking of the core beliefs and understandings that a person has about the world. Each person, whether he knows it or not, has beliefs deep in his soul which determine his actions and behavior and help him explain the world around him. Worldview helps people understand nature, other people and the supernatural world. As people grow, their experiences result in the formation of a worldview which may or may not accurately interpret reality.

When we speak of a biblical worldview, we are speaking of what the Scriptures say about the universe, what is real, what is true, what IS. Logically there can be ONLY one reality, one truth or explanation of what IS. We believe that Scriptures present this explanation of the world. And it is by this truth that we seek to measure or check our understanding of the world.

It is very important that church planters have a biblical worldview in order to properly interpret the circumstances of their ministry. This is especially true concerning spiritual warfare. If a person does not have a biblical worldview, he may not recognize attacks from Satan, or he may not know how to respond to the attacks. In this lesson we will explore common worldviews and how the biblical worldview is foundational to understanding spiritual warfare.

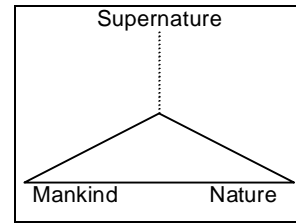
I. COMMON WORLDVIEWS

One way to understand worldviews is to look at three components of the universe: supernature, nature and mankind. We will use these three components to explain three common worldviews below.

Let's say that a person is sick. How do we interpret that event? It all depends on worldview. As we describe the worldviews below we will see how each explains this sickness.

A. Secular Worldview

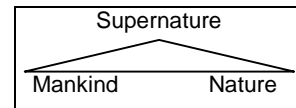
In the secular worldview, the natural world and the realm of mankind are controlled by “natural laws”, which perhaps a creator god established, but which today operate without any supernatural involvement. The existence of the supernatural world, including God and spirit beings, may be denied completely by secular people. Or, if the supernatural exists, secular people assume that it is separate from the natural/mankind world. Whatever connection there may be, it is believed to be a very distant one.



Secular people accept the premise that every phenomenon has a natural or human cause. For the one who is sick, a germ, or mosquito, or other illness infected the body. Everything can be explained scientifically. The person should seek medical treatment to get better, according to this worldview.

B. Animistic Worldview

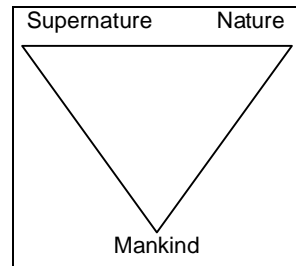
The animistic worldview is nearly the opposite of the secular worldview. In this worldview the supernatural world is extremely close to the natural and mankind realms. Spirits from the supernatural realm may live in natural objects and people and these spiritual beings have power to control things. If a person pleases these spirits he can gain merit, including protection or healing. If a spirit is angry it can cause great harm.



The sick man, according to this worldview, has upset the spirits or a spell has been put on him. In order to be well again this person will need to do something to please the spirits or break the spell. The treatment in this case may even defy medical knowledge, which is not to be trusted in the animistic worldview.

C. Fatalistic Worldview

The fatalistic worldview is based on the belief that man has no control over the world around him. Supernatural and natural forces direct the track of history, and man lives as best he can in that predestined fate. One Shinto writer put it so well: *“Life is like a leaf floating in a river. The leaf can get stuck in a little whirlpool, or it may flow along peacefully in a quiet stream, or it may come upon rapids, water of great turmoil. The leaf has no control over where it goes. So humans are trapped in their fate.”*



The treatment then for the sick man may be to do nothing. There may be no attempt to treat him as well as no attempt to determine the reason for the sickness.

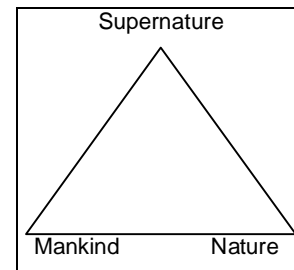
II. A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

The biblical worldview, as we have already said, teaches the proper worldview. The proper worldview sees the three components as they actually interact with one another.

A. Supernature

1. *God the Creator*

The book of Genesis opens with the words, "In the beginning God..." This is our natural foundation for building a worldview. God Almighty, existing out of time, eternal, self sustaining, Creator of heaven and earth, without equal or rival, in His sovereignty controls the happenings of history. In contrast to the secular worldview, Scripture teaches that God is involved in history. For instance



- He directed the history of Israel in preparation for the Messiah.
- Christ came into the world and lived among mankind.
- Christ ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit upon His church.

The Bible affirms the active work of the Holy Spirit in and through the lives of believers. The Holy Spirit is active today. He convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness and judgment (Jn 16:8-11). He gives the believer new life (Ro 8:11). He testifies that we are God's children (Ro 8:16). The Holy Spirit helps us to pray (Ro 8:26) and He teaches (Jn 14:26, 1Jn 2:27).

Scripture does not teach that God and Satan are equal yet opposite forces. According to the biblical worldview, God is self-existent and Satan is created. Satan does not have power equal to God's. God controls Satan as seen in Job chapter 1. Before Satan could do anything to Job, he had to receive God's permission.

2. *Created Spirit Beings (Satan and Angels)*

The story of creation continues. Though the Genesis account does not include the creation of angels, we read in Colossians 1:16 that God (in Christ) created all things, in heaven and on earth, visible and **invisible**. Though the New Testament records very little about angels, it is clear that they are active in our world today (Heb 13:2). Many evangelicals believe that Revelation 12:4 refers to the fact that when Satan fell he took one third of the angels with him. These "bad angels" are also known as demons. We know that demons also are active in our world (Jas 3:15, 1Ti 4:1). Again, this is in contrast to the secular worldview but closer to the animistic worldview in that both recognize that there is a battle between God and Satan. In the animistic worldview, the victory in battle depends on whose "god" is stronger. If two tribes war against each other, the tribe with the greater god will be victorious. In contrast, Scripture teaches that God is the victor. A seeming contradiction is found in Joshua 7. There God's people were defeated in battle. A careful look at the text shows that this was not because some other god or spirits defeated God, but because His people suffered the consequence of their sin. God was not defeated. He permitted Israel to be defeated because of disobedience.

Consider your own understanding of angels and demons. To what extent can they act in your daily activities? Are they limited to the level of the intellect and mind? Can they be involved in physical activity? Can we be sure of victory over Satan? We will discuss these ideas in more depth in the following lessons on Spiritual Warfare.

B. Nature

The creation account continues with how God created the material world. Here also there are many different worldviews or perceptions of the material world. Some say it does not matter—it is just an appearance (fatalistic); some identify with the earth as "mother nature" and maintain a reverent respect for it (animistic); others hold it is something man must conquer and rule over (secular).

According to the Bible, God's creation was designed to declare the glory of God (Psalm 19). Nothing is more awesome, impressive, or beautiful than the world itself—high mountains, crashing waves, waterfalls, underground caves, green fields, frost covered trees, fields of flowers, sunrises and sunsets; God's creation does declare His glory! Satan's goal is to destroy or mar God's creation. If Satan cannot destroy God then he will attempt to destroy that which glorifies God. It is interesting that God's assignment to Adam was to cultivate and keep the garden (Ge 2:15). Our

worldview should reflect God's intention for His creation—that it might glorify Him. Do our activities in the material world glorify God?

C. Mankind

Finally, we come to the creation of man in the Genesis account. Man was created out of the natural world (that is, the dust) but God also breathed the breath of life into him and created man in His own image. Thus man is a complex being; he is both material and spiritual. This is the teaching of Scripture. Man is not just physical—a mix of chemicals and cells as some hold (secular). Man is not just spiritual, as some fatalistic Eastern worldviews hold. Man has a spirit and a physical body (Ge 3:7). Part of the great mystery of man is that he has a free will. God does not force man into behavior or thinking or program him as a robot. In contrast to the fatalistic worldview, man is not trapped in some "river" of life called fate. He has a will and makes choices. He may choose to love God, and he may choose to reject God (Jos 24:15).

III. WORLDVIEW AND CHURCH PLANTING

The Scriptures show us that God is not battling Satan. Satan has already been conquered (1Jn 3:8, Col 2:15, Heb 2:14-15). Through the Gospel as it is declared by the Church, God seeks to reconcile man to Himself, while Satan seeks to deceive man (Rev 12:9), devour him (1Pe 5:8), tempt him (1Th 3:5), and accuse him (Rev 12:10).

Spiritual warfare takes place within the realm of man. As the apostle Paul states in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, this war is for our minds—our worldview:

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

Note how the apostle Paul makes a connection between destroying strongholds and arguments and taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Finally, consider John 8:32, "*You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.*" The more we know the truth and act on it, the more we will be victorious. This will be explained in more detail in the next lesson, "Relationships in Spiritual Warfare."

It is extremely important that we as church planters have an understanding of the world as it actually is—that is, as explained in Scripture. Church planting is spiritual warfare. Satan will attack in any way he can as churches are planted. If we do not have a proper worldview then Satan may attack (for example, through sending sickness) and we may not even recognize it! A correct understanding of biblical worldview helps the church planter to correctly discern what is happening in his life and ministry.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION, REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- As you have been exposed to the truth of this lesson, have you identified any practices in your own life that are inconsistent with the biblical worldview? What about practices of those who are in your target area?
- How do these inconsistencies in your life affect your relationship with God, your spouse, your children or the lost?
- If a church planter becomes very ill, does this mean that Satan is attacking him through sickness? When might this be the case?

ACTION PLAN

- Meet with another believer and explain the main ideas of this lesson. Share how your behavior is going to change in response to the new truths you have learned.
- Think about the worldview of the people who are in your target area. In what way is their worldview the same as the biblical worldview? In what way is it different? How will this effect your strategy for

evangelism? How and what will you teach new converts in order to bring their worldview more in line with the biblical worldview?

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- Warner, Timothy M. *Spiritual Warfare: Victory over the Powers of This Dark World*. Good News Pub. 1991.
- *Demon Possession*. Edited by John W. Montgomery. Minneapolis, MI: Bethany House, 1976.

**SPIRITUAL
WARFARE**

LESSON 2

Dynamics of Spiritual Warfare

Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help the church planter understand the dynamics of relationships between God, man and spirit beings in spiritual warfare, and the position and authority of the believer over Satan in Christ.

Main Points

- A correct understanding of the relationship between God, man and spirit beings is essential for victory in spiritual warfare.
- The battle for the mind is won by applying God's truth to Satan's lies.

Desired Outcomes

When the contents of this lesson have been mastered, each participant should...

- Know that church planting is spiritual war.
- Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might by knowing his identity in Christ.
- Be able to defend himself against demonic attacks.

Appendix

2A Inductive Bible Study: Ephesians 4:17- 5:21

Suggestions to Trainers

This lesson contains many doctrinal concepts with many verses cited. Please study it carefully before presenting it to the trainees. Select the main points and verses which you might have them look up during the training.

Included in this lesson is a diagram (figure 2.1) showing these relationships. You may want to put this on a transparency or poster to accompany your teaching.

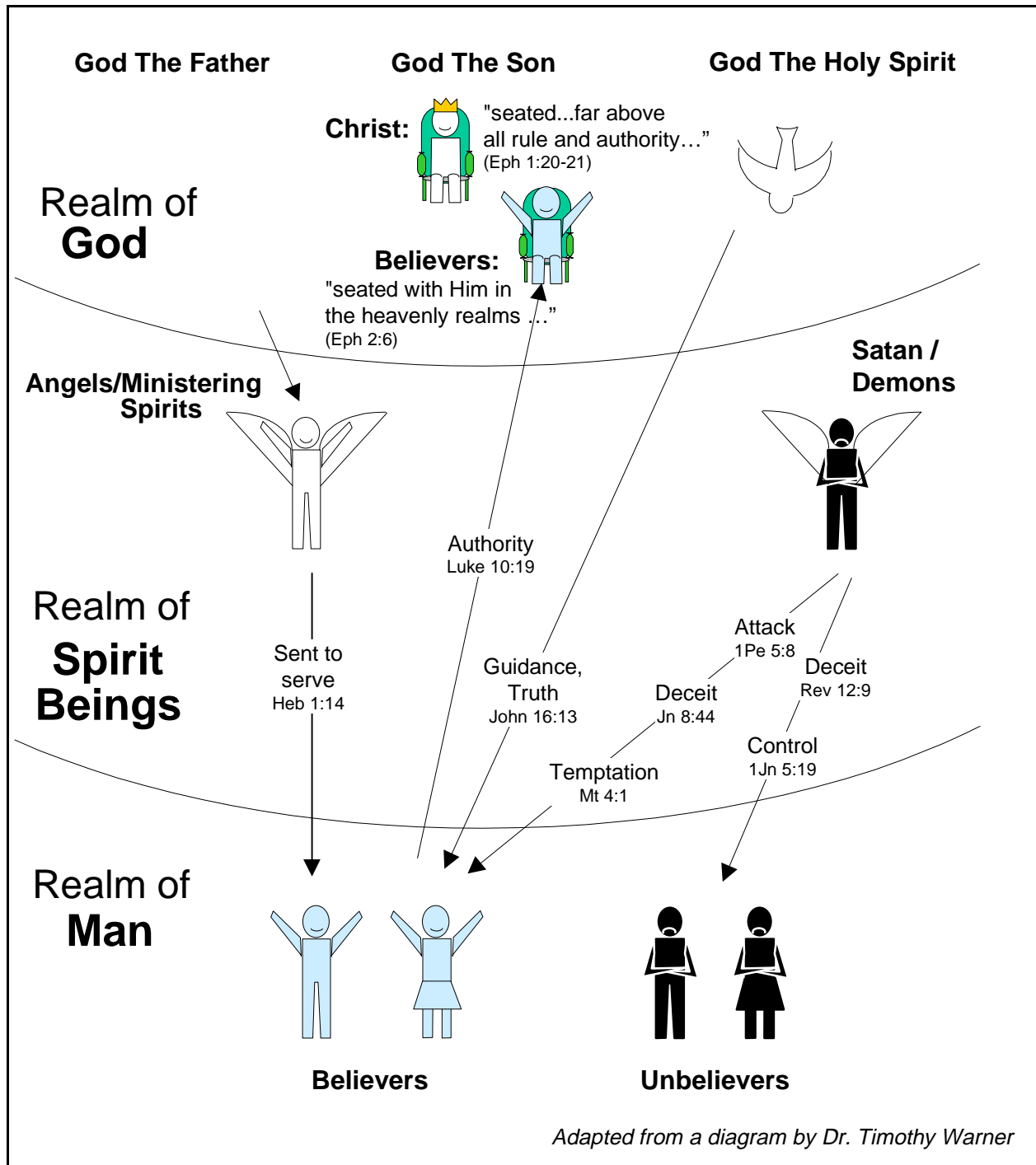
INTRODUCTION

Church planters who are in the process of building up new congregations of believers find themselves invading enemy territory. Satan, the "prince of this world" (Jn 16:11), does not want the church planter to open the eyes of unbelievers so that they might turn from darkness to light and find forgiveness for their sins (Acts 26:18). There is a real spiritual battle going on, and church planters who do not realize this will find themselves woefully unprepared to deal with the attacks that come their way. Not only must they be personally prepared for spiritual warfare, they must also know how to help the new believers and emerging church stand firm against the enemy.

Every competent general who plans his tactics for battle knows his own strategies, strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of his opponent. He understands how his opponent thinks and acts. The church planter must also know his own strengths and weaknesses, and he must understand the strategies that Satan will attempt to use to attack him. In order to grasp the dynamics of the spiritual battle in which he finds himself, the church planter needs to understand the realm of God, the realm of man, and the realm of spirit beings in this world, and how they interrelate one with another. He must understand and believe the truth of who he is in Christ, as that truth will be the most important weapon he has in the spiritual battles that he will face.

Figure 2.1 shows the interrelationships between the realms of God, spirit beings and man. This diagram will visually help to explain some of the concepts presented in this lesson.

Figure 2.1. Relationships in Spiritual Warfare: The Realms of God, Spirit Beings, and Man



I. THE REALM OF GOD

God is the Great “I AM”, the eternal, self-sustaining, self-sufficient, non-created Creator of all things and supreme Ruler of the Universe. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present and always Holy, Righteous, Mercy, Love, Truth and Faithful. HE HAS NO EQUAL.

God is a triune God, a unity in diversity. The three members of the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—all share the moral attributes of the Godhead. They differ only in their role, but even that is sometimes hard to distinguish. For example, the Father is said to be the Creator (Dt 32:6). But in John 1:3, all things are said to have been created through the Word (the Son).

A. God the Father

For this study, the most important role of God the Father is centered around redemption: He loved the world and sent the Son to be the Savior (Jn 3:16; 1Jn 4:10). He raised Jesus from the dead (Col 2:12). He has “rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves” (Col 1:13) and He protects His children by the power of His name (Jn 17:11).

B. God the Son

The role of God the Son, Jesus Christ, is focused primarily on His entrance into time and space. He was one with the Father (Jn 10:30) who shared in His attributes from all eternity (Jn 1:1,2). He was “the fullness of the Deity in bodily form” (Col 2:9). He came into the world to be “God with us” (Mt 1:23). But when He came into the world, he took on the form of a servant (Php 2:6,7). He always did the Father’s will (Jn 6:38). He died on the cross as a sin offering for us (Ro 8:3) and was raised on the third day (1Co. 15:4).

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father, where He makes intercession for us (Ro 8:34). He is the giver of eternal life (Jn 17:3). Now in His glory (Jn. 17:24), He has all power (authority) in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18-20). He is the “head over everything for the church” (Eph 1:22).

With regard to the spirit world, He is greater than angels (Heb 1:5-2:9). He is the head over every power and authority (Col 2:10). Someday, every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth shall bow before Him (Php 2:10).

C. God the Holy Spirit

The role of God the Holy Spirit is mentioned primarily in relationship to the believer. He is most often called the Holy Spirit, but also the Spirit of truth (Jn 16:13), the Spirit of life (Ro 8:2), and the Spirit of the living God (2Co 3:3).

It is He who gives new life to the believer (Ro 8:11), who controls the believer (Ro 8:9), who testifies that we are God’s children (Ro 8:16), who helps us to pray (Ro 8:26-27), and who convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin (Jn 16:8-11). He is our Counselor/Helper (Jn 14:16), and our Teacher (Jn 14:26). He lives in God’s children (Ro 8:9), He testifies about Jesus (Jn 15:27), and brings glory to Him. He is greater than the “world” (1Jn 4:4).

II. THE REALM OF MAN

When God created Man, he made Him male and female in His image: two individuals that would be one, thus reflecting the unity in diversity of the Godhead (Ge 1:26,27). With regard to spirit beings, Man was made “a little lower than the heavenly beings” but was “crowned with glory and honor” (Ps 8:5). He was made ruler over the works of God’s hands, and everything was put under his feet (Ps 8:6).

However, Man chose to listen to the lies of the devil, sinned against God and fell into sin. So all mankind became sinners (Ro 3:23), dead in trespasses and sin (Eph 2:1), without hope and without God in the world (Eph 2:12) and condemned to death (Jn 3:17; Ro 6:23). Man’s right to rule was usurped by the devil, so that now he lives in a world ruled by Satan (Mt 4:8,9).

When a person becomes a believer in Jesus Christ, he continues to live in the world but no longer belongs to it (Jn 15:19). He is delivered by Christ from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col 1:13). He is hated and persecuted by the world (Jn 16:18-21) and also by Satan and his demons (Eph 6:11). The believer is part of a spiritual war between God and His forces and Satan and His forces (2Co 10:3-5).

III. THE REALM OF SPIRIT BEINGS

A. Angels/Ministering Spirits

Although the Bible speaks frequently of angels, there is no systematic description of them. We do know that they are created beings (Ps 148:2,5; Col 1:16) who are inferior to God (Heb 1:4), but superior to man (Ps 8:5). They have great knowledge, but are not omniscient (1Pe 1:12). They have great power, but are not omnipotent (Ac 12:7-11). Although usually not seen, when they were seen they were described as “shining” and “white as snow” (Eze 1:13,14; Mt 28:3). They are messengers of God (Ac 7:38) who “always carry out the Father’s will perfectly” (Mt 6:10). In relation to man, they are “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Heb 1:14).

B. Demons/Fallen Angels

Although nowhere explicitly stated, it is accepted by evangelicals that demons are fallen angels (2Pe 2:4). Evangelicals believe that Revelation 12:7-9 speaks of Satan and his angels being hurled from heaven to the earth. Jude 1:6 speaks of angels who did not keep their positions of authority.

Throughout the gospels we see that one of their weapons is to afflict people with various sicknesses such as blindness, deafness, dumbness, and epilepsy. Satan is their ruler (Mt 12:24). They are so united in their evil purposes that when the disciples reported that they had cast out demons, Jesus said “I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven” (Lk 10:17,18).

C. Satan

Who is Satan? He is a created being, probably a fallen angel. He is a sinner whose work Jesus came to destroy (1Jn 3:8). He is called the prince of this world (Jn 16:11) and the “god of this world” (2Co 4:4). Other titles given to him are murderer and liar (Jn 8:44); a roaring lion who goes about trying to devour people (1Pe 5:8; 2Ti 4:17); deceiver of nations (Rev 12:9; 20:3,10); accuser of the brethren (Zec 3:1; Rev 12:10); angel of light (2Co 11:14); ancient serpent, devil, dragon (Rev 12:7,9; 20:2); prince of demons, Beelzebub (Mt 12:24; Lk 11:15).

What does Satan do? He leads the whole world astray (Rev 12:9). Satan has the whole world under his control (1Jn 5:19). He performs counterfeit signs and miracles (2Th 2:9). He roams the whole earth looking for prey to devour (Job 1:7; 1Pe 5:8). He wages war against God’s people (Rev 12:17). He holds the power of death (Heb 2:14).

What are Satan’s limits? He can go no further than God permits (Job 1:12). He is a defeated foe! (Rev 12:7-9). What is Satan’s final destiny? He will be crushed by God (Ro 16:20). God will destroy Satan (Heb 2:14) and will throw Him into the lake of burning sulfur (Rev 20:10).

IV. THE REALM OF THE BATTLE

When we became Christians we were transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Col 1:13). Although we continue to live in the physical world, as citizens of the kingdom of God we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph 2:6). We are aliens and strangers in the world (1Pe 2:11). As a result, we no longer live by the standards of the world (2Co 10:12). Therefore, the world and its ruler, Satan, hate us (Jn 17:14) and war against us.

In the next Spiritual Warfare lesson “Spiritual Battles” we will look at different arenas where Satan attacks the believer. Here we look at the primary arena; the mind.

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2Co 10:3-5).

Notice that we are to use supernatural power against arguments and thoughts. Satan's first arena of attack is the mind.

Satan is a liar and the father of lies (Jn 8:44). One of his tactics against believers is to deceive them into believing that lies are really true. The lie may be against the nature of God and His Word, as it was with Eve (Ge 3:1-4; 2Co 11:13). Jesus himself is the truth (Jn 14:6). In His prayer to the Father in John 17, He prayed "Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth" (Jn 17:17). We must stand firm on the truths of God's Word.

Satan's lie is often to make us believe that we are not saints saved by grace but sinners who are powerless to overcome our sinful condition. Our defense against this lie is also the truth. Jesus said "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." When Satan tempts us to think we are nothing, we are helpless, we have no power, etc. We must fight back with truth. In Christ, we have authority over Satan and his demons. The Church, the Body of Christ, already has ultimate victory over the powers of darkness. This is a truth that church planters must live and teach. Below are some verses that tell who the believer is in Christ. Memorize these verses and when Satan tempts you to believe a lie, use these truths against him.

Figure 2.1 Who I am in Christ

As a believer in Christ, I am...

- **not under condemnation, but have passed from death to life** (Jn 3:18, Ro 8:1)
- **a new creation** (2Co 5:17)
- **set free from law of sin and death** (Ro 8:2)
- **chosen by God** (Eph 1:4)
- **adopted by God. He is my Father** (Eph 1:5)
- **accepted by God** (Eph 1:6)
- **redeemed, purchased, and valued by God** (Eph 1:7)
- **a joint heir with Christ** (Eph 1:11; Ro 8:17)
- **sealed with the Holy Spirit** (Eph 1:13)
- **spiritually alive** (Eph 2:1-7)
- **a recipient of God's grace** (Eph 2:8)
- **His workmanship** (Eph. 2:10)
- **delivered by Christ from the power of darkness and placed in the kingdom of His Son** (Col. 1:13)
- **a temple of the Living God** (2Co 6:16)
- **complete in Him** (Col 2:10)
- **salt and light in the world** (Mt 5:13,14)
- **going to be like Christ when He returns** (1Jn 3:1,2)

CONCLUSION

The triune God is Creator and Ruler of all things, including mankind and spirit-beings (angels, Satan and demons). He is superior to all of His creation.

When God raised "Christ from the dead, he seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church ... And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms" (Eph 1:20-22; 2:6).

Our identity in Christ is the basis for our authority over those in the realm of spirit beings (Satan and his demons). We are partakers of the divine nature, saints who sometimes sin. We must resist the battle for our mind and hold fast to the truth of the victory that is already ours in Christ. As church planters, we must remember what Jesus said, **"I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."**

ACTION PLAN:

- Take time to review this lesson and look up all of the verses cited. Note in your spiritual journal any new truths you learned or ideas that have taken on a deeper meaning for you.
- Read aloud the list "Who I am in Christ" and thank God for what He has done for you. Memorize Scripture verses for areas of your identity in Christ about which you have doubts or fears. As you memorize these Scriptures, the Holy Spirit will make those truths become real in your life.
- Do the inductive Bible study of Ephesians 4:17-5:21 found in Appendix 2A.

SOURCES

- Moreau, A. Scott. *Essentials of Spiritual Warfare*. Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1997.
- Anderson, Neil T. *Victory over the Darkness*. California: Regal Books, 1990.



Inductive Bible Study: Ephesians 4:17 - 5:21

This inductive study in Ephesians has been started for you. Carefully study what has already been done. Then complete the study, answering all questions, writing summaries when that is indicated, and filling in all spots left blank. Be sure to write out the application.

I. OBSERVATION

Study Ephesians 4:17-24. Write out the following observations:

A. Describe how the Gentiles live (17-19)

- v.17 futility of their thinking
- v.18 darkened understanding
- v.18 separated from the life of God
- v.18 ignorance caused by hardened heart
- v.19 lost sensitivity
- v.19 given themselves over to sensuality
- v.19 indulge in every kind of impurity
- v.19 continually lust for more (impurity)

In a brief paragraph, summarize in your own words how the Gentiles live.

B. Describe how you (the Ephesians) have come to know Christ (20 - 23)

- v.21 you were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus
- v.22 to put off your old self
- v.23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds
- v.23 to put on the new self created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness

In a brief paragraph, summarize in your own words how the Ephesians came to know Christ.

II. INTERPRETATION

Answer the following interpretative questions:

- How are a person's actions determined by his thinking (mind)? (vs.17, 22, 23).
- What place did truth play in changing the Ephesian's actions? (21).
- Describe the "new self" (22). How is this new creation like God's original creation of man? (Compare Ge 1:27).

III. APPLICATION

Ephesians 4:25-5:21 is Paul's application. List the things he includes in his application. Then write a statement saying how you will apply these things to your life and ministry.

Verse	Application
4:25	Put off falsehood
4:25	
4:26	
4:26	
4:27	How does anger give the devil a foothold?
4:28	
4:28	
4:29	
4:30	Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God (How do we grieve Him?)
4:31	
4:32	
5:1	
5:2	
5:3	
5:4	
5:5	
5:6	
5:7	
5:8	
5:9	
5:10	
5:11	
5:12	

Application in my life and ministry:

**SPIRITUAL
WARFARE**

LESSON 3

Spiritual Battles

CHURCH PLANTERS UNDER ATTACK

☛ Lesson Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to help church planters discern and defend against satanic attacks and be able to help people who are suffering from demonic affliction.

☛ Main Points

- Satan's attacks may be in the physical, material, mental/emotional or spiritual realm.
- Defending one's self against Satan requires a knowledge of Scripture and spiritual maturity.

☛ Desired Outcomes

When they have mastered the content of this lesson, trainees will ...

- Know how to discern when they're under satanic attack.
- Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might.
- Begin learning how to defend against satanic attack and to take steps in offensive warfare.

☛ Appendices

- 3A Bible Study: How Did Jesus Deal With Demonized People?
- 3B Case Studies From Around the World

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual warfare is a reality for every believer in Christ. When a person becomes a believer in Christ, his relationship to everything in the emotional, mental, spiritual and physical realms dramatically changes. The believer is a new creation in Christ (2Co 5:17), a citizen of heaven (Php 3:20), and God's child (Jn 1:12). Because of his new relationship with God, the believer becomes the target of attack by the enemies of God—Satan and his forces who oppose God's person, plans and purposes.

This lesson contains information which is foundational to understanding how church planters can come under spiritual attack, how to defend themselves, and how to help others who have been afflicted by demonic forces. In the ongoing battle between Satan and the forces of God, any time a new church is started Satan realizes that he is losing territory in a world that he desires to control. Because of this, he will viciously attack new churches and new believers, and do all that he can to destroy them.

Church planters must not only be prepared for spiritual battle themselves (both defensively and offensively), but they must also teach the new believers in cell groups and churches about the battle that they are a part of, whether they know it or not. Without a solid biblical understanding of the spiritual warfare that is going on around them, new churches will be more vulnerable to satanic attack that can weaken and even destroy them. Church planters have a responsibility to help prepare God's "army" of believers for the spiritual battles that lie ahead of them.

I. ARENAS OF SATANIC ATTACK

Satan and his host of demons are in the world, fighting against God's plans and purposes. People may experience satanic attacks in the mental, physical and spiritual realms. In the previous Spiritual Warfare lesson "Dynamics of Spiritual Warfare" we saw that the primary arena is that of the mind. In this session, we will discuss the other realms. Satan and his demons may attack directly, or may use others.

An example of the latter is through persecution from the world. This indirect attack from Satan should come as no surprise to believers, since the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy "...Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2Ti 3:12). Peter wrote his first epistle to tell believers how to live under persecution. Jesus said the world would hate His followers (Jn 15:18-19). Therefore, believers should not be surprised by persecution, but should realize that is an indirect attack from Satan.

A. Attacks In The Physical Arena

1. Physical Health

Not every sickness is a result of satanic attack. However, we do see in the Gospels that there were cases where this was true (Mt 9:32-33; Lk 13:16; Mk 5:1-13). See Appendix 3A, "How Did Jesus Deal With Demonized People?".

2. Physical Desires Like Food And Sex

God created humans with physical needs and desires. When rightly fulfilled, these are good. However, Satan likes to take that which is good and tempt man to use it in ways that are harmful. In the temptation of Adam and Eve, Satan used something that appealed to the eyes (food) to cause them to sin. The sin was not because they wanted or needed food, but because they misused food—in this case food that had been forbidden by God (Ge 3:1-6). Likewise, after Jesus had been fasting for forty days and nights, Satan tempted Him to relieve His hunger by exercising supernatural power independently of His father (Mt 4:2-4).

Satan tempts people to misuse that which God created to be good. John described as part of the world (controlled by Satan) the lust of the eyes (1Jn 2:15-16). Many recent stories tell about Christian leaders around the world who have fallen into sexual sins. Church planters are on the "front lines" of ministry and as such need to guard themselves carefully against the temptations that Satan will most certainly offer them.

B. Attacks In The Material Arena

Another arena in which Satan attacks is in creating an unhealthy desire for the good things that God has given us. Satan tempted Jesus in this arena by offering Him all of the kingdoms of the world with their splendor if He would worship him (Mt 4:8).

Closely related to this is the desire for power. In Genesis 1:28-29, God told Adam and Eve that they should rule over all living creatures. But a result of their sin was that the man would rule over the woman (Ge 3:15). Thus began the struggle for power over other humans.

Church planters need to be careful that an unhealthy desire for possessions and power does not cause them to take their eyes off Jesus.

C. Attacks In The Mental/Emotional Arena

The temptation to be discouraged or to despair may be a direct attack from the enemy. See Mk 5:1-10 and Lk 9:37-42.

D. Attacks In The Spiritual Arena

Today there is an increasing interest in the occult. Many people are seeking spiritists, mediums, psychic healers, palm-readers, psychic counselors or guides, horoscopes, etc. Through these occult practices, Satan can get a hold on peoples' lives.

Church planters must be careful to avoid these occult practices, and they must teach others in their cell groups and churches the dangers that are involved with these practices. It is very common for new believers to not fully understand the severity of these types of occult practices. They may have visited a fortune teller, a spiritual healer, or someone else involved in occult activity before they became a believer, and do not see the danger of returning to them.

II. HOW TO KNOW IF A PROBLEM IS FROM NATURAL CAUSES OR IS A SATANIC ATTACK

It is not always easy to distinguish the source of problems. For example, it is not uncommon to hear Christian workers relate stories like the following:

"I was alone in my room, sleeping soundly. Suddenly I was awakened for no apparent reason. The darkness in the room seemed oppressive and I found my heart racing, my breath coming in gasps and my body covered with sweat. Sensing that this was a satanic attack, I sat up in bed, turned on the light and in a loud voice started acknowledging Jesus Christ as LORD and asking for His protection from any evil spirits that might be trying to harm me. As I prayed, the oppression lifted and I lay down and again slept soundly."

The person relating this story suspected that he was being attacked by Satan and immediately went on a counterattack. Should you suspect you are under satanic attack, here are some biblical principles to consider. They are not listed in any particular order:

- Test the spirits to see whether they are from God (1Jn 4:1-3).
- Seek help from someone in the Body with the gift of distinguishing between spirits (1Co 12:10).
- Trials may be from the Lord to make us mature and complete (Jas 1:2-4).
- Temptations are from the devil; if we allow our own evil desire to cause us to yield, sin results (Jas 1:13-14).
- Satan attacks to cause us to sin, but God brings about good (Ge 50:19-20).
- Satan sends things into our lives which God uses to show His power in our weakness (2Co 12:7-9).

III. HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF AGAINST SATANIC ATTACKS

A. Take Every Thought Captive To The Mind Of Christ (2Co 10:3-5)

Memorizing and meditating on Scripture allows us to evaluate thoughts and ideas which come into our minds and reject those which are against the truths of Scripture. Scripture memorization also helps to train our thinking patterns so that we become disciplined to think and act more like Christ.

B. Renew Your Mind (Ro 12:1-2)

Ask God to search your thoughts and reveal to you any which are wicked or impure. Confess those to the Lord and turn away from them (Ps 139:23-24). Think about things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy (Php. 4:8).

Beware of the deluge of sexual lies and temptations that would fill your mind with godless thoughts. *"Satan has no power over you except what you give him by failing to take every thought captive and thus being deceived into believing lies"* (N. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness*, pg. 169 & 170).

C. Put On All The Armor Of God (Eph 6:10-18)

Acknowledge your salvation by faith in Christ, your righteousness before God by the blood of Christ, and the peace that you have with God because you are His child. Take time to praise the Father for His victory over the evil one and the fact that through Christ you have victory over the evil one.

The one offensive weapon which a believer has is the Word of the God—"the sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17). Believers are admonished throughout the Scriptures to stand firm in the truth of the Word of God (Jn 8:32, 1Pe 5:9).

D. Acknowledge The Covering Of The Blood Of The Lamb (Rev 12:11)

The only basis of victory over the flesh, the world and Satan is the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. His sacrifice broke the power of Satan and allowed man to enter into fellowship with God. It is important that believers realize that they cannot overcome Satan in their own power, but only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

E. Do Not Let Sin Reign In You (Ro 6:12)

Believers are admonished to physically remove themselves from situations which can result in their yielding to sin (2Ti 2:22). Also, believers should “avoid any appearance of evil” (1Th 5:22; Eph 5:3).

IV. GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH DEMONIC AFFLICTION

Throughout the New Testament and in examples from around the world (see Appendix 3B, “Case Studies From Around The World”), we see people who are demon-possessed. Demonic possession is a reality in the world in which we live.

It is also very clear from Scripture that believers can open themselves to demonic oppression, or demonic influence. Ephesians 4:27 speaks of believers not giving Satan a “foothold” in their life. 1 Peter 5:8 was written to believers and tells us that we have an enemy who prowls around looking for someone to devour. In 2 Corinthians 2:11 Paul tells us that Satan is scheming against us, and that he wants us to fall into his trap so that he can obtain the right to afflict us with his demons.

Every Christian should be able to defend himself from satanic attack, since God has given us clear guidelines from Scripture how to live and how to wear His armor as defense. Obviously, unbelievers do not understand how to defend themselves, and they do not have the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives to give them the strength to do it. Unfortunately, there are also some believers who for various reasons choose to open themselves up to demonic influence in their lives.

Because of this, the essence of working with people who are suffering from demonic oppression and possession is a **truth** encounter, not a **power** encounter. Some Christians incorrectly believe since God is more powerful than Satan, that in Jesus’ name they can remove all demonic influences in the life of someone who is suffering. While God is all-powerful and Satan is not, God has given man a free will to choose whether or not he will allow the “prince of this world” (Jn 16:11) to have influence in his life. God has given us all that we need to defend ourselves against the schemes of the Devil, but we can still choose to ignore these things and allow Satan to have some amount of control in our lives. It is the realization of the truth of the believer’s identity in Christ that gives him the ability to choose to refuse the sinful activities that would otherwise give Satan the right to torment him.

The following guidelines can be used to minister to those who are suffering from some type of demonic influence in their lives.

A. Pray And Seek Wisdom From The Holy Spirit

Dealing with demonic influences requires great spiritual wisdom and dependency on the Holy Spirit. Satan is a powerful foe and confrontation with him or his forces should not be entered into lightly. The need for guidance and leading from the Holy Spirit cannot be overemphasized, since there is not a “formula” for working with people who are suffering from demonic activity in their lives. Every person is unique, every situation is different, and although there are general principles involved, each situation requires dependence on and wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Time in prayer should be spent before any type of ministry involving demonic affliction.

B. Work With Others

This type of ministry should always be done with at least one or more mature believer in Christ. If possible, have people present who have the gift of discernment and who have had prior experience with demonic oppression/possession. Take time together as a group to pray (and fast, if necessary) as you deal with the person who is suffering. If at all possible, church planters and other Christian workers should avoid doing this type of ministry by themselves.

C. Determine The Cause

Sometimes demonic manifestation will occur unexpectedly in public places such as a worship service, Bible study, cell group meeting, or other corporate setting. In these cases the Christian leaders who are present may have no choice but to deal immediately with the situation, relying on the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to guide them.

However, it is much more common that demonic influence manifests itself over the course of time in the life of a person, and in such a way that the problem is evident to them and others around them. In these instances, it is necessary to set up a meeting between this person and those in the church who are able to help him become free from the demonic influences in his life. The purpose of the meeting is to try and understand what has happened in this person's life that may have given Satan the right to afflict him. It is also a time to determine whether the problem is demonic, or if there are other natural causes involved.

There are many ways that people can open themselves up to Satan and give him the opportunity to torment them. Some of the more common areas include:

- Occult activity: idolatry, Eastern religious practices (such as transcendental meditation), spiritism, secret "blood" pledges, participation in cults, astrology, fortune telling, some types of hypnosis, psychic healing, out-of-body experiences.
- Witchcraft and Satanism: incantations, spells, satanic rituals, dedication of children to Satan, ritual abuse, magic (white and black).
- Willful, ongoing and unconfessed sin: drugs, addictions, anger, sexual sins, hatred, an unforgiving spirit, etc.

It is vitally important that people who are suffering be completely honest with the believers who wish to help them. Are they currently, or have they in the past, been involved in the occult? How about their parents or other relatives? If they are believers, do they have some "hidden" sin in their lives that they do not want to confess? As much as possible, determine everything that could contribute to the demonic manifestation in their life.

D. Deal With Sin Issues

Whether or not the person being afflicted is a believer, he must want to be free from the demonic influence. Based on what was learned about previous or current occult activity, unconfessed sins, etc., this person must repent of these sins and each activity that may have given Satan a foothold in his life. Each item should be confessed out loud, and forgiveness asked for from God. The person should refute any past satanic practices and the stronghold(s) that these gave Satan in his life.

It is important to understand that this person does not need to be a Christian in order to be freed from the demonic forces in his life. However, without the protection and position that a believer has in Christ over Satan, this person is open to renewed demonic activity in his life, sometimes with even greater intensity (see Mt 12:43-45). As sin issues are dealt with, the Gospel should be clearly presented and the opportunity given for this person to accept Christ as Savior.

Regardless of the spiritual condition of the person, he must understand that if he returns to occult practices or willful sin, he opens himself up again to Satan's demonic activity in his life.

E. Deliverance

At this point, the believers involved should pray and ask the Holy Spirit to show them how He wants to deal with the demonic activity in this person's life. This may be as simple as casting out the demon(s) in the name of and by the authority of Jesus Christ. Other times, extended prayer and fasting may be required to break through the spiritual resistance of the demonic forces involved. Sometimes in cases where the person being afflicted is a believer, the Holy Spirit will lead them to acknowledge their position in Christ, repent of the sins that resulted in demonic oppression, and refute Satan themselves.

Note that during the process of freeing someone from demonic affliction, it is best not to communicate in any way directly with the demon(s) involved. John 8:44 tells us that the devil is a liar and the father of lies, and there is no reason for the demons to say anything less than half-truths. Many Christians in ministry with oppressed people have found that talking with demons and asking them to manifest themselves causes much more profanity, physical aggression, violence, and greatly prolongs and complicates the process of freedom from the demons involved.

In the same way that there is no "magic formula" for releasing someone from demonic influences in his life, there are also no guaranteed results from a time of intercession and deliverance ministry.

Sometimes an afflicted person will be completely and totally delivered from all demonic activity. Other times there will be little or no deliverance. Sometimes the Holy Spirit desires that several problem areas in the life of the afflicted person be resolved one by one over a period of time. Sometimes more prayer and fasting is needed. In all cases, the believers should pray and ask for continued leading and direction from the Holy Spirit.

F. Follow-up

If possible, one mature believer should be assigned as a counselor for this person to answer questions that he might have and to "watch over" him for several months. In instances where complete deliverance was not obtained, the counselor can continue to work with this person to look at areas in his life where there might still be unconfessed sin, occult practices, etc. Although demonic manifestation may decrease for a time after intercession or casting out of demons, if all the areas which gave Satan a foothold in the first place are not dealt with, sooner or later the demonic oppression will continue and make itself known again.

If the person received Christ as Savior during the deliverance process, the counselor can also help with discipling this new believer and reminding him of the truth of his identity in Christ. If other signs of demonic activity are noticed, the deliverance process should be repeated, looking for other "ground" that this person has given to Satan in his life. Ultimate freedom will be obtained when all of the footholds have been given up, when the person understands who he is in Christ, and when Christ has been given complete control over every area of his life.

ACTION PLAN:

- In your life and ministry as a church planter, are you experiencing anything that you think might be a direct attack of the evil one? If so, list ways from this study that indicate what you should do to stand against these attacks. Share this with a mature Christian who will pray with you.
- Complete the table in Appendix 3A.
- Read the case studies in Appendix 3B.

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**SPIRITUAL WARFARE
APPENDIX**

3A

Bible Study

HOW DID JESUS DEAL WITH DEMONIZED PEOPLE?

The following chart lists the places in the Gospels where Jesus dealt with demonized people. Complete the chart, and then write down how these truths apply to your life and ministry. Some of the work has been done for you.

Reference	Background & Demonized person	How did Jesus respond?	What were the results?	Interpretation:
Mt 4:24-25	From "...all over Syria people brought to him...the demon possessed."	He healed them	Large crowds followed Him.	
Mk 1:21-28	In Capernaum on Sabbath. In synagogue man – "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God"	Ordered demon to "Be quiet! Come out of him!"	Evil spirit shook the man violently and came out.	Jesus gives orders to evil spirits & they obey Him. Demons know Jesus is God and that He has power to destroy them. When He spoke, the demons obeyed. When His children speak under His authority, the demons also obey.
Mk 1:32-39 (Lk 4:40 – 41)	Same day as above. Evening; home of Simon & Andrew. People brought demon possessed to Jesus	Drove out many demons but would not let them speak because they knew who He was		Jesus did not want people to follow Him as Messiah without first accepting Him as Savior.
Mk 3:15; 6:7 (Mt 10:2-4) (Lk 6:14-16)		Jesus chose 12 apostles; gave them authority to drive out demons		
Mt 8:16-17		He drove out the spirits with a word.		
Mt 8:28-34	2 demon -possessed men came from tombs were violent and shouted to Jesus, "What do you want with us, Son of God?"...Have you come to torture us before the appointed time?"			Jesus will judge demons. They will be cast into hell.
	Begged Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the heard of pigs	Said, "Go"	Demons entered pigs; whole town went out to meet Jesus; pleaded with Him to leave their region.	

Reference	Background & Demonized person	How did Jesus respond?	What were the results?	Interpretation:
Mk 5:1-17	One demon possessed man broke chains & ankle irons No one strong enough to subdue him Night and day cried out & cut himself			
	Demons begged Jesus not to torture him.	"Come out of this man, you evil spirit"		
	"Legion, for we are many"	What is your name?"		
	Begged to be sent into pigs	Gave them permission to go into pigs	Pigs ran into lake and were drowned	
	Man begged to go with Jesus	"Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you.		
Lk 8:26-37	For a long time had not worn clothes or lived in a house		After demons driven out, man was dressed and in his right mind	
	Begged Him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.			Demons realize that Jesus has power to send them to the Abyss.
Mt 12:22-28	Mute & blind	Jesus healed him so that he could both see & talk	People astonished "Could this be the Son of David?" Pharisees: He does this by power of Beelzebub. Jesus' teaching followed: Mt 12:25-29 Mk 3:23-30 Lk 11:14-26	
Mt 15:21-28	Jesus withdrew to Tyre & Sidon; Canaanite woman: "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon possession"	"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."		
Mk 7:24-30	Lord, help me.	"It is not right to take the children's bread & toss it to their dogs."		

Application in my life and ministry:

SPIRITUAL WARFARE
APPENDIX

3B

Case Studies From Around The World

The following are case studies showing how some missionaries have dealt with demons in ministries. Except for the missionary in study one, all names have been changed. These can help you face similar situations that you might encounter as you are engaged in the advance of the Church.

I. CASE STUDY ONE: DICK HILLIS RECOUNTS THE FOLLOWING STORY FROM CHINA

A young soldier brought his wife to me to cast out a demon, saying, "My wife is in the courtyard, and she is demon possessed. Twice the demon has ordered her to kill herself, once by hanging and once by jumping in the moat. Both times she obeyed him, but I was able to rescue her."

"We went to the compound to pray that the woman would be delivered. I confess that I prayed in doubt, wondering if I would need some special gift of healing. As we prayed, the demon-possessed woman would take words from our prayers and make ridiculous poems out of them. She would scream and yell and make fun of what we were doing. Apparently, our prayers were of no avail."

This continued for three days. We told the soldier to destroy any idols in their home, which he did. Still the demon did not leave. Then God showed my wife that we needed to acknowledge our position in Christ and command the demon to leave. When we did this, she was instantly delivered.

His conclusion was, "We learned further that it is not enough to pray or sing, though I believe that Satan hates both prayer and song. We must resist the devil and command that he depart" (from *Demon Experiences in Many Lands*, p 37-39).

II. CASE STUDY TWO: A MISSIONARY COUPLE TELLS THE FOLLOWING STORY FROM A COUNTRY IN CENTRAL/EASTERN EUROPE

Fatima, a mother of four, came from a family with many problems, the majority of which seem to have their roots in demonic activity.

At 15 she married Hysen, a man whose father was mentally ill. After several years of marriage, he also became mentally sick. He could be kept calm only with medication. Although still a Muslim, he requested prayer in the name of Jesus for deliverance from curses his family had put on him.

Fatima's mother-in-law had put a curse on her "that she would die before her time." Now at 39, she was dying of cancer. The missionary said, "When I went to see her, she told me that she had been having unbearable pain all day. When the pain gets very bad she sees her now-dead mother-in-law dressed up like a witch with a rod in her hand." Although now a Christian, she was terrified. The missionary decided he should take authority in the name of Jesus, which he did. Fatima was instructed to pray likewise. She improved spiritually, but the physical pain continued.

In spite of the prayers, Fatima died. At her funeral, Hysen's brother took charge. This brother is involved in occult practices (fortune telling, making magic charms, etc.). He brought in a Muslim priest who is somewhat of a magician to perform rituals.

A week after the funeral, the missionary's wife went with other women to visit the grave. Afterwards, she was invited to the family's home for dinner. Fatima's older daughter, a believer, asked her to pray because she had seen some relatives putting soil from the grave in the family's food. According to tradition, this will cause the same curse that fell on Fatima to fall on her family.

If you had been the missionary in this study, how would you have helped this family as they went through this crisis?

III. CASE STUDY THREE: A MISSIONARY COUPLE TELL THE FOLLOWING STORY FROM ROMANIA

A couple in their late thirties told the missionaries how they had been placed under a curse. When they were married, the husband's sister (a white witch) had sewn small slips of paper with curses on them into their clothing. The curse was that they would never be able to have children. Although they had destroyed all of the paper, they still were childless. Now nearing the end of their child-bearing years, the couple sought help. They reported that they were not able to have normal relations because every time they began to do so they heard mocking voices telling them they could not.

The missionaries read with them verses showing them that they could be free from this curse by the power of Christ. Claiming their authority in Christ, they denounced the work and power of Satan in their lives and asked God for deliverance. The next time they talked with the missionaries, they said they had been claiming this authority and had heard no more voices. Their marriage was much stronger. They thought the woman was pregnant, which proved to be incorrect.

If you had been the missionaries in this story, would you have done anything differently? What would you have said when they reported that they could still not have children?

IV. CASE STUDY FOUR: A YOUNG MISSIONARY IN AFRICA HAD THIS EXPERIENCE OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

In 1986, I went on a short term missions trip to Senegal, West Africa. My second night in the country was enough to teach me that we indeed are in a battle against the powers of darkness.

I was staying with missionaries who lived in Ouakam, a village known for its spiritual darkness. After the morning service in another city the day after I arrived, we decided to hold the first-ever worship service in Ouakam that same night. It was a blessed time, and afterwards, we talked late into the night. The rest of the family went upstairs to bed, and I prepared for bed downstairs.

I tossed and turned until 3:00 a.m., then finally fell into a deep sleep. It was hot and muggy and I had a fan blowing across the bed. After a short time, I became extremely cold. But when I tried to get up to shut off the fan, I couldn't move. My mind was very alert, but my body was paralyzed. I tried to cry out for help, but my tongue was swollen in my mouth.

Since this was during the Muslim fast of Ramadan, it was noisy outside. Witch doctors were casting curses and shamans were praying to evil spirits. It was known that the house where we lived had been visited by a witch doctor who had tried to put curses on it to make the missionaries leave the village.

I heard the footsteps of someone coming down the stairs, but no one ever came around the corner. I saw a shadow coming toward me from the far side of the room. It looked like the outline of a man wearing a dark cloak. Then I heard the sound of an animal ripping apart flesh with its teeth.

The fear that was growing in my heart was settled by one thought: "This is the work of the evil one and Jesus is my protection." So I tried to cry out the name of Jesus. I said it once, twice, and on the third time, my mouth was loosened, the shadow disappeared, the noise stopped, and I sat up in bed free from the invisible power that held me. I bolted upstairs, awakened the older missionary and explained what had happened. She asked if I had been dreaming. I assured her that it was not a dream. We prayed for 30 minutes before I was ready to rest.

From that night on, I could sense evil in the room on many occasions, but when I would put on the armor of God and tell the spirits to go away in Jesus' name and by His authority, I could sleep in peace.

I now understand God's power in the midst of darkness. I know we are in a spiritual battle for the souls of men and women, but I am assured that He who is in us is greater than any spirit. Jesus in us is the hope of glory.

If this experience had happened to you, would you have known about the authority you have to rebuke demons? What does this say about the power of prayer?