

Developing Godly Reproducing Churches

**Growing Christian Leaders Series
Manual 17**

by

Duane L. Anderson

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Growing Christian Leaders Series

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1.

Healthy Churches Reproduce Themselves

In Acts 2:41 we see that the number of believers multiplied as the church began on the day of Pentecost with 3000 being saved. Then in Acts 6:1 and Acts 6:7 we see that the number of disciples multiplied greatly as Christians became equipped to lead a small group of people and help them in their spiritual growth. In Acts 9:31 we read, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” In these passages we see a progression: Christians multiplied, disciples who were able to lead a spiritual household multiplied and then churches multiplied. Today we are going to start a series of topics that will help your church to become equipped to multiply itself.

In Acts 11:19-21 we see how the church in Antioch began. Those verses say, “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” In these verses we see that the church in Antioch began because Christians from Jerusalem and Judea shared the Gospel wherever they went when they were forced to leave Jerusalem because of persecution.

We also see that the church at Jerusalem took the responsibility to help these new Christians grow. Acts 11:22-24 says, “Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.” Here we see that the church in Jerusalem had the concern of a parent and sent Barnabas to help these new Christians grow.

Next we see that Barnabas realized the need to develop a leadership team because he could not help all of the Christians in their spiritual growth. Acts 11:25-26 says, “Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” Barnabas had earlier encouraged Saul as recorded in Acts 9:26-30. Barnabas and the other leaders at Jerusalem had heard how the Lord was using Saul in Tarsus according to Galatians 1:21-24. Barnabas recognized that Saul had become equipped to help Christians grow and develop as leaders. As a result, Barnabas recruited Saul, later called Paul, to become a part of the leadership team at Antioch.

Barnabas and Paul focused on helping Christians grow and become disciples that were able to lead a spiritual household. These disciples grew so much in their spiritual lives that the people of Antioch even started calling them Christians (little Christs). This was probably originally meant as a term to mock the believers but was recognized by the believers as a compliment and we are still called Christians today. May it be our goal that our lives will be so transformed that the world will recognize that we act like Christ also.

In Acts 13:1 we see that the leadership team in Antioch had grown from two to five as Barnabas and Paul helped three other men grow to the point where they became part of the leadership team. It is at this point that we see that the church at Antioch had become a healthy church that was able to reproduce itself. Acts 13:1-3 says, “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”

These verses tell us several things about the leadership team in the church at Antioch. First, we see that this leadership team spent time praying and fasting as they sought the will of the Lord. Second, this was a leadership team that had become multiethnic and multicultural. Third, Barnabas and Paul had trained the leaders so well that the Lord could now lead the team to send Barnabas and Paul out to do the same thing in other areas. Barnabas and Paul had helped these three men grow so much that they were now able to lead the church without the help of Barnabas and Paul. We see that a healthy church develops leaders that are able to lead the church with or without the original leaders.

By the time that Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch a few years later, the three leaders that had been left had developed many others to the point where they had become a part of the leadership team. Acts 15:35 says, “Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.” The leadership team that had been left at Antioch realized that their first priority was to develop additional leaders for the team so that there would be additional leaders to help disciples continue to develop and become the heads of spiritual households.

The interesting thing that we see is that Paul and Barnabas repeated this same process wherever they went. Acts 14:21-23 says, “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” In these verses we see the process that develops healthy reproducing churches. We see that Paul and Barnabas did the following things:

- They preached the Gospel.
- They helped those who became Christians grow and become disciples that were able to lead spiritual households.
- They strengthened the souls of the disciples.
- They exhorted them to continue in the faith.
- They prepared them for much tribulation.
- They appointed leadership teams from among the disciples.
- They prayed for the leadership teams with fasting.
- They entrusted these new leadership teams to the Lord.
- They believed that the Lord would work through these new teams.
- They left the area to continue their ministry in other places.

Although Paul and Barnabas left this area, they did not forget these new churches. They continued to pray for them. Later they came back to visit them and encourage them. Acts 15:36 says, "Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." The Lord led Barnabas to take Mark to go to visit the churches they had started in Cyprus. The Lord led Paul to take Silas and go to visit the churches they had started in Syria and Cilicia.

We see that the churches that Paul and Barnabas had started in other areas had also become healthy, reproducing churches. In Acts 16:1-3 we see that these churches now had one of their young leaders that they could now send with Paul and Silas to help them continue to start new churches in other areas. Those verses say, "Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek." Timothy had become a disciple that could lead a spiritual household and he had a good report from cities that were forty miles apart.

However, Timothy was not the only leader that these churches had developed to reach out and reproduce additional churches. Acts 16:4-5 says, "And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily." Here we see that all of the churches were sending out part of their leaders to establish other churches in surrounding cities and communities. The result was that the number of churches was increasing every day.

Just as Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 2:2, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.", we are also to develop godly reproducing Christians that are able to develop healthy reproducing churches. Godly leaders develop godly leaders. Christ has called each spiritual leader to develop other spiritual leaders and equip them to teach others also. If we are in any kind of spiritual leadership, one of our first priorities should be to develop other godly leaders as we take them with us and show them by our example how to be a godly leader. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop godly leaders who can help their churches reproduce.

2.

Healthy Churches Develop and Select Leaders – Part I

In our last topic we talked about the fact that healthy churches reproduce themselves. This will only happen if the church develops a godly leadership team. In Titus 1:5 we read, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” Paul and Titus had preached the Gospel in the cities on the island of Crete (the island is 160 miles long and 35 miles wide). However, Paul had to leave before those churches were organized and established. As a result, Paul left Titus to complete that ministry. Here we see that Titus had two primary responsibilities:

1. He was to set in order the things that are lacking.
2. He was to appoint elders in every church.

The thing that the churches were lacking was qualified spiritual leadership to lead them. As a result, Titus was first to develop that leadership and then second appoint elders in every church. We will talk about the first of these two today. This meant that every church had men that would become qualified if they were helped to mature in their spiritual lives. The responsibility of Titus was to help them become qualified before he appointed them as elders. This brings us to a list of the qualifications for elders in Titus 1:6-9 which says, “If a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

Most of the things in this list are character qualifications. Just as Christ developed these character qualifications in His disciples by taking the disciples with Him so that they could see His example, Titus would also help men develop these qualifications by taking them with him. We might summarize these qualifications by saying that the primary responsibilities of Titus were to:

- Help potential leaders develop a respected life.
- Help potential leaders develop a healthy marriage.
- Help potential leaders develop a healthy family relationship.
- Help potential leaders become Christ centered and not self centered.
- Help potential leaders deal with former sinful habits.
- Help potential leaders learn to use their homes for ministry.
- Help potential leaders develop godly character.
- Help potential leaders learn to teach the Word of God.
- Help potential leaders learn to correct those who contradict.

The reason why Titus was given this list of qualifications was to help him understand how to qualify men for the leadership team not disqualify them. These things are all taught by example because most of them are character qualifications. It takes two things to develop these things in others – time and example. Christ spent about 21 months with His disciples before Christ chose the twelve to become the leadership team. Luke 6:12-13 says, “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was

day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles.” We see that Christ had a larger group of disciples but He chose to select a smaller group to show them how to walk so that they could become the leadership team of the early church.

Then He spent about that much more time focused on their character development and the development of their ministry skills. The night before He was crucified Christ could say in John 17:4, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” The work that He had finished was developing the qualifications in eleven of those men to qualify them to lead the early church. Christ was also modeling for us how we develop a godly leadership team today.

I often share this list of nine things from Titus with pastors who say that they do not have enough leaders in their church or in the case of some pastors say they have no leaders. I have them take their men one by one and tell me in what areas they are not yet qualified. Usually with each man they will list two or three areas where that person is not yet qualified. In the case of a new Christian, the person probably will not be qualified in any of the areas yet. When we have discussed each man, I tell the pastor that he has just defined his primary responsibility to each of the men that we mentioned. He is to take that person with him and show him by his example. He is to show that person how to become qualified in those areas where the person is not yet qualified. In a larger church each of the men on the leadership team can focus on taking a few men with them and showing them how to live. Titus was to model these things for the men in Crete.

Titus had to have three key attitudes to be an effective developer of others. First, he had to have the attitude of a godly servant leader that caused him to serve others by showing them how to develop a godly life so that they were making Biblical priorities their priorities. Second, Titus had to be motivated by the love of Christ and not driven by fear so that it was possible for him to focus on developing godly reproducing Christians that would produce godly reproducing churches. Third, he had to have a passion to develop those men so that they were equipped to teach faithful men to teach others also (the third and fourth spiritual generation described by Paul in II Timothy 2:2). Those attitudes would make it possible for him to bring glory to God and not himself. Those are the same three attitudes that we need to have to develop godly leadership teams.

As Titus helped the people in each city to develop character qualifications in their lives, he was to also teach them certain things and show them by example how to practice them. Chapter two gives a summary of the things that he was to teach. Titus 2:1-2 tells what he was to teach the older men, “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience.” He was also to help the older women develop godly character so that they could show the younger women how to develop godly character. Titus 2:3-5 says, “The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things--that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

Titus was told to teach the younger men in Titus 2:6-8 how to develop godly character in the younger men by his example. Those verses say, “Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity,

reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.” Finally Titus was to help the servants learn how to become a godly example to their masters. Titus 2:9-10 says, “Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.” Paul made it very clear to Titus that the thing that would have an impact on the people of the island of Crete was the transformed lives of the Christians.

In the same way, the only way we are going to be able to develop the leaders needed to develop godly reproducing churches is to show people by our example how their lives can be transformed by obedience to the Word of God. In fact Paul emphasized the same things in chapter three of Titus. Titus 3:1-2 says, “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.” Then Titus 3:8 says, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” Paul made it very clear in all three chapters of Titus that Titus was to develop godly leadership by his own example of a transformed life.

Chapter one tells one other thing that Titus was to teach potential leaders by his example. Titus 1:9 says, “Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” Titus was to show each man how to teach sound doctrine. He was to show each man how to encourage and strengthen other Christians from the Word of God. He was also to show each man how to answer those who spoke against the Word of God. Paul explained how to teach men to teach the Word in I Corinthians 14:29-31, “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” Here we see that all of the men were to be given opportunities to speak the Word of God so that they could learn how to share the Word of God.

Just as Titus was to help people develop godly character by following his example, and show men how to teach the Word by showing them and giving them opportunities to teach, we are to do the same things. We are to show people how to develop godly character. We are to show each man how to teach the Word of God and then give them opportunities to teach the Word. As we do these things each person will develop godly character, Biblical knowledge and ministry skills. May the Lord richly bless you as you show people how to have their lives transformed by your example.

3.

Healthy Churches Develop and Select Leaders – Part II

In our last topic we saw that Paul left Titus on the island of Crete to do two things. Titus 1:5 says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” In this verse we see that Titus was to:

1. Set in order the things that were lacking.
2. Appoint elders in every church

Our last topic focused on the first of these two things. This topic will focus on the second. These two things establish the foundation that helps a church to become a healthy reproducing church. In our last topic we saw that the first responsibility of Titus was to help men become qualified by his example. Today we will focus on their appointment once men are qualified.

Paul gave us an example in Acts 14:21-24 where we read, “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.” These verses show us several things about the selection of the leadership team of a church.

In previous topics we have discussed the fact that a disciple by the definition of a disciple given in Matthew 13:52 has become the head of a spiritual household. That means that he is leading a small group in Bible study to help them in their spiritual growth. However, even though they were already leading a small group, Paul and Barnabas felt it was necessary to do three things to equip the men to be effective leadership teams. Paul and Barnabas chose to:

- Strengthen the souls of the disciples.
- Encourage them to continue in the faith.
- Prepare them for many tribulations.

This brings us to the question, if men are already able to lead a small group, why do they need continued strengthening, encouragement and preparation for tribulation. Christians continue to need these things as long as they live. Paul and Barnabas recognized that these men would need a team to do these three things once Paul and Barnabas left to minister in other places. This is one of several reasons why we need a church leadership team and not just one person to lead a church. Another reason why we need a team is due to the fact that no one person has all of the spiritual gifts and every Christian needs the gifts of other Christians to have an effective reproducing ministry.

We see that once Paul and Barnabas had strengthened the disciples, encouraged them and prepared them for tribulation, they appointed elders in every church. Here we see that men that were existing elders recognized those additional men who now also met the qualifications for spiritual leadership. Just as Christ had done with the eleven, they now recognized these men as qualified men and helped each church to recognize them as qualified. After training the eleven for 3 ½ years, Christ called them His friends in John 15:15, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My

Father I have made known to you.” Then in John 20:17 He called them His brethren and in verse 21 told them, “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Christ called the eleven friends and brethren and made them full partners in ministry.

In each church that Paul and Barnabas established, they recognized those men that had become qualified as friends and full partners in ministry. Later that same recognition was given to Timothy when Paul asked him to become a part of the team with Paul and Silas as they went out to establish new churches. I Timothy 4:14 says, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” The other elders laid their hands on Timothy and prayed for him and recognized him as a partner in ministry with Paul and Silas.

In the case of Timothy, it was the elders of the churches at Derbe, Lystra and Iconium that had recognized the spiritual character of Timothy and had recommended him to Paul. Acts 16:2-3a says, “He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him...” Here we see that the leadership teams of several churches had joined together to recommend Timothy to Paul and Silas as a man qualified to join their church planting team. These churches were also multiplying churches in their own area as Acts 16:5 says, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.” These churches were developing sister churches in their local area and becoming sending churches as they sent one of their own as a part of a team to start churches in other areas.

Here we see in Acts 14:23 that Paul and Barnabas had earlier done the same thing in the churches at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. That verse says, “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” In each church they appointed these elders after a time of prayer and fasting. These new leadership teams in each church were recognized by Paul and Barnabas and also by each church. There was a unity of spirit because these churches had seen these men grow and become qualified for spiritual leadership. This is the pattern of healthy churches that become reproducing churches.

One of the key things to notice about these church leadership teams that Paul and Barnabas appointed was the fact that they trusted these men to continue to lead the churches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. After recognizing these teams, they commended them to the Lord and believed that the Lord would work through each of these teams to help each church continue to grow and develop additional qualified men to become a part of a church leadership team. The verse that was quoted above from Acts 16:5 shows that by the time Paul returned to this area several years later that the churches that had been established were now establishing new churches daily.

One of the things that made it possible for this to happen was the fact that the early church leaders knew what was of greatest importance in their work and ministry. Christ had demonstrated that His work was to develop the leadership team that would lead the church when he returned to heaven. The apostles had done the same thing in the church at Jerusalem as they had multiplied the number of disciples and then expanded the leadership team. Paul and Barnabas had done the same thing in these cities as they had developed the men who became the leadership team of every church.

Every church leadership team that makes it their work of greatest importance to develop each

person so that new men are becoming qualified for the spiritual leadership team with be a healthy church because that priority will also mean that the church will have new leaders for a next generation. In addition, that church will also develop enough leaders that it will be able to reproduce itself in surrounding areas and have leaders to send to other areas just as the churches were doing in Acts 16:1- 5.

Each church that makes it a highest priority to qualify additional men to become a part of the leadership team will see additional men develop. This is illustrated by the church at Jerusalem and also the church at Antioch. This is demonstrated in the church at Jerusalem in Acts 6:3-7 where the church adds seven more men to the leadership team. We see that in spite of persecution the church at Jerusalem continued to qualify additional men and expand the leadership team. Acts 15:4 says, “And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.” Here we see that the leadership team included elders as well as apostles.

The same thing happened in Antioch. In Acts 11:25-26 Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch to help him teach the Christians. By Acts 13:1-2 we see that the leadership team had grown to include five men and Barnabas and Saul were sent out from that church to start churches in other places. By the time Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch several years later, there were many others that were also on the leadership team. Acts 15:35 says, “Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.”

Paul and others also made it their priority to develop the church leadership team in Ephesus and equipped them to develop others. Later when Paul said his farewell to that leadership team, Paul reminded the elders of how he had trained them. Acts 20:20-21 says, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul had trained this team by taking them with him as he ministered both publicly and from house to house. As a result, they developed godly character because they saw it modeled in the life of Paul and others. They also developed Bible knowledge and ministry skills as they saw how Paul ministered and also as they had ministered with him. That is what Christ has called all leaders to do to develop healthy reproducing churches. Many the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example to others to help them develop godly character.

4.

Healthy Churches Equip Every Christian for Evangelism

In Acts 8:4 we read, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” Acts 8:1 says that all of the Christians were scattered except the apostles. Here we see that Scripture tells us that in the early church all of the Christians knew how to share the Gospel and were actively sharing the Gospel as they were scattered. When all of the Christians are equipped to share the Gospel, the church is establishing a foundation for reproduction. This brings us to the question, How do we equip every Christian to share the Gospel?

In Mark 1:17 Christ said, “Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men. It is important to notice what Christ did not say as well as what He said. Christ did not say, Follow me and you might become fishers of men. Christ did not say, Follow me and you will feel good. Instead what Christ said tells us the commitment that He was making to these fishermen. Christ was telling these men that He would make them become something that was not presently true of them.

Christ was promising these men that if they would follow Him that He would help them to become something different than what they already were. We are called to do the same. They were fishers of fish but Christ said that He would prepare them and help them to become fishers of men. The Christians in Acts 8:4 were all able to preach the Word because someone had taken the time to help them become something that was not true of them at the time they repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ.

We know that Christ showed those fishermen how to become fishers of men by taking them with Him so that they could see how Christ preached the Gospel. Mark 1:38-39 says, “But He said to them, “Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.” And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons.” The first thing that Christ did to show the disciples how to become fishers of men was to take them with Him as He preached the Gospel in all of the towns of Galilee. They had the opportunity to hear what Christ taught and to see how He taught and how He answered the questions that were asked. They were shown what to share and how to share it.

However, the people mentioned in Acts 8:4 were not a part of the group that followed Christ as He preached in the synagogues throughout Galilee. We have to go to the book of Acts to see how these believers were equipped to share the Gospel. We are given the first example in Acts 2:46-47 where we read, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The 120 disciples mentioned in Acts 1:15 were going to homes of new Christians daily to break bread (have a meal and communion) with them in their homes.

Communion with new Christians in their homes does several key things. It provides the opportunity to repeat what these new Christians have been taught about the death and resurrection of Christ. It provides the opportunity for new Christians to get their questions answered so that

they can learn how to explain to others about the death and resurrection of Christ. Those who go along with the person leading this time of communion are being shown how to begin to train new Christians so that they can also begin to share the Gospel. It shows acceptance of the family by going to them in their own home. It helps people learn where they are comfortable.

However, it does one other key thing that is even more important. It provides an opportunity to share the Gospel with the rest of the family and friends of the new Christians as the new Christians observe. Christ gives us some very clear examples of this in the Gospels. Mark 2:14-17 says, "As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

In these verses we see that Christ did several things as soon as Matthew followed Him:

1. Christ went to the home of Matthew to meet his family and friends.
2. Christ spent time with the friends of Matthew (the tax collectors and sinners).
3. Christ shared with many people that would not hear the Gospel otherwise.
4. Christ showed His disciples how to share the Gospel with Matthew's friends.
5. Christ made it clear that this was an opportunity to invite sinners to repentance.
6. Christ gave us an example of how to train new Christians to be able to explain the meaning of repentance and faith to their family and friends.
7. Christ gave the disciples an example to follow and they followed His example in Acts 2:46-47 and many other places in Acts.

The disciples also showed the new Christians how to share the Gospel publicly. In Acts 3 Peter and John went to the temple at the hour of prayer. Many Jews were gathered there as that was the time of the evening sacrifice. Peter and John healed a paralyzed man and then showed many of the new Christians who were there how to share the Gospel publicly with the large crowd of people that gathered in Solomon's porch (the large covered area on the east side of the temple courtyard). After speaking about the death and resurrection of Christ, Peter said in Acts 3:19, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." Peter used the opportunity to show the new Christians how to share the message of repentance with large public crowds.

This sermon caused two things to happen. First, many repented of their sin and believed in Christ. Acts 4:4 says, "However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." Second, Peter and John got arrested for preaching the Gospel. This gave the new Christians the opportunity to see how to react to persecution. Acts 4:13 says, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus." New believers saw that Peter and John responded with boldness instead of fear when opposition came.

When they were released by the Jewish religious leaders, Peter and John showed the new believers how to pray when opposition comes. Acts 4:29-31 says, "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." The new believers learned by example that the way to deal with opposition was to pray for boldness to share the Gospel because they were filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the Word of God with boldness.

We equip new Christians to share the Gospel with family and friends by following the examples given in the book of Acts. In Acts 10:24 Peter showed six Christians from Joppa how to share the Gospel with the household of Cornelius and his relatives and friends. That verse says, "And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends." Acts 10:27 says, "And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together." The six men from Joppa saw the results in Acts 10:44, "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word."

Paul and the team with him also placed the emphasis on reaching the whole extended household many times. Two examples are found in Acts 16. Acts 16:14-15 says, "Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.'" So she persuaded us." Here we see that the whole household became Christians. Then Acts 16:30-32 says, "And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.'" Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house." Verse 33 goes on to tell us that the entire household became Christians that night.

Christ calls us to equip every Christian to share the Gospel by praying for boldness and by showing them what to share and how to share it. We do this in the homes of new Christians by sharing with their families and friends in their own homes. We equip growing Christians by taking those Christians with us as we go to the homes of new Christians to share with their families and friends. We also equip growing Christians by showing them how to share the Gospel in public places. We follow the example of Paul given in Acts 20:20 where he said, "How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house. May the Lord richly bless you as you show each new Christian how to share the Gospel by your example.

5.

Healthy Churches Learn to Think Regionally

A healthy church learns to think beyond its local community. Christ was constantly expanding the vision of the disciples. On one of his early ministry trips with the disciples Christ took them through Samaria so that they could begin to develop a larger vision. John 4:3-4 says, "He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria." Christ needed to go through Samaria for two reasons. First, Christ knew that there was an entire town that was open to the Gospel. We see in verses 39 through 41 that many people believed in that town.

However, Christ also needed to go through Samaria for a second reason. That reason was to expand the vision of the disciples. John 4:35 says, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" The disciples had gone into the town and all they had found was food. In contrast, the woman of Samaria had gone into the same town less than an hour later and found a whole town full of people that wanted to find out how to have eternal life. Christ wanted to give the disciples a vision for the area of Samaria.

Later Christ began calling some of His disciples and promising them that He would show them how to become fishers of men. The next day He said to them in Mark 1:38-39, "But He said to them, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.' And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons." Here we see that Christ was expanding their vision to the whole region so that they would begin to think regionally instead of just thinking of their home town.

By the time Christ spoke His final words to the disciples, He was giving them a vision for the whole world. Acts 1:8-9 says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." The disciples had seen that Christ had a vision for their home town, for the entire region of Galilee, for the nearby regions of Samaria and Judea and now His final words were to give them a vision for the whole world.

In Acts 10 the Lord sent Peter to take the Gospel to the household of Cornelius and the other Gentiles that were gathered at his home. Peter had learned from the example of Christ. Acts 10:23 tells us that Peter took six others with him as he went to the house of Cornelius. That verse says, "Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him." Later when Peter was giving a report about his ministry to the church in Jerusalem Peter said in Acts 11:12, "Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house." Peter helped these early believers develop a vision for the surrounding region by taking them with him as he went to share the Gospel in Caesarea.

We see that Paul did the same thing as he took various people with him. Verses like Acts 20:4 show us that Paul always took people with him as he traveled. That verse says, "And Sopater of

Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.” These men were all developing a vision for other areas as they traveled with Paul.

We see that Paul also helped the churches that developed in each city to develop a vision for their surrounding area. In Acts 14:21 Paul shared the Gospel in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch. Then in Acts 16:1-5 he visited the same area again. We see that when Paul came to Derbe that he met Timothy who had a good report of the brethren at Lystra and Iconium even though Iconium was 40 miles away. This would indicate that Paul and Barnabas had given the Christians a vision for the surrounding area on their first visit. However, Acts 16:5 gives much greater evidence of the fact that the churches had developed a vision for the surrounding area. That verse says, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.” In order for churches to increase in number daily, a lot of Christians had to get a vision for the surrounding areas.

Acts 19:8-10 says that the same thing happened in Ephesus. Those verses say, “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” Notice that all those in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus. The Roman province of Asia was the area that is now western Turkey and extended more than 200 miles from Ephesus. That region had many other cities. In fact the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 were all in the province of Asia.

In the city of Ephesus Paul found that the school of Tyrannus was available during the hot part of the day when most of the people took a break from work and the students of Tyrannus took a break from their studies. As a result, Paul used that school during that part of the day. Then Acts 20:20-21 shows what Paul did the rest of the day as Paul reminded the leaders at Ephesus how he had trained them. Those verses say, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Once Tyrannus needed his school back as it got cooler in the afternoon, Paul would take the developing leaders with him from house to house to show them how to share the Gospel with both Jews and Greeks.

As a result, many of these men developed a vision for the surrounding area. They began to take the Gospel back to their home towns in other parts of the province of Asia. In this way the Word of God spread throughout the province of Asia in just two years. We have an example of this in the book of Colossians. Paul originally wrote the book of Colossians to Christians that had never met him in the cities of Colosse, Laodicea and Hierapolis. These three cities were located about 100 miles east of Ephesus but were all in the province of Asia. We know that Paul had not visited these cities because Colossians 2:1 says, “For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.”

Then Colossians 4:12-13 says, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and

those in Hierapolis.” Here we see that Epaphras was one of the people that had learned from Paul and had taken the Gospel to these cities. Paul had helped him develop a vision for the cities in the region where he grew up. In addition, Paul had also helped Epaphras develop a vision for other areas because he was with Paul in Rome (Paul was a prisoner) at the time the book of Colossians was written.

As Paul shared with the leaders and others at Ephesus he had helped many of them develop a vision for the region of Asia from which they had come. As a result, many learned from Paul as he taught in the school of Tyrannus and then as he showed them how to share the Gospel from house to house. They had learned what to share and how to share it. They had learned to depend on the Holy Spirit for boldness. Then they had gone back to their home regions and shared the Gospel in the cities and towns from which they came. This resulted in the Gospel spreading throughout Asia because people had developed a vision to reach their families and friends for Christ.

One of our greatest ministries as leaders is to take people with us and share our vision with them. If we have a vision to help them reach their relatives, friends, coworkers, neighbors and other acquaintances with the Gospel, they will develop that same vision. If we have a vision for the entire region, they will develop that same vision. Christ showed us by His example that if we have a vision for the world that those that we take with us will also develop a vision for the world. Paul did the same and we see that as people became Christians and grew because they were being taught the Word of God and were being shown how to share the Gospel that they began taking the Gospel to the places for which they had developed a vision.

Christ had called us to follow His example and show people what to share and how to share it. We will show them as we take them with us as we are sharing the Gospel. This can have an even greater impact if we will take them with us to share the Gospel with their relatives, friends, coworkers, neighbors and other acquaintances. They will see our concern to share with the people for whom they are concerned and they will begin to develop a vision to reach out to others as well. We can also take them with us as we travel to other areas to share the Gospel. This will help them to see the need in other areas and also to see our concern to share the Gospel in those areas. Christ and Paul both demonstrated by their example that it was their priority to train others by taking others with them wherever they went. May the Lord richly bless you as you take others with you to help them develop their vision and learn to share the Gospel with others.

6.

Healthy Churches Help People Learn to Develop Vision

Christ was preparing and developing the disciples to develop healthy reproducing churches. As a result, Christ began early in His ministry to the disciples to help them begin to expand their vision. Soon after Christ met part of His disciples He went with them as they traveled to the Passover in Jerusalem. Christ used that opportunity to talk to Nicodemus in John 3. Jesus and the disciples then stayed for a while longer in Judea so Jesus could teach the people in that area. The disciples were from Galilee but Christ was showing them the importance of reaching out to the city of Jerusalem and the surrounding area of Judea.

Then, instead of taking the usual route home from Judea to Galilee, John 4:4 says, “But He needed to go through Samaria.” Christ needed to go through Samaria for two reasons. First, He needed to go through Samaria to reach a whole group of people in the city of Sychar. Second, Christ needed to go through Samaria to expand the vision of the disciples. Christ sent the disciples into the city to buy food. The disciples got the food but they had no vision for the people. As a result, Christ said in John 4:35, “Do you not say, There are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” They found food but they did not bring anyone to Christ.

While the disciples were in the city Christ had also given a woman a vision for the people of her own city. The woman did not bring food but she did bring many people to meet Christ. John 4:39-41 says, “And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all that I ever did.'" So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word.” Christ had expanded the vision of the woman beyond her own needs and many people believed in Christ as a result. Christ showed the disciples by example His vision for the Samaritans. We help Christians develop a vision for people of other cultures as we take them with us as we share the Gospel with other cultures.

Christ also expanded the vision of the disciples by taking them with Him as He preached throughout Galilee. Immediately after Christ invited the disciples to follow Him, He promised the disciples that He would make them become fishers of men in Matthew 4:18-22, verse 23 says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.” Jesus was showing the disciples how to teach and preach and at the same time He was expanding their vision. The disciples developed a vision for the entire region of Galilee. We help Christians develop a vision for the entire region as we take them with us as we share the Gospel in other cities in the region.

We also help people develop their vision for the spiritual needs of people by encouraging them to see the needs around them and to begin to pray for laborers to reach these people. Matthew 9:36-38 says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send

out laborers into His harvest.” In these verses we see that Christ did several things to develop the vision of the disciples:

- He showed them that He was moved with compassion as He saw people.
- He showed them that people are faint and scattered abroad because they are like sheep without a shepherd.
- He explained to the disciples that the harvest is great.
- He explained to the disciples that the laborers are few.
- He encouraged the disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers.

Then after asking the disciples to pray, in the very next verses Christ sent them out to gain experience through on-the-job training. Christ sent out the twelve with some very specific instructions. Although Christ was expanding their vision, Christ knew that they would be trained best to share the Gospel by beginning with people of their own culture. As a result, Christ said in Matthew 10:5-6, “These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” We help people develop vision as we help them pray for people they know and show them how to share the Gospel with those people.

Christ also had the twelve give a report of their ministry so that He could further expand their vision. Mark 6:30 says, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.” Christ wanted them to learn by giving them the opportunity for on-the-job training. However, He also wanted to expand their vision as they told Him what they had said and what they had taught. As a result, Christ showed His compassion for the multitudes, had them see the multitudes, pray for laborers, gain on-the-job experience preaching and then had them report what they had done. The whole process was designed to expand their vision.

Then in Luke 10:1 Christ sent out a larger group of seventy disciples so that He could develop the vision of a larger group of disciples. That verse says, “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.” Luke 10:17 says that they returned and gave a report of what the Lord had done through their lives. That verse says, “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” Vision is also expanded as people begin to realize that Christ can work through their lives. Many Christians have never realized that Christ can work through their lives. They will see how He works in them and through them as we give them opportunities to serve with us and show them how to serve the Lord.

After complementing them, Christ also helped them refocus their vision on what is most important. Luke 10:20 says, “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” These people had their vision expanded because they saw that Christ could work through their lives. At the same time Christ guided their vision so that they developed the right priorities. The reason for sharing the Gospel with others is not to demonstrate our own power and persuasiveness. Instead we want to help people develop a vision for the lost because they understand Christ’s love for them. II Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died

for them and rose again.” This should be our real motivation. As we are motivated by the love of Christ instead of our own fear, we will rejoice for the privilege of showing others how to share the Gospel with their world.

As Christ returned to heaven His final words were designed to expand the vision of His disciples to the entire world. Acts 1:8-9 says, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” Many people remember the last words spoken by a close relative or friend. The last words of Christ on this earth were to expand the vision of His disciples to the world. If a vision for the world caused Christ to make that His last words, certainly a healthy church will continue to do everything possible to develop that same vision for the world.

The disciples developed that same vision in new Christians. When Peter returned to Jerusalem after sharing the Gospel in the house of Cornelius, Peter told how he had expanded the vision of six men from Joppa by taking them with him as he shared the Gospel with the Gentiles. Acts 11:12 says, “Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.” These men were shown by the example of Peter the importance of having a vision for the Gentiles.

Paul was continually adding people to his team and giving them a vision for the world. Nearly 40 people are listed as traveling with Paul at different times although there may have been quite a number of additional people that are not listed. Acts 20:4 tells how Paul expanded the vision of a group of men to include the Roman province of Asia. That verse says, “And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.” We help people to expand their vision by taking them with us as we share the Gospel with others in other places.

People do develop vision as they take root in the love of Christ and are shown the power of the Gospel to change lives. As we have said in the past, Acts 8:4 shows that the early believers went everywhere preaching the Word. They did this because they had been shown the importance of praying that the Lord would give them boldness. The results are seen in Acts 9:31 where we read, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” The churches multiplied throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria because the early Christians had been shown what to share and how to share the Gospel with others. At the same time they were motivated by the love of Christ to share that message wherever they went. May the Lord richly bless you as you help Christians develop a similar vision for the world around them.

7.

Healthy Churches Develop Outreach Teams

During the first year of the ministry of Christ He had many people follow Him and go with Him to various places. After a year of contact Christ invited some of those who had gone with Him to various places to follow Him so that they could learn how to become fishers of men. Then between six and nine months later Mark 3:13-14 says, “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” Here we see that Christ trained His disciples by forming them into an outreach team. For the second half of the public ministry of Christ this team traveled with Him everywhere He went.

From this we learn two key things. First, people are best trained in teams. This is true both in direct teaching and also in on-the-job training. Even when Christ sent out the twelve and later the seventy he sent them out in teams. Second, people are best trained when they are trained through outreach ministry as a part of their total development. Today we will see why these two things are so important in a church if that church wants to become a healthy reproducing church.

Once Christ chose these twelve, we see that He also established a new relationship with them. Mark 3:33-35 says, “But He answered them, saying, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.” Christ said that His disciples were now a part of His spiritual family and they had the same privileges as His physical family. Christ was showing them that they were going to learn to function together as a team and as a spiritual family. Learning to function as a team is a very important principle that is often neglected in the development of spiritual leadership. When Christ rose from the dead, John 20:17 tells us that the first thing Christ did was to send Mary with a message to His brethren (disciples).

Once Christ chose the men that would be on the team He began training them and working with them in a different way than He worked with the multitudes. Mark 4 begins with Christ teaching a great multitude of people while His disciples were with Him. Mark 4:2 says, “Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching.” Here we see that Christ taught the multitude in parables. Mark 4:33-34 says, “And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.” The crowds heard the parables but the twelve had Christ explain to them everything that He taught.

The multitudes saw what Christ did and heard what He taught. The twelve learned why Christ did what He did and had what He taught explained so that they gained a fuller understanding. Here we see a principle that is important both in a local church and also as a small group functions as an outreach team. The crowd will hear what is taught. However both a church leadership team and an outreach team need to know why we do what we do. Then also need to gain a fuller understanding of what we teach so that they will be able to teach the same things to others at a later time.

The very same day that Christ explained these parables to His disciples, Christ also taught them a very important lesson about how to function as a team. Christ got in a boat with the disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee. In order to teach the disciples how to function as a team, Christ chose to lie down in the back of the boat and go to sleep. Christ also chose to arrange for a great storm of wind to cause great waves to fill the boat with water. The disciples had to work as a team to try and bail the water out of the boat. However, all of their efforts to work together as a team were not enough and the boat became full of water.

Then Mark 4:38 says, “But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” Of course we know that Christ did care because He immediately rebuked the wind and calmed the sea. Then Christ asked them a simple question. Mark 4:40 says, “But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” To learn to function as a healthy team the disciples had to learn:

- That they could not lead effectively if they were controlled by fear.
- That they could not lead effectively if they had no faith.
- That they needed to continually recognize that Christ is the leader of the team.

When they got to the other side of the sea Christ showed them how destructive an evil team can be. When they got out of the boat they were met by a man with a legion of demons in him. Christ wanted to show the disciples how to transform the lives of people. Mark 5:3-5 describes the condition of this man. We see that this man was self destructive, “Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.” This man was being destroyed by a team of demons.

We see that Christ showed the disciples that He is able to transform any person. After Christ cast out the legion of demons Mark 5:15 describes what everyone saw had happened to this man, “Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.” The disciples saw that this man was restored to his right mind and was now normal. They were only able to see this because they were the outreach team that was traveling with Christ and saw what He did as well as heard what He taught.

Christ performed two other miracles to teach the disciples when they got back to the other side. Christ had a woman touch Him that had been going to doctors for twelve years to find help for a physical problem but she only got worse. Christ wanted to teach the disciples another lesson so He allowed the woman to touch Him and be healed. Then Christ asked, “Who touched my clothes?” Mark 5:31 says, “But His disciples said to Him, “You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, Who touched Me?” The disciples had to learn that Christ was concerned about individuals even in the middle of great crowds.

The second miracle was raising a young girl from the dead. Christ took only the father, mother and His disciples with him into the room. He then told the girl to arise. Mark 5:42 says, “Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.” The disciples had to learn that Christ can give both physical and spiritual life and that

He is the only One that can give life. Again these were lessons that could only be taught as the disciples traveled with Him as an outreach team.

Next we see that Christ taught the disciples to function as teams by sending them out in teams of two. At the same time He taught them that He would supply their needs because He told them to take no food, no money and no extra clothes. Here we see that some lessons are best taught through on-the-job training. As these teams went out, Mark 6:12 tells us, "So they went out and preached that people should repent." Then Mark 6:30 tells what happened when they returned, "Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught." Here we see that Christ had them minister and then report back and tell Him what they had done and what they had taught.

One of the things that we see here is that the primary purpose of sending outreach teams is to train them and give them the opportunity to gain experience sharing the Gospel and the need to repent with others. They do have a real impact in the lives of others and that provides an extra blessing. However, the most important thing that happens is that they gain experience and learn how to share the Gospel as a team. The disciples also gained a greater understanding of what they learned as they explained to Christ what they had done and what they had taught.

A second lesson that is important in the development of every team is that the teams each learn that the Lord will supply their needs. Christ sent these teams without extra food, money or clothing so that they could learn that He would supply their needs. Many Christians are fearful of reaching out to new areas because they have never learned that the Lord will supply their needs. That lesson can be taught by sending outreach teams out for short periods where they are forced to learn to depend on the Lord to supply their needs. This is one way they learn that the Lord provides what is needed.

Outreach teams provide an ideal way to train people and help them to grow in their understanding of the fact that the Lord can work both in their lives and through their lives. They also learn to work together as teams and see that the Lord is able to multiply what happens through the team working together. Outreach teams also provide an ideal opportunity to help people understand why we do what we do and to help them gain greater understanding of the things that they hear taught in larger groups. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop outreach teams so that you can show Christians how to serve the Lord in many different situations.

8.

Healthy Churches Continue to Serve Christians that Move

In Acts 8:4 we read, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” One of those that left Jerusalem during this persecution was Philip. He went to the city of Samaria. Acts 8:5 says, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.” Many people in that city responded to the preaching concerning the kingdom of God and turned to Christ. Then all of the men and women that believed were baptized.

What we want to focus on here is what happened when the church in Jerusalem heard what was happening in Samaria. Acts 8:14 says, “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.” Here we see that the leaders in the church at Jerusalem had a concern to help those Christians that were scattered to other places. They knew that Philip had become part of the leadership team in Jerusalem. They heard that he had led many people to Christ in Samaria. They immediately sent Peter and John to help him help these new believers in their spiritual growth.

Peter and John helped Philip teach these new believers. They even showed him how to deal with one who tried to buy the gift of giving the Holy Spirit to others. The result of this continued ministry was an encouragement to Philip and was used by the Lord to strengthen the believers in Samaria. After teaching and preaching in Samaria for a period of time, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem. However, they also used the opportunity to reach out to the surrounding area. Acts 8:25 says, “So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.” Peter and John helped the new Christians in the city of Samaria but they also used the opportunity to reach out to the surrounding villages.

Acts 9:32-35 also tells us that Peter went to the towns of Lydda, Sharon and Joppa to help the disciples that had gone to those towns. In fact Peter was in the town of Joppa when the Lord showed him by a vision that he was to take the Gospel to Cornelius and the other Gentiles that were gathered in his house in the city of Caesarea. In addition to helping the new Christians grow, Peter also preached the Gospel wherever he went. Acts 9:34-35 says, “And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.” Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.” These accounts show us that the church at Jerusalem took the responsibility to help Christians both in the area of Samaria and along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

However, Acts 11 gives us the most complete example of the church at Jerusalem taking the responsibility to help Christians that had moved to other areas. Acts 11:19-21 says, “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” Antioch was more than 200 miles from the city of Jerusalem.

In spite of the distance, notice how the church in Jerusalem responded when they heard what was happening with the believers that had fled to Antioch because of the persecution. Antioch was the second largest city in the Roman Empire and more than ten times the size of Jerusalem. Acts 11:22 says, "Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch." The church at Jerusalem realized that these newer believers would need help in their own spiritual growth in order to help the new believers in Antioch. As a result, they sent Barnabas to Antioch to help them and he added Saul to the team.

Acts 11:23-26 tells us what Barnabas and Saul did to serve both the believers that had fled from Jerusalem and also to help the new believers in their spiritual growth. Acts 11:23-26 says, "When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." Here we see some of the reasons why healthy churches continue to serve Christians that move.

First, the church at Jerusalem realized that Antioch was a different kind of city than Jerusalem. Nearly all of the people that were in Jerusalem were Jews that spoke the same language. That was not true in Antioch. Many of the new believers in Antioch were Hellenists (Acts 11:20) and they spoke the Greek language and were familiar with the Greek culture. As a result, that was probably why they sent Barnabas and he later added Saul to the team. Barnabas had grown up on the island of Cyprus (Acts 4:36) so he would be very familiar with the Greek culture and language. Paul grew up in Tarsus so the same would be true in his life. All Christians need to learn how to apply the Word of God in their own language and culture.

Second, the believers that had fled from Jerusalem to Antioch needed further encouragement and teaching to help them grow in their own spiritual lives so that they could help those who were just becoming believers. We see that Barnabas immediately began to share with all of the believers, both those who had fled from Jerusalem and also the new believers. The last part of verse 23 says that Barnabas "Encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord." Here we see that Barnabas encouraged these believers to determine in their hearts that they were going to follow the Lord regardless of how much persecution they might face. All Christians that are learning to lead others need continued encouragement.

Third, the believers in Antioch needed a mature believer that provided an example by his life that others could follow. People learn to follow the Lord by following the Lord's people. I Thessalonians 1:6-7 says, "And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe." Barnabas provided that kind of example for the believers in Antioch. Three characteristics of the life of Barnabas are given to show us that his life was an example that others could follow. He was a good or righteous man. He was full of the Holy Spirit. He was full of faith. New Christians become what we are whether that is good or bad.

Fourth, the new believers in Antioch needed to be shown how to reach out to their relatives,

friends, coworkers, neighbors and other acquaintances. Barnabas was an ideal example to show the new believers how to reach out to others. Acts 9:26-27 tells how Barnabas had earlier reached out to Saul. Those verses say, “And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.” Barnabas could show the believers how to reach out to others because that was a part of his life.

Fifth, the new believers in Antioch needed to be shown that believers are most effective as they work together as teams. Barnabas modeled this by going to Tarsus and getting Saul and adding him to the team that was teaching these believers in Antioch. No Christian has all of the spiritual gifts. As a result, we all need team members who are more effective at certain ministries than we are because of the fact that God has equipped them with different spiritual gifts, different hearts or passions, different abilities, different personalities and different experiences in life (given them a different SHAPE).

Sixth, the believers that had fled from Jerusalem and the people that had become new believers in Antioch also needed systematic teaching of the things that Christ had taught His followers while He was here on the earth. Acts 2:42 says about the church at Jerusalem, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Every new believer needs to be taught the teachings of Christ. One they have gained that knowledge, then they need understanding. Luke 24:45 says, “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Once Christians have knowledge and understanding of the teachings of Christ, then they need to be shown by example how to apply those teachings in their daily lives. Paul said in I Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” We need to show new believers by our example how to imitate Christ.

We see the impact that these six things had on all of the believers in Antioch. It was in this city that believers were first called Christians. It was also from this city that the Gospel then spread to the rest of the Gentile world. However, this all happened because the church at Jerusalem continue to serve the Christians that had been forced to flee from Jerusalem by sending someone from the church in Jerusalem to help them grow and mature in their spiritual lives. That is why this is a characteristic of a healthy reproducing church. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop reproducing Christians and then work with them to develop reproducing churches.

9.

Healthy Churches Become Sending Churches

Paul and Barnabas planted the churches in the cities on the island of Cyprus and in the cities of Pisidia and Galatia such as Antioch, Lystra, Derbe and Iconium during their first missionary trip. Acts 15:39-40 says that these men began a second trip. On this second trip Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus. Paul took Silas and went to the cities of Galatia. In Acts 16:1-3a we read, “Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him...” Here we see that in a few short years a strong young leader had developed in Galatia.

We see several key things about this developing young leader. This was a young man that was already having an impact throughout the region (Derbe and Iconium were 40 miles apart). He was a disciple who was able to lead others in their spiritual growth. He had a background that was both multiethnic and multicultural. He had a good report of the leaders in the various churches of the area. Paul recognized that this young man had great potential to help develop churches in new areas. Paul wanted Timothy to go with him and Silas so that Timothy could become a part of the church planting team.

One other thing that these verses show us is the vision that was present in the new churches that were being established. These churches had also developed a vision to plant churches in other areas and were willing to send one of their best young men to help in the planting and development of new churches. Certainly these churches could have continued to use a young man like Timothy to help them in their development. However, they had developed a vision that extended far beyond their own cities. They were prepared to send one of their best to help plant churches in other regions of the world. As a result, the leaders told Paul and Silas about this young man and told them about the effectiveness of his ministry in the local area. As a result of their recommendation, Paul wanted this young man to become a part of the church planting team.

This brings us to a key question, how do churches develop people in their churches so that the Lord can lead those churches to send some of those people and the Lord can use them to develop churches in other areas around the world? We see that Timothy had been developed through the ministry that he was given in his local area. First, we see that Timothy was helped to grow in godly character so that his life became an example. I Timothy 4:12 says, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” In this verse we see that we help people develop by helping them grow in godly character.

We also see that Timothy gained experience in the churches in Lystra and Derbe and was able to continue to minister because of that experience. I Timothy 4:13 says, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” Timothy was to keep on doing the things that he had done as a young Christian. The church had given Timothy opportunities to read the Scripture in the services of the church. He had been given the privilege and opportunity of explaining the Scripture to others in the services of the local church. He had been given opportunities to explain the doctrines that Scripture teaches as he taught in the local church. Today young Christians need to be given opportunities to do these same things in the services of the church.

Timothy had also developed his spiritual gift and had that spiritual gift recognized by the leaders of the church where he was serving the Lord. I Timothy 4:14 says, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” The local church gave Timothy the opportunity to develop his spiritual gift. They also recognized that spiritual gift and commended him to the work of the Lord by laying their hands on him and praying for him as he went out to serve the Lord in various ways including the exercise of that spiritual gift. We need to recognize the spiritual gifts of Christians and commission them to use those gifts in their service for the Lord.

Timothy was encouraged to keep his focus on serving the Lord and not to get sidetracked by other activities. I Timothy 4:15 says, “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” Timothy was to continue to think about the things that he had learned. He was encouraged to keep letting his life make an eternal impact by devoting himself to serving the Lord wherever he went. Timothy was also assured that if he would do these things that his progress in his life and ministry would become evident to everyone. In the same way, those who look for opportunities to serve the Lord will have their spiritual progress recognized by others.

Timothy was also encouraged to continue to grow in his understanding of the teaching of the Word of God. I Timothy 4:16 says, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” Here we see that Timothy was to pay attention to his own spiritual growth. He was also to continue to grow in his understanding of the teachings of the Word of God. Paul told Timothy that making this the focus of his life would benefit both Timothy and those who heard him teach the Word of God. This indicates that the things Timothy had learned as a young man in Derbe and Lystra were to continue to be a part of his life and ministry wherever he went.

In these verses we see that Paul was encouraging Timothy to keep on doing the things that he had been doing at the time Paul first invited him to go with him. The local church had made it their priority to help Timothy to develop in his spiritual life so that the Lord could use him wherever the Lord led him. He had served the Lord in his home area. The report of what he had done in his home area was what caused Paul to invite Timothy to go with him. Here we see that Paul encourages Timothy to keep on doing these same things as he helped spiritual leaders and churches develop in the region of Ephesus.

Here we see the impact of the churches in Derbe and Lystra. The leaders in the churches there had helped Timothy develop and become a spiritual leader. Instead of keeping the best of their spiritual young leaders for themselves, the churches had sent one of their best young men to help churches develop in other regions and among other cultures. Later on we see that this same church would send another of their young men as a part of the team that ministered with Paul. Acts 20:4 says, “And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.” In this verse we see that Gaius had also come from Derbe. This verse shows that he was now part of the team that was ministering with Paul in Macedonia, Greece and Asia.

In fact this verse also shows that the churches in several other cities had sent some of the spiritual

leaders that had developed in their churches to travel with Paul and spread the Gospel to other areas. Sopater was from the city of Berea and he became a part of the team. Aristarchus and Secundus were both from the city of Thessalonica. Tychicus and Trophimus were both from the province of Asia although the particular city is not specified. These verses remind us that healthy churches develop leaders to send out to minister in other areas. These leaders were some of their best leaders because they were able to cross ethnic, cultural and language barriers. Today many churches measure their success by the number of people in their church instead of measuring their effectiveness by the number of people they have developed, trained and sent out to take the Gospel to people in other parts of the world.

We see that local churches in other places also sent some of their best young men to take the Gospel to other cultures and countries. In Acts 16:8 we read, “So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.” In this verse we see that Paul and those traveling with him came to Troas. Then in Acts 16:10 we read, “Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.” Here we see that there is a change from “they” in verse 8 to “we” in verse 10. This is an indication that Luke joined the team at Troas. Here we see that the local Christians at Troas sent one of their choice young men to help take the Gospel to Macedonia and Greece.

Throughout the book of Acts we see that churches in various areas sent people from their churches to take the Gospel to people in other areas and from different cultures. This is one of the keys of a healthy church because it shows that the church has a desire to obey Christ and carry out the commission that Christ gave to make disciples of all nations. We can truly say that a healthy church reproduces itself.

Today the Lord also wants to help you become personally involved in spreading His church around the world. That may mean that Christ wants you to help develop those leaders in your church. It may mean that Christ wants you to take the lead in encouraging your church to send out some of its best leaders to take the Gospel to other regions of the world. It may even mean being willing to become a part of a church planting team and help plant churches in a new area yourself. The plan of Christ is to spread His church to the ends of the earth. He gives us the privilege of being a part of that plan. May the Lord richly bless you as you ask Him in what ways He wants you to be involved personally in helping to spread His church to every culture, language and ethnic group in the world.

10.

Healthy Churches Develop Sister Churches

In Acts 9:31 we read, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” Then in Acts 16:5 we read, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.” In these two verses we see that the number of churches rapidly increased in the book of Acts. Healthy churches are churches that are able to reproduce themselves by starting other churches in the surrounding areas. The focus of our topic today will be how we develop churches that are equipped to reproduce themselves by starting other churches.

In these two verses we see that the churches first multiplied in the area of Judea, Galilee and Samaria and then the churches began to increase daily as the churches spread to a wider and wider area. Paul and the teams that traveled with him planted churches in key cities and then encouraged those churches to spread to the surrounding towns and villages. In this way as each church developed it was able to develop sister churches throughout the surrounding area. This principle is illustrated in Acts 16:1-5. Paul and Silas came to the cities of Lystra and Derbe. They met Timothy who had a good report of the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. They spent time in the region strengthening the churches. Meanwhile the churches continued to increase daily. What made it possible for this to happen?

One of the things that many people do is confuse a church service, a church building or some other thing with a church. I Corinthians 12:27 says, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” This verse makes it very clear that the church is the body of Christ. It also makes it clear that the church is made up of individual members. As a result, the church includes all those who have repented of their sin of unbelief (John 16:9) and placed their trust in the fact that Christ died for their sins (I Corinthians 15:3-4), was buried and the Father raised Christ from the dead to show that He was satisfied with the payment of Christ for sin (I John 2:1-2). Christ is the One who builds His church (Matthew 16:18) and adds to His church (Acts 2:47).

This means that the people in each local church are those who have repented of their sin of unbelief and placed their trust in Christ. However, a local church is more than just a group of Christians in an area. Acts 14:23 says, “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Here we see that a local church is led by a group of elders (spiritual leaders) who meet qualifications for spiritual leadership (Titus 1:5-9). This means that for new churches to develop that teams of spiritual leaders are developed to lead a group of Christians in a local area. Acts 14:21-23 shows us that Paul and Barnabas did not appoint these spiritual leaders or organize these local churches until their return trip when men had now become qualified to lead each local group of Christians. In fact we have seen in Titus 1:5 that the reason Paul left Titus in Crete was to develop the leaders needed to establish churches in each city.

We see a good picture of the development of sister churches in Acts 19:8-10 where we read, “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe,

but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” In these verses we see that those who were developing as spiritual leaders worked with Paul and the team to develop sister churches throughout the entire region. A key principle for developing sister churches is focusing on sharing the Gospel in the entire region.

While ministering in the city of Ephesus Paul helped to build vision for the entire region. This is illustrated in Colossians 4:12-13, 16 where we read, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he has a great zeal for you, and those who are in Laodicea, and those in Hierapolis... Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.” Paul helped Epaphras develop a vision for the cities in his region of the province of Asia. Epaphras helped churches develop in the cities of Colosse, Hierapolis and Laodicea while Paul was ministering in the city of Ephesus.

In focusing on the needs of the surrounding area we see that Paul was following the example of Christ and the early church. In Mark 1:38 we see that Christ focused on the next towns, “Jesus replied, “But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.” Christ helped the disciples expand their vision by sending the seventy to the cities where He was planning to go. Luke 10:1 says, “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.” Acts 10:23 tells us that Peter did the same thing, “Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.” We see that Peter took six brethren from Joppa when he went to Caesarea.

The verse that we mentioned as we started this topic, Acts 9:31 shows how people begin to realize that it is their responsibility to help multiply churches. That verse says, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” Here we see that as churches are being built up and edified that they realize that it is their responsibility to multiply churches. We also see that they walked in the fear of God and that this reverential fear of God produced obedience and reproduction. Finally we see that these churches depended on the Holy Spirit for strength and the power to reproduce.

Another key thing that helps healthy churches desire to develop sister churches is reports of what Christ is doing in other areas. Acts 11:18 says, “When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.” Here we see that the church at Jerusalem was filled with joy when they heard what the Lord was doing among the Gentiles. Acts 14:27 says, “Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.” Churches are encouraged when they hear what the Lord is doing in other places. I Thessalonians 1:7 says, “So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.” This verse shows us that a report of what God is doing through a healthy church provides an example to other churches.

The key though to the development of sister churches is the establishment of home Bible classes in nearby areas. Christ went to the home of Matthew in Matthew 9:9-13 and it provided a great opportunity for evangelism among all of his friends and coworkers. It is likely that none of these people would have gone searching for Christ. Instead Christ came to them and shared the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins with them in the home of a friend. They were eager to meet Christ when Christ was willing to come to them where they were comfortable.

In addition to providing opportunities for evangelism in nearby areas, home Bible classes also provide the opportunity to teach the Word of God and help people grow. Acts 2:42 and 2:46-47 say, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers...So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” In the process the Christians in that nearby area are also building relationships with one another. This can begin to lay a foundation to establish a sister church in that area.

One of the important things that a home Bible study in a nearby area does is provide the ideal opportunity to begin to develop new spiritual leadership. When Paul first came to Corinth, he met Aquila and Priscilla who had recently come to Corinth because they had been forced to leave Rome by the Roman government. Since Paul had just come from Athens he stayed with them and worked with them. Acts 18:3 says, “So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.” They grew and developed as spiritual leaders as Paul spent time in their home and worked with them. Acts 18:26 says that they did the same thing and helped Apollos to develop as a spiritual leader in Ephesus. Romans 16:3-5 shows that later they returned to Rome and started a church in their home in that city. Several home Bible studies in a nearby area can be greatly used by the Lord to develop the nucleus for a new church to be started in that nearby area.

A healthy church develops evangelistic outreaches to nearby areas, develops stable Christians and then develops spiritual leadership and qualifies that leadership to lead new healthy churches. This makes it possible for the church to reproduce itself. May the Lord richly bless you as you help churches become healthy reproducing churches.

11.

Healthy Churches Develop Godly Servant Leaders

In the world we commonly have two types of leaders. Some are drivers that drive other people to complete their personal goals. Others are leaders that lead people to accomplish group goals. However, we see that Christ teaches us that in the church we are to develop a third kind of leader. That third kind of leader is a godly servant leader. Christ modeled this style of leadership throughout His ministry and helped His disciples to see the difference when He washed their feet the night before He was crucified. After washing their feet, Christ said in John 13:14-15, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

Christ did not just tell His disciples to wash one another's feet. Instead He chose to wash their feet and then tell them that He was giving them an example to follow. Here we see one of the differences between a leader and a godly servant leader. A godly servant leader does not ask others to do what he is unwilling to do. Instead a godly servant leader takes the time to show people how to do what he is asking them to do by his example.

We see all three of these styles of leadership in the Bible. John 13:2 says that Christ waited until after supper to wash the feet of the disciples. This allowed each of the disciples to have the opportunity to wash the feet of the others but none of them did because none of them were willing to humble themselves and do the work of a slave by washing the feet of the others. The reason none of them offered was due to the fact of their own pride. That is a key difference between a leader and a godly servant leader. Let's look at a Biblical example of each of these three kinds of leaders.

First, some leaders are drivers. They drive people to reach their own personal goals. Esau gives us an example of a leader that was a driver. He showed this characteristic when he met his brother Jacob as Jacob returned from Laban. Genesis 33:12-14 says, "Then Esau said, 'Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you.'" But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir."

Esau was leading 400 soldiers and he was going to do things in a military way by helping Jacob drive the flocks hard so they could get to his goal quickly. Jacob knew that a driver would drive both the flocks and the children in such a way that it would destroy the flocks and harm the children. As a result, Jacob said that he would come at a pace that would be good for both the flocks and the children. A driver is driven by fear and he drives others with fear until they can get out of the way.

Today many leaders in churches have followed the example of the world and drive people to accomplish their goals. The people are either driven or forced to try and get out of the way of such leaders for their own survival. III John 1:9-10 describes such a leader in the early church. Those

verses say, “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.” We see the following characteristics in the life of Diotrephes:

- He loved to have the preeminence – pride.
- He refused to receive other godly leaders.
- He spoke against those who were godly spiritual leaders.
- He spoke malicious words against those leaders to try to destroy the trust of their followers.
- He also forbid those who wanted to follow godly leaders.
- He put out of the church those who disagreed with him.

A much better style of leadership is the kind of leadership demonstrated by leaders who are concerned to help a group move toward worthy goals. This kind of leadership can be seen in some leaders in the world. Instead of driving people, these leaders lead by inspiring people. The first act of leadership of Saul demonstrated this kind of leadership although he later became a driver. In I Samuel 11 Saul heard that Nahash, the king of Ammon had told the men of Jabesh-gilead that the only way that he would agree to not kill them would be if they agreed to be blinded in their right eye.

We see the reaction of Saul in I Samuel 11:4-7 where we read, “So the messengers came to Gibeath of Saul and told the news in the hearing of the people. And all the people lifted up their voices and wept. Now there was Saul, coming behind the herd from the field; and Saul said, "What troubles the people, that they weep?" And they told him the words of the men of Jabesh. Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard this news, and his anger was greatly aroused. So he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not go out with Saul and Samuel to battle, so it shall be done to his oxen." And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.” The people willingly followed Saul because all of them wanted to join in the worthy cause of rescuing the men of Jabesh-gilead. Here we see that Saul was able to lead the people because he inspired them to fight for a worthy cause.

The third kind of leadership is the kind of leadership that Christ demonstrated when He washed the feet of the disciples. Christ had earlier told some of the disciples in Mark 1:17, “Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” These words certainly inspired those disciples.” However, they also did something much greater. Christ said that He would show these men how to become fishers of men. Here we see that Christ did several things:

- He invited the disciples to follow Him (He gave them a choice to follow or not follow. When they learned the cost of following, many chose not to follow – John 6:66-69)
- He promised to transform their lives (I will make you to become...).
- He promised to serve them by helping them to develop into something that was not presently true in their lives (become fishers of men).

Christ also taught these men the following things about godly servant leaders:

- He taught them the differences between godly leadership and worldly leadership – Mark 10:35-45.

- He provided them an example by His acts of service to them such as washing their feet – John 13:1-17, Mark 10:43.
- He provided them an example of true humility by becoming obedient unto the death of the cross – Philippians 2:5-8, Mark 10:44.
- He transformed their character so that they were no longer driven by fear but instead were led by the love of Christ (compare Luke 9:49-56 with Acts 4:13, Acts 4:23-31 and especially Acts 8:14 and 25).
- He loved them in such a way that they knew that He greatly loved them because He commanded them to love one another as He had loved them – John 13:34-35.
- He prayed for them and for us at the very time that He was preparing to go to the cross within a few hours – John 17:1-26.
- He even called Judas a friend at the very moment that Judas was betraying Him and since Christ is God the words that He spoke were words of truth. Matthew 26:48-50 says, “Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “Whoever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him.” Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. But Jesus said to him, “Friend, why have you come?” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.”

Drivers are driven by fear and they drive others until others can get out of their way. This is the most common form of worldly leadership because leaders are motivated by their own self gain instead of focusing on developing others.

Leaders inspire others and can lead others as far as they have gone themselves. They may inspire a group to work toward worthy group goals.

Godly servant leaders love and inspire others. In addition, they show others how to grow and develop godly character by their own example. They take others with them and show them by their example how to serve the Lord effectively. Godly leaders focus on the development of every Christian not just those who are dynamic. Godly leaders also serve others and help them to develop their God given potential which may go far beyond the potential of the leader. Godly leaders multiply their ministry through a second, third and fourth generation of godly spiritual leadership.

If a church is truly a healthy church, it will make the focus of its ministry the development of people so that every Christian develops the God given potential that God has given each Christian. They will see God work through each Christian in a mighty way as God accomplishes what He has promised in Ephesians 3:20-21 where we read, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. The Lord wants to work mightily through you and your church. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop godly servant leaders who are able to develop others.

12.

Healthy Churches Measure Effectiveness by How Many They Send Out

Today many churches measure their success by the number of people that come to their church or by the size of their buildings or offerings. These happen to be worldly measures of success instead of Biblical measures of effectiveness. Christ focused on effectiveness rather than success. In the first part of John chapter six Christ fed the five thousand. Many people that saw that crowd would have said that Christ was very successful. Later in the chapter when the crowds came to Him again, Christ told the crowds what it meant to be His disciples. We see the results by the response of many of the people that called themselves His disciples.

John 6:60 says, "Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, 'This is a hard saying; who can understand it?'" Christ told them that some of them did not truly believe. We see the response of the crowd in John 6:66, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more."

Christ then spoke to those who remained and said in John 6:67-70, "Then Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also want to go away?' But Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Even with the twelve Christ knew that Judas was not a true follower. In the space of one chapter Christ went from a crowd of more than 5000 to a group of eleven true disciples. Christ was not concerned about worldly success but He was very concerned about being effective by doing the Father's will.

Christ make two key statements near the conclusion of His earthly ministry – one the night before He was crucified and the other the night after He rose from the dead. Those two statements summarize why Christ knew that He had been obedient to the Father in His ministry on this earth. Christ made the first statement as He prayed to the Father in John 17:4 where He said, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." Then Christ said to the disciples in John 20:21 the night of His resurrection, "So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.'" Christ had finished the work of equipping the disciples to carry on His work before He returned to heaven. He had glorified the Father by making disciples and He had equipped them to Make Disciples. Now Christ was sending the disciples out to do the same work.

That is the same work that Christ has called each Christian to do in our lives here on earth. Matthew 28:18-20 says, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" Amen." This means that we cannot measure our success by the number of people that we get to attend a church.

Instead Christ said that we will only be effective if we Make Disciples. We will Make Disciples and be effective if we:

1. Reach people for Christ by going to people where they live, work and spend their free time and sharing the Gospel with them and then helping them identify with the body of Christ, the church.
2. Teach those that we reach so that they know the Word of God, understand the Word of God and apply the Word of God to their lives.
3. Train people how to glorify God by showing them how to grow in godly character and showing them how to be effective in ministry to others.
4. Send them out to glorify God by reproducing themselves as they Make Disciples.

We bring glory to God by finishing the work that Christ has commissioned us to do. That work is to Reach, Teach, Train and Send as we become reproducing Christians and reproducing churches. The last thing that Christ said before He returned to heaven was to tell the disciples where to do that work. Acts 1:8-9 says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." That means that the true measure of effectiveness is the number of disciples that we send out to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth to be witnesses of Christ and Make Disciples of all nations.

The word translated "nations" in Matthew 28:19 is "ethnos" from which we get our word ethnic. We glorify God by reaching people of all ethnic groups for Christ, showing them how to grow in godly character, teaching them the Word of God, showing them how to share the Word with others, and equipping them to Make Disciples among each of the ethnic groups in our community. This means that the true measure of our obedience as churches and Christians is whether our goal is to bring glory to God by making disciples.

In the process of making disciples, we are to show by our own example those we reach and equip how to cross four barriers:

Jerusalem – the barrier of fear of sharing the Gospel and making disciples among their own relatives, friends, coworkers, neighbors and other acquaintances.

Judea – the barrier of making contacts with strangers.

Samaria – the barrier of sharing the Gospel with people of another culture, religion or ethnic group.

The ends of the earth – the barrier of language.

Through the years I have asked many people which of these barriers is the hardest barrier to cross. Nearly every person has answered that the hardest barrier to cross is the barrier of their own fear. Even Paul said this was the hardest barrier for him to cross. That is why he asked for prayer in Ephesians 6:19-20 where he asked the Ephesians to pray, "For me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." If Paul had to ask for prayer for boldness to share the Gospel, then every Christian needs to ask and pray for boldness to share the Gospel. We bring glory to God by helping every Christian to learn to pray for boldness to share the Gospel instead of trying to share the Gospel in his or her own strength. Learning to yield our lives to Christ and asking for His boldness is the first and most important lesson that every Christian must learn in order to become effective and bring glory to God.

However, Christ also shared some other lessons about how to become effective reproducing

Christians and churches that bring glory to God. In Mark 1:16-17 we read, "And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." The next three verses show that he gave the same invitation to James and John. Then verses 21-37 tells them that Christ showed them that very same day by His example how to share the Gospel with their relatives, friends, coworkers, neighbors and other acquaintances.

Christ did not show the disciples what to share just one or two times. Mark 1:38-39 says, "But He said to them, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons." Here we see that Christ showed His disciples what to share and how to share it many different times and in many different places. He showed them how to answer the questions that people asked in these various places. He showed them how to develop attitudes of compassion and love.

During the years that these men spent with Christ, their lives were being transformed. They learned to deal with sinful attitudes in their lives that needed changing because they saw the attitudes of Christ. They learned to have compassion for people because they saw the compassion of Christ. Most of all they learned that Christ loved them. That is why they could understand what Christ meant when He gave them the new commandment in John 13:34-35. Those verses say, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." They had seen His love for them. Now He told them to love one another with that same love. That command could never have been given unless they had spent much time with Christ.

In the same way, people will only learn to love others as Christ loves them if they see our love as they watch our example. That is why Paul said to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 11:1, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." Just like Christ, Paul spent time with people so that they could see his love, learn to follow his example and not just hear his words. In fact Paul, Silas and Timothy told the Christians in Thessalonica how they had helped them in their spiritual growth. I Thessalonians 2:7-9 says that they had provided both the time and the loving care of a nursing mother to help them grow in their spiritual lives. Then I Thessalonians 2:10-12 says that they provided the example of a godly father as they helped them grow. The lives of people will be transformed and equipped to help others have their lives transformed as we share our time, show our love and give them an example to follow as we follow Christ.

Are we looking for worldly success or are we seeking to glorify God by developing a transformed life that will give others an example to follow? Are we telling others what to do or are we showing them how to live? Are we spending time with them and serving them by taking them with us as we minister? We need to ask these questions both as individuals and as a team of church leaders. Churches that seek worldly success measure their success by the number of people that attend their churches whether their lives are being transformed or not. Churches that seek to glorify God will be able to measure their effectiveness by the number of people that they reach for Christ, teach to grow in Christlikeness by their example, show how to grow in godly character and effective ministry and then send out to make disciples to the ends of the world. Is that the goal of your church and also your personal goal? May the Lord bless you as you seek to glorify Him!

13.

Healthy Churches Develop Godly Flexibility

Today we are beginning the first of four topics on the importance of Godly flexibility in order to be effective at developing healthy reproducing churches. A very significant passage on this topic is Acts 21:20-26. We will begin by contrasting a major difference in the development of churches in different cultures. Acts 21:20 says, "And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law." Then Acts 21:25 says, "But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality." Here we see that one culture was zealous for the law and the other culture grew up with no background of the law.

The setting for this event was the return of Paul to the city of Jerusalem after ministering among the Gentiles for many years. The leaders of the church at Jerusalem were filled with joy as they heard about the conversion of the Gentiles but they also saw that there were many people in the church at Jerusalem that might not accept Paul. Acts 21:19-20 says, "When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law." The leaders of the church at Jerusalem recognized that both they and Paul must demonstrate godly flexibility or there could be great conflict in the church at Jerusalem.

The Council in Jerusalem in Acts 15 had decided that the Gentile Christians were not under the Jewish law. The Jewish law included circumcision, the keeping of the various feasts and ceremonies and especially the diet that was contained in the Levitical law. Peter had this explained to him in a vision in the first part of Acts 10. Peter explained what this meant when he went to the house of Cornelius. Acts 10:27-28 says, "And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together. Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean." The Jews were not allowed to eat in the home of a Gentile because the food might not be prepared according to the Levitical law. This effectively kept the Jews separated from the people of the nations.

In contrast, there were only four requirements for Gentile believers decided on at the Jerusalem Council. These four requirements are all given in the first chapters of Genesis prior to the call of Abraham and so are universal. They have nothing to do with the Levitical law, the specific requirements given to Jews such as circumcision and the keeping of the feasts and ceremonies and especially the eating of clean and unclean foods. Let us look at those four specific requirements.

First, the Gentiles were to keep themselves from things offered to idols. Idol worship was clearly demonstrated in Genesis 11 at the Tower of Babel. God changed the languages to slow down the development of rebellion and idol worship. Then Joshua 24:2 says that Abraham came from a family of idol worshippers.

Second and third, the Gentiles were to keep themselves from blood and from things strangled. Genesis 9:4 says, "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood." Here we see that immediately after the flood Noah was commanded not to eat blood. Animals that are strangled would still have their blood in them so that would also be a violation of this commandment.

Fourth, the Gentiles were to keep themselves from immorality. That would take us back to the very first institution established by God when He performed the first marriage. Genesis 2:22-24 says, "Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Any form of sexual immorality is a violation of the one flesh principle that God established when He established marriage.

Since these four things were all known before the scattering of the people at the Tower of Babel, nearly all cultures have similar prohibitions although most cultures freely violate these four prohibitions. However, they recognize them as a violation of their own laws whether they had passed on any knowledge of the Creator or not. Even though they might freely violate them, they were and are aware that these are violations of their own laws. The Jewish Christians at the Jerusalem Council recognized that the Gentiles were not under any of the Jewish laws that were given to the nation of Israel. This made it possible for the early church to spread rapidly among the Gentiles. However, it did require understanding both by Paul and by the leaders of the church at Jerusalem.

We also see that the Christians at Jerusalem had heard a lot of wrong information about Paul probably through the Judaizers. Acts 21:21 gives us some of the opinions that they had developed about Paul. That verse says, "But they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs." At least three things were specific problems. They had heard Paul was teaching Jews to forsake the law of Moses. They heard that Paul was teaching Jews that they did not need to circumcise their children any longer. They had heard that Paul was teaching Jews to forsake the customs such as various vows and the eating of unclean foods. These were things that the Jews had been instructed by God to do throughout their generations.

The leaders of the church at Jerusalem and Paul all recognized that Christians often believe the opinions that they have heard and do not stop to check out the facts. How many times have you had urban legends forwarded to you by e-mail from other Christians that are totally false? Verses 21 and 22 show the leaders at Jerusalem knew that the Christians had believed a lot of false rumors about Paul.

To end these rumors, Paul was very willing to submit himself to the leaders of the church at Jerusalem and take a Jewish vow – see verses 23-26. Paul himself had earlier taken a Jewish vow according to Acts 18:18, "So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow." As a result, we see that Paul kept the Jewish law himself but he did not even suggest to the Gentiles that it was necessary for them to keep the Jewish law. In fact in a

future topic we will see that he stood strongly against those who tried to make Gentiles keep the Jewish law.

In verse 24 we see a key statement that the leaders of the church at Jerusalem made about Paul. Acts 21:24 says, “Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.” This verse shows that the leaders of the church at Jerusalem recognized three things. They recognized that the things that the Christians had heard about Paul from the Judaizers were not true. The fact that they knew the people had heard these things also indicated that they knew that many of the Jewish Christians had believed what they had heard about Paul.

The second thing the church leaders in Jerusalem recognized was that Paul walked an orderly life. The words “walk orderly” are from one word that means to direct one’s life or to walk in a way that is God honoring. It was also used to speak of soldiers marching in order. The church leaders recognized that throughout his ministry that Paul had demonstrated godly character. Galatians 2:9 showed that they had recognized this for many years. That verse says, “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”

The third thing that the church leaders in Jerusalem recognized was that Paul walked according to the law. Here we see that Paul obeyed the Jewish law so that his actions would not be a hindrance to reaching the Jews for Christ. As a result, in each of the cities where Paul had preached the Gospel some of those who became Christians were Jews. The leaders recognized that Paul walked according to the law but did not expect the Gentiles to do so. Here we see that Paul understood the church leaders and chose to take a Jewish vow so that all of the Jewish Christians could see that they things that they had heard about Paul were false.

The early church was able to reach both Jews and Gentiles because the leaders of the church had developed godly flexibility and were teaching the entire church to do the same. They did not try to make Gentiles live like Jews or make Jews live like Gentiles. Instead they taught both Jews and Gentiles to serve one another in love. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” In order to plant churches effectively, especially across cultures, we must learn to develop godly flexibility. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop godly flexibility.

14.

Healthy Churches Understand Godly Flexibility

In our last topic we talked about developing godly flexibility. Today we are going to focus on the topic of understanding godly flexibility. Paul was a Jew who was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. As a result, he had to understand this flexibility fully and apply it in his own life so that he could effectively share the Gospel both with the Jews and also with the Gentiles. Since over one half of his recorded ministry happened in just four cities, he also gives us an example of how to reach the people of the cities for Christ. Those four cities were Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome which also happened to be four of the five largest cities in the Roman Empire – the fifth being Alexandria, Egypt.

Paul gives us a summary of his understanding of godly flexibility in I Corinthians 9:19-23 where we read, “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.” In these verses we see that Paul was willing to make many changes in his own life in order to reach people for Christ. In these verses we learn several very important principles.

First, Paul said that he was free from all men. This is a key principle if we are going to be effective as churches and Christians that develop effective reproducing Christians. In verse 18 Paul had said, “What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel.” Paul said that as he traveled to the various cities that he did not expect the people there to pay his expenses so that he could preach the Gospel. In fact when he began his ministry in Corinth he made tents to support himself. Paul chose to be free from self interest by not charging the people he was trying to reach.

Second, we see that Paul chose to make himself a servant or a bondsman to all. He was willing to adapt himself to the people that he was trying to reach in order to reach them for Christ. That meant that he circumcised Timothy in Acts 16:3 because he was part Jewish. At the same time it meant that he did not circumcise Titus in Galatians 2:3 because he was a Greek. Paul was willing to be very flexible so that he could reach both Jews and Gentiles for Christ.

Third, Paul said that his real concern was to be able to avoid creating any barriers between himself and those who were not Christians so that he could win more people to Christ. Paul was even willing to forsake foods that might be his favorites in order to win more people to Christ. Romans 14:15-19 says, “Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”

Paul shared with the Corinthians how he had applied this principle among them for the sake of evangelism. In I Corinthians 10:23-27 Paul said, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness." If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake." Paul ate the food that those who did not believe served him at dinner unless they made a point of the fact that they had bought the meat at the temple of the idol. Then, based on the four things that Gentile Christians were not to do from the decision of the Jerusalem Council, Paul would abstain from eating the meat but would not condemn his host.

In fact Paul went on to say that he was very careful not to offend anyone by what he ate or did not eat. I Corinthians 10:31-11:1 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." Paul became a bondservant to all so that he would not offend Jews, Greeks or the church. He did what he did to bring glory to God in a way that would reach more people for Christ.

Fourth, Paul said I Corinthians 9:20, "...to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law..." Paul took Jewish vows to show that he did the things that were commanded by the Levitical law for Jews. Acts 18:18 says, "So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow." Here we see that Paul shaved his head to fulfill all of the requirements of a Jewish vow. He also avoided eating those animals that the Jews would consider unclean.

Fifth, Paul also said in I Corinthians 9:20, "...to those who are without law, as without law..." Since most of the Gentiles were not familiar with the Jewish law, Paul did not even use the Old Testament law when he shared the Gospel with Gentiles. In fact Paul summarized his teaching of the Gospel to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 2:1-2 where he said, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He did not depend on either the Jewish law or Greek philosophy.

Paul repeated the Gospel that he preached to the Corinthians a second time in I Corinthians 15:1-6 which says, "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep." His message was the death and the resurrection of Christ to Jews or Gentiles.

Sixth, Paul said that he did function under one law in I Corinthians 9:20, "... (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ)..." Here we see that Paul did obey the law of Christ in his relationship with all people. Christ gave this commandment to His disciples in John 13:34-35 where we read, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Galatians 5:13 says, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Paul chose to be a bondsman to all because he made it his purpose to serve all in love. This meant that Paul acted out of love and set aside his own desires for the sake of reaching others for Christ.

Seventh, Paul said in I Corinthians 9:22, "...to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak..." The word that is translated weak is used in I Thessalonians 5:14 to speak of those who are without strength. That verse says, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all." Here we see that Paul said to uphold those who are without strength. Paul showed love to those who had no strength in themselves by holding them up in their weakness. He described the way he, Silas and Timothy had helped the new Christians in I Thessalonians 2:7, "But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children." Paul said that they had provided the same kind of care that a mother provides to her newborn child.

Paul summarized his entire ministry in the last part of I Corinthians 9:22 where he said, "...I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you." Paul understood that to reach people of many different cultures and religions, he had to become totally flexible in his ministry. That is the kind of Christians that we need today if we are going to plant churches among the many different cultures of our world. In many of our cities we find a tremendous variety of cultures. We need to follow the example of Paul and seek to understand how to most effectively reach each of these cultures with the Gospel.

Understanding godly flexibility is a very important key to reaching people for Christ and developing reproducing churches in every culture. May the Lord richly bless you as you grow and continue to develop your flexibility so that you can reach people for Christ in an increasing number of cultures.

15.

Healthy Churches Practice Godly Flexibility

In our last two topics we have talked about developing godly flexibility and understanding godly flexibility. Today we will look at some examples of how we practice godly flexibility in the situations that we face in our lives and service for the Lord. This is essential if we are going to become healthy reproducing Christians and churches especially when we are reaching out to people of various cultures and religions.

In Galatians 2:9-14 we read, “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?” Here we see that Paul helped Peter to get a better understanding of godly flexibility.

Peter was the first apostle that we read about that took the Gospel to the Gentiles. Peter had a very difficult time when God called him to take the Gospel to the house of Cornelius. He had earlier shared the Gospel in the Samaritan villages but the Samaritans had some Jewish roots in their background so that was not like taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. Acts 8:25 says, “So when they (Peter and John) had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.”

God had to give Peter a vision before Peter was willing to take the Gospel to the house of Cornelius. One day Peter was very hungry so God gave him a vision in Acts 10:11-15 which reads, “And saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.” And a voice spoke to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.” When Peter was trying to figure out the vision, Acts 10:19-20 says, “While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.” Peter had to receive these special instructions before he was willing to take the Gospel to the house of Cornelius.

However, Galatians 2 shows that Peter still had some lessons to learn from Paul because Paul had already learned these things. First, Galatians 2:9 shows that Paul and Barnabas knew that they were called to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. That verse says, “And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and

Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” Paul had been given grace to go to the Gentiles. The word that is translated grace means the merciful kindness by which God exerts His holy influence upon people and turns them to Christ. God had shown that grace to Paul on the road to Damascus and had called him to the Gentiles while he was in Damascus – Acts 9:1-16. This call was a call that would require flexibility for someone who had been a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

Second, Paul practiced godly flexibility by having a concern for the poor. Galatians 2:10 says, “They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.” James who was one of the pillars mentioned in verse 9 wrote in James 2:2-9, “For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, “You sit here in a good place,” and say to the poor man, “You stand there,” or, “Sit here at my footstool,” have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” Paul had learned to show a concern for the poor because the cities had many poor. Today many Christians neglect the cities and especially the poor of the cities. If we are going to really impact the world we must have a concern for the poor.

Third, Paul practiced godly flexibility by standing firm for Christian liberty. Galatians 2:11-12 says, “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.” Peter was showing the very favoritism that James said is sin. He ate with the Gentiles when there was no one else from Jerusalem there. However, when some Christians came from James (the very same James that wrote the book of James) Peter withdrew from eating with the Gentiles.

Paul saw that Peter was violating the principle given in Galatians 5:13 which says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Peter was using his liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. We see why this was true because it says that Peter withdrew himself because he feared those who were of the circumcision. When we act out of fear, we will become rigid and satisfy the flesh instead of exercising godly flexibility. Today many Christians are being driven by fear instead of being led by the love of Christ. Paul was willing to stand firm for Christian liberty and so he withstood Peter to his face because he practiced godly flexibility.

Fourth, Paul practiced godly flexibility because he recognized hypocrisy. Galatians 2:13 says, “And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.” Because Peter was a leader that sinned by showing hypocrisy because of fear, the rest of the Jews followed the example of Peter and sinned also. Paul saw how the wrong actions of Peter were influencing all of the other Jews and was bringing division between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. Paul knew that this division between Jews and Gentiles must be stopped immediately.

Fifth, Paul practiced godly flexibility by rebuking hypocrisy when he saw it. Galatians 2:14 says, "But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?" Paul made it clear that Peter was violating the truth of the Gospel by his hypocrisy. Peter had to learn that flexibility in order to become effective in ministering to the Gentiles. That also meant that he had to learn to start acting out of love instead of fear in his relationship to the Gentiles.

Sixth, Paul went on later in Galatians to explain the purpose of the law. Galatians 3:24-25 says, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." The purpose of the law means that Christ and the Gospel have removed the barriers between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and those who are free, between men and women. Galatians 3:26-28 says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Here we see that the Gospel breaks down the barriers between cultures.

Paul explains the implications of this tremendous change in Ephesians 2:13-18 where we read, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." Here we see that when we practice Biblical flexibility that we will truly break down historic barriers because of the law since Christ has freed us from the law. This is the liberty that we preach in Christ.

It is important to understand the importance of godly flexibility to learn to share the Gospel with people of other backgrounds and cultures. It is even more important to understand that this flexibility makes it possible for us to help people of various backgrounds become one in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you grow in your understanding of godly flexibility and learn to practice it in your daily ministry for Christ so that all that you do brings glory to Christ.

16.

Healthy Churches Apply Godly Flexibility

In our last three topics we have talked about developing godly flexibility, understanding godly flexibility and practicing godly flexibility. Our topic today will talk about applying godly flexibility especially in the area of evangelism. Godly flexibility is critical if we are going to be effective in evangelism today. Paul demonstrated this godly flexibility in every city he visited but we will use his ministry in Athens to illustrate various principles of godly flexibility in evangelism.

First, we see that Paul took time to discern what groups of people were in Athens. Acts 17:16-17 says, "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there." Paul quickly recognized that this was a city that was given over to idols. There were some people that recognized God but the vast majority followed various idols and had no concept of a Creator that had a personal interest in the lives of individuals. That describes most of the people in much of the world and especially in the major cities of the world today.

Second, Paul chose to meet people where they lived, worked and spent their free time. There were some Jews and some Gentile worshipers in the city. As a result, Paul met them where they spent their free time. That was in the synagogue. However, since the city was given over to idolatry most of the people in the city never came near the synagogue. Paul knew that he must meet the rest of the people where they lived, worked and spent their free time and not expect them to come to the synagogue because they would never come. He knew that the only way he was going to meet most of the people of Athens was to meet them where they lived, worked or spent their free time. This caused him to go daily to the marketplace to meet people. There Paul spent his time reasoning with them and discussing the death and resurrection of Christ.

Third, Paul took time to understand the various philosophies and cultures of the people. Acts 17:18 says, "Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, 'What does this babbler want to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,' because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection." The Epicureans had given up the search for truth and had chosen to satisfy themselves with pleasure. The search for pleasure is one of the major philosophies that drives many of the people of the world today. In contrast, the Stoics lived a very disciplined life and focused on self-sufficiency. The desire for such self-sufficiency is a very real philosophy today and drives many people to seek wealth and other things.

Fourth, Paul was willing to explain his beliefs to them where they would feel comfortable. Acts 17:19-21 says, "And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, 'May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.'" For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." Here we see a common characteristic of people in cities. They are open to listen and discuss any system of beliefs if people will explain those beliefs in a setting where they feel comfortable. The Areopagus was a court on a hill where Paul could explain his teachings.

Fifth, Paul took time to make a distinction between religion (spirituality) and the worship of the Creator who is the true God. Acts 17:22-23 says, "Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you." Paul made it clear that it is possible to be religious or spiritual and yet not have a knowledge and understanding of the true God.

Sixth, Paul used one of their objects of worship as a bridge and not a barrier to explain to them about the true God. Instead of condemning their idols, Paul chose to build a bridge of communication by using the inscription that he had read as he had looked at one of their altars. Christ did the same thing when He talked to the Samaritan woman when he asked for a drink of water instead of condemning her lifestyle.

Seventh, Paul began at the point where he needed to begin in that situation. Four common points of contact for sharing the Gospel are found in the New Testament. With Nicodemus who knew the Old Testament but was depending on his own religious works, Christ began with confrontation. With the Bereans who had an Old Testament background and were open to search the Scriptures, Paul began with clarification. With people like the Samaritan woman and the tax collectors and sinners who had some knowledge of the Old Testament but felt that they were too bad to be forgiven, Christ began with compassion. However, the people in Athens had no Biblical background at all. They were like the young husband I asked recently in an evangelistic Bible study, "What are we celebrating at Easter?" He thought for a minute and then said, "I have no idea." Here we see that with individuals with no Biblical background that Paul began with creation. These are 4 key Cs for evangelism and each needs a different approach.

Acts 17:24-27 says, "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us." Here we see that Paul began with creation and the Creator because of the lack of any Biblical background.

Eighth, Paul used illustrations from their culture with which they were familiar. Acts 17:28 says, "For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'" Here we see that Paul quoted from one of their own poets because he knew that they would be familiar with the quotation. We see that Paul helped them to realize that one of their own poets recognized that there was a Creator who created all things and gives life to all.

Ninth, Paul made a distinction between objects of worship and worship of the Creator. Acts 17:29-30 says, "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of

ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” Here we see that Paul gives a call to repent by turning from sin and turning to God, the Creator.

Tenth, Paul worked with the Holy Spirit. John 16:8-11 says that the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment. Acts 17:31 says, “Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” The Holy Spirit convinces people of their sin of unbelief and the need to repent. The Holy Spirit convinces people of the fact that Christ is the Righteous One who paid for our sin and God showed He was satisfied by raising Christ from the dead. The Holy Spirit convinces people that Satan has already been judged by Christ’s death and resurrection and that those who continue to follow him will share in his judgment. Here we see that Paul worked with the Holy Spirit by sharing all three areas in which the Holy Spirit convicts unbelievers.

Eleventh, Paul recognized three responses by those who had heard what He shared. Acts 17:32-34 says, “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, “We will hear you again on this matter.” So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.” Paul accepted rejection from those who mocked when they heard about the resurrection because He knew they were really rejecting Christ and not him. Paul saw that there was a second group that wanted to hear more. This is the group of people that are open to having an evangelistic Bible study so that they can learn more about Christianity. Often these will become Christians in the following weeks and months as we have evangelistic Bible studies with them

We also see that there was a third group that believed. Here we see that they joined Paul. They wanted to spend more time with him so that he could begin helping them grow in their new life in Christ. Because this group has just put their trust in Christ, they are eager to grow and will be glad to spend time with us so that they can learn more about Christ so that their lives can take root in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7) and His love (Ephesians 3:17-19). Since this group of topics had been about developing reproducing churches, it is this third group of people that will form the nucleus for the beginning of a new church in the area where they live. We need to spend a lot of time with this group to help them grow. The second group of people will be the group from which additional people become Christians. We need to continue to work with them in evangelistic Bible studies. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop reproducing Christians that develop reproducing churches.