

Vietnam Edition

# **Practical Training for Saturation Church Planting**

**Book 3  
Establishing Converts**

**Practical Training for  
Saturation Church Planting  
Vietnam Edition  
Book Three – Establishing Converts**

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This is a revision of the original version of the *Omega Course*, a practical church planting curriculum which was prepared in 2000 by the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting ([www.alliancescp.org](http://www.alliancescp.org)) in cooperation with Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries ([www.russian-ministries.org](http://www.russian-ministries.org)). The original *Omega Course* was copyrighted by the Alliance for Saturation Church Planting, and is currently under copyright by United World Mission. Materials from the original *Omega Course* are used by permission.

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**PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR SCP**  
**BOOK 3 – ESTABLISHING CONVERTS**

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**CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

Book	1. Laying Foundations	2. Winning The Lost	3. Establishing Converts	4. Training Leaders	5. Multiplying Ministry
<b>Overall Goal:</b> The participant should complete this book ...	...certain of his call and a strategic approach to the church planting task.	...with the skills and motivation to share the gospel.	... able to organize new converts into small groups and lead them toward maturity.	... able to start corporate worship and to equip new leaders for ministry.	... with the skills and commitment to multiply new churches and continue in SCP ministry.
<b>Subjects / Lessons, Timeframe</b>	<p><u>Month 1</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God’s Ultimate Purpose</li> <li>Making Disciples Of All Nations</li> <li>Planting Churches Everywhere</li> <li>“Z” Thinking</li> <li>Research</li> <li>SC 1: Spiritual Adoption</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prayer In The Church Planting Process</li> <li>Purpose Of The Church</li> <li>Nature Of The Church</li> <li>Defining The Church</li> <li>SC 2: The Centrality of the Cross</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form And Function</li> <li>Understanding the Message</li> <li>Sharing A Personal Testimony</li> <li>Evangelism And Church Planting</li> <li>Biblical History Of Redemption</li> <li>SC 3: Who Needs the Gospel?</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>History Of Christianity, Advance Of The Gospel</li> <li>Barriers To Effective Evangelism</li> <li>Chronological Bible Storying 1</li> <li>IBS: Intro</li> <li>IBS: Method</li> <li>IBS: Demonstrated</li> <li>SC 4: The Law and the Gospel</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 5</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group Inductive Bible Study</li> <li>Cell Group 1: Intro</li> <li>CG 2: Leading Cells</li> <li>CG 3: Preparing to Start</li> <li>SC 5: Understanding and Overcoming the Sin Nature</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 6</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perseverance Through Persecution</li> <li>Prayer And Fasting</li> <li>Discipleship 1: Intro</li> <li>Discipleship 2: Forms</li> <li>Chronological Bible Storying 2</li> <li>SC 6: Understanding and Overcoming Self-Pity</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 7</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discipleship 3: Toward Maturity</li> <li>Caring For Others</li> <li>Team Ministry</li> <li>Developing Your CP Team</li> <li>Styles Of Interaction</li> <li>SC 7: True Repentance</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 8</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing SCP leadership</li> <li>Servant Leadership</li> <li>Spheres of Leadership</li> <li>Christianity and Culture</li> <li>Discipleship 4: Multiplying the Process</li> <li>SC 8: Growing in the Gospel</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 9</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilizing Leaders</li> <li>Identifying and Equipping Leaders</li> <li>Training Cell Group Leaders</li> <li>Skills for Leaders</li> <li>Strategic Planning</li> <li>SC 9: Forgiveness</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 10</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiplying Cell Groups</li> <li>Corporate Leadership Skills – Supervising Cells</li> <li>Worship</li> <li>Effective Communication</li> <li>Studying Culture</li> <li>SC 10: Conflict Resolution</li> </ol>	<p><u>Month 11</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Church Planting Cycle</li> <li>Next Steps – Planting More Churches</li> <li>Training As Part Of A Church Planting Movement</li> <li>Signs Of A Movement</li> <li>Vision And Telescoping— Taking The Gospel Into The World</li> <li>Contextualizing The Gospel</li> <li>SC 11: The New Nature</li> </ol> <p><u>Month 12</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biblical Examples Of Saturation Church Planting Movements</li> <li>Strategy Components For A Church Planting Movement</li> <li>Shepherding Within A Movement</li> <li>Mobilization</li> <li>SC 12: Ministry Through Weakness</li> </ol>
<b>Outcome Project (Homework)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research The Target Region</li> <li>Organize Prayer Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evangelize The Lost And Their Friends</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize Converts And Contacts Into Cell Groups</li> <li>Identify And Begin Working With Disciples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train And Release Leaders</li> <li>Complete A Strategic Ministry Plan</li> <li>Organize Cells Into Corporate Worship Groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research And Cast Vision For Work In New Regions/New Groups</li> <li>Start Daughter Churches</li> </ul>

Note: the Vietnamese language version of this curriculum corresponds to the English, with the exception of being organized into six books of two months worth of lessons in each book.

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# MONTH 5

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## Review of Month 4

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Congratulations! You have made it to Book 3. By now you have begun to think about a strategy for church planting, you have researched your target people or region, and have been actively sharing your faith. Additionally you have learned to study the Bible inductively, and to teach it chronologically. We trust you have learned many more things in your training and ministry.

The main emphasis of the last month training was Evangelism and Inductive Bible Study. You were asked to do the following:

From Lesson 7, “History of Christianity”:

How has the Gospel come to your region? Interview those who might know more about this than you do and write a small report summarizing what is known. What kind of insights does your local church history give you into the present task? Include this in your report.

How many unreached people groups still exist in your country? (Joshua Project [www.joshuaproject.net](http://www.joshuaproject.net) may help you find the answer to this). What can you say about the missionary task that still remains in your country? Include this in your report as well.

From Lesson 8, “Barriers to Effective Evangelism”:

Do an inductive Bible study of John chapter 4. Identify the barriers that Jesus overcame to reveal Himself to the woman at the well.

From Lesson 9, “Chronological Bible Storying”:

Try this method out with some people you are trying to evangelize, even if they are not oral learners. Begin by picking a biblical concept that they need to hear. Then pick three Biblical stories that teach the concept and tell them the story. Think of questions which will help bring out the truths from the scripture you are using.

Report on the experience to your mentor.

From Lesson 12, “Inductive Bible Study Demonstrated”:

Your assignment is to study a passage using the inductive method, and to prepare as many observation, interpretation, and application questions as possible. Practice the inductive Bible study method on your own using any two of the following passages. You may want to compare your choice with the other trainees so that everyone does not do the same passage. Write and answer your own questions as has been modeled for you in the previous lesson. Use the **Inductive Bible Study Outline** which follows if it helps you.

- *Acts 13:4-12 (Paphos)*
- *Acts 13:13-52 (Antioch)*
- *Acts 14:1-7 (Iconium)*
- *Acts 14:8-20 (Lystra and Derbe)*

- *Acts 16:11-40 (Philippi)*
- *Acts 17:10-15 (Berea)*
- *Acts 17:16-34 (Athens)*
- *Acts 18:1-17 (Corinth)*
- *Acts 19:1-10 (Ephesus)*

**Each of your two inductive Bible studies must be in written format, and should include all three aspects: observation, interpretation, and personal application. Bring these written studies with you to the next seminar.**

These assignments are repeated here to provide an opportunity for review with your mentor if you have not done this already.

This month we will emphasize cell group ministry. We trust that as you have been sharing your faith, there are people who have believed the gospel. These new believers need to be established in cell groups characterized by warm fellowship, authentic worship, relevant Bible teaching, and ongoing outreach. Let's get going!

## INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

### Lesson 1: Group Inductive Bible Study

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As we learned previously in this course, inductive Bible study is first and foremost a method for personal growth of the Christian. However, it is also a very effective form of ministry to others. It is a good way for unbelievers to discover the message God has for them—that is, repent and trust Christ for salvation. It is also a good way for believers to discover God’s truth together, in a group. It can be used for evangelism, and also for discipleship in a cell group.

#### I. CHARACTERISTICS OF AN INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

An inductive Bible study group is any small group of people who come together for the purpose of studying the Bible using the inductive method. There are a number of differences between an inductive Bible study group and a sermon. Three of the most important differences are listed below:

##### Scripture is the Authority

In a sermon, the source of authority is very often perceived as the preacher himself. As a result, if the speaker is very capable, people listen to what *he* says, and may or may not realize that message comes from God. In the opposite case, the message of the Word can be clouded or confused by a poor speaker. In both situations, a person stands between the hearers and the Word of the Lord.

Inductive Bible study, by contrast, allows each member of the group to focus on the Scriptures. The living and active Word of God is capable of touching the innermost being of a person, bringing conviction or comfort. Nothing stands between the Word and the hearer. No human interferes. The Holy Spirit applies the message directly to the heart of the reader.

Obviously, there is a time and a place for teaching. Sometimes it is helpful to listen to a teacher when people are not willing to read the Word for themselves, or when the teacher has particularly good insight into a particular passage or subject. However, teaching should be balanced wherever and whenever possible by personal study of the Scriptures. Teaching should *add to* what we are learning on our own—it should never *replace it*.

**Question 1: In which situations would inductive Bible study be more effective than a sermon in communicating the truth of Scripture?**

##### The Goal is Discovery

Educational theory has strongly and repeatedly proved that we learn and remember something best when we discover it for ourselves. Having someone tell us what fishing is like is far inferior to actually going fishing and experiencing it for ourselves. The same holds true for the truth of the Word. When we discover the truth in the pages of the Bible, we are more likely to understand it, believe it, and act on it than when someone preaches it to us. In order to enable this discovery, an inductive Bible study group should be small enough to allow for interaction among the members (15 people or less).

##### The Leader is a Facilitator

Since the best method of learning spiritual truth is to discover it ourselves, the leader of an inductive Bible study must help the members *discover* truth in the passage—not *tell* them. This is accomplished through the skillful

use of questions. Questions are a way of directing the attention of the members to important facts in the passage, without actually telling them. It guides them, but allows them to discover. That is the goal.

It should be obvious, therefore, that the questions you choose to ask the group are very important. There will not be time during a group study to ask all the questions the group can think of. Rather, the responsibility of the group leader is to study the passage ahead of time, and note which questions were most helpful for him or her. This includes all areas—observation, interpretation, and application. The number of questions needed depends on the length of time of the study session, but you will not need many since you will want to allow enough time to discuss the answers. Also, you should definitely allow the groups members to ask and answer their own questions—especially as they gain experience in the process.

It is important to note that your questions should not lead the group to your own personal conclusion or understanding of a passage. Your questions should be objective and allow the group to reach a conclusion which perhaps differs from your own.

***Question 2: What is the role of the leader as he/she facilitates a group inductive bible study?***

## **II. PREPARATION FOR THE STUDY**

Before the group meeting, the leader should carefully plan the study using these steps:

### **Study the Passage Yourself**

It is important that the leader discover the central truth(s) and main application(s) of the passage. The leader should observe, interpret, and apply the passage on his own according to the inductive Bible study guidelines taught in Book 2.

### **Write Down the Purpose of the Study**

The leader should decide the general direction for the small group Bible study to take. This direction should not be too specific. Remember that the Holy Spirit may teach the group in ways that you did not anticipate.

### **Prepare Questions Which Cover All Three Parts of the Study**

The leader should prepare to lead the group to **apply** sound **interpretation** based on careful **observation** by guiding the group through the same process of discovery that he has already taken. Thought-provoking questions should build on one another so that the discussion concentrates on the main purpose and application of the passage. The questions should not require simple "yes or no" answers. Rather, they should guide the group to search the verses for the facts, meaning, and application. If it takes a few minutes and several attempts to adequately answer a question, that is fine. The questions should help the members discover—not insult their intelligence.

The previous manual showed you how to prepare these three kinds of questions, and asked you to prepare a sample study. In all future studies that you lead, you should work through the same process. As you prepare, you will think of far too many questions to use in a group. After you have completed the study of the passage for yourself, you will need to sort through your questions to identify the most helpful or informative ones, and use only those in leading others in a study of the text.

Make sure to include several questions for each of the steps—observation, interpretation, and application. Remember the example of building a pyramid with a strong base. It is preferable to have more observation questions than interpretation questions, and even fewer application ones. This does not mean that application is less important—it is the *most* important thing. However, it will require a number of questions to lead the members of the study group to the point of discovering the one application that is most needed in their lives. Guiding people to discovery through skillful questioning is difficult, but rewarding.

## **Review the Questions**

When the questions have been formulated, the leader should ask:

- Are my questions clear?
- Is each brief enough to be readily grasped?
- Do the questions make the group search the passage?
- Do the observation questions provide a solid basis on which to ask interpretive and application questions?
- Do the questions move the group through the whole passage?
- Do the application questions lead the group to specific actions?

## **Prepare an Introductory Question to Get the Members Excited about the Bible Study**

The introductory question can focus on how this passage speaks to a particular situation with which the members identify. For example, 1 Peter was written to churches facing persecution. Studying this book, you might ask, "How do you act when you are persecuted for being a Christian? How did the people Peter was writing to react to persecution?"

## **III. LEADING THE STUDY**

### **The Study Should Be Started and Closed with Prayer**

Studying the Bible is not just a mechanical process. It requires the help of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the truth that God wants to communicate to us. We should pray for enlightenment before we study, and then ask the Lord to help us apply what we learned after the study.

### **The Leader Should Be Prepared to Learn from the Group**

Remember that the same Holy Spirit who speaks to the leader speaks to others. Others will have insights that the leader perhaps will not see. If the leader is not prepared to learn, then he will appear to be an 'expert.' The presence of an 'expert' can prevent honest discussion from taking place. In many cases, people will not want to share their opinions in the presence of an expert who may correct them.

### **The Leader Should Not Answer Questions**

The leader should avoid answering his own questions. It will limit group thinking. If the leader does answer his own questions, the questions begin to sound like test questions with correct answers. Many people will be reluctant to answer questions that they could get "wrong." When there is a lot of hesitation after a certain question, the leader should be alert to rephrase the question in case the group has difficulty understanding. Likewise, questions that arise from within the group should be reflected back to the group for their consideration. For example, "Hien has a question about \_\_\_\_\_. What do you think about it?" Or, you can direct Hien's questions to a particular person in the group: "Tuan, how would you answer Hien's question?"

### **Do Not Be Afraid of Silence**

The leader should allow sufficient time to answer the question. There may be a few moments of silence—which is perfectly all right. People need time to think. Silence is a group pressure that works on the behalf of the leader.

### **The Leader Should Not Always Be Satisfied With the First Answer Given**

If the leader constantly accepts an answer and moves on to the next question, then the group can fall into a question/answer, question/answer pattern. It would be better for the group to have a discussion, not a quiz. By

asking for several responses to the question, a natural discussion is more likely. Also, the first answer given is often not the most complete or insightful. Sometimes there can be more than one answer. By taking time to discuss other answers, a more comprehensive understanding of the passage is gained.

### **Questions Not Answered By the Group May Be Left Unanswered**

The leader should refrain from answering questions that the group has not been able to process. To do so would be to stifle individual and group thinking by providing the answer. Also, if we trust the Holy Spirit to be the real teacher, then we have to trust that an unanswered question is something that the group is not ready to handle at that moment. The unanswered question may hold their curiosity and bring them back the next week.

### **Incorrect Answers Should Be Corrected By the Scriptures and/or the Group, Not the Leader**

Whenever a group of people study the Bible there will be questions, wrong answers, and incorrect statements. The natural response is for the leader to correct and rebuke. But doing so can discourage group members from opening up. This will in turn kill open and honest discussion. Instead of correcting a wrong or partial answer, the leader can do one of the following:

- Ask the person answering to re-read the text, or refer them to another text.
- Ask the group whether it is in agreement with the answer or not.
- Ask group members for other related Scripture verses to support or correct the answer.

### **Keep the Discussion on the Main Theme of the Passage**

Satan is a master at getting people to divert their attention from the main truth. The discussion of Jesus with the Samaritan woman (John 4) is a good example of an attempt to divert Christ from addressing the woman's real needs. It is likely that good questions, even important ones, will arise out of the discussion. If they are not related to the main theme, then the leader should say something like the following: "Hien, that is a very interesting question. But since it is not really related to our theme tonight, we will save it until after the study to answer." Or, "Hien, your question is very important. It deserves a whole study itself. We will plan a study later on. Tonight we want to focus on our theme of this passage."

### **Do Not Forget to Ask the Application Questions**

The goal of the study is not just to gain knowledge about God's word, but to discover how to practically obey God's word. The leader should not be afraid to use rather direct questions that prompt people to action. Group members will not want to be like the man in James 1:22-24 who did not act on what he learned. The leader should help everyone be as specific as possible in application so he can look back after a week and see the progress he has made in the application of Scripture to his life.

### **Control the Participation of Those Who Talk Too Much or Too Little**

Most small groups will have a few people who are anxious to answer every question, the majority who will answer occasionally, and a couple of people who have to be really encouraged to participate. For those who always answer, the leader needs to say something like this: "Hien, we can always count on you for an answer. Let us hear what Tuan thinks about \_\_\_\_\_." For those who rarely participate, the leader can ask them to read the text or answer an easy observation question. As confidence builds, they can be encouraged to participate in other, more difficult interpretation and application questions.

### **At the End of the Study, the Leader Can Summarize What the Group Has Learned**

The leader should avoid adding new information which the group did not consider. Adding new information not only sets up the leader as the "expert," it also shows a lack of trust in the leading of the Holy Spirit to reveal what He wanted the group to discover. It is better to affirm what the group has learned and move on.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why is personal discovery of biblical truth necessary for Christian growth? Why is preaching alone not enough?
- What are the characteristics of a good discussion question?
- If your group comes to a wrong conclusion or does not understand a certain passage, is it better for you as the leader to explain the passage to them? Why or why not?

## ASSIGNMENT

1) Several sample Inductive Bible Studies follow this lesson. These samples may be used as a workshop to help you be more familiar with Group Inductive Bible Study. Your assignment is to pick one of the Inductive Bible studies and practice using it in a group.

The leader should not feel the need to ask every question, or ask only these questions. Be creative and flexible according to the situation. Normally you will need to come up with questions on your own to lead a study. This exercise will give you a feel for how the method works in a small group and also provide an example of the kinds of questions that work well in such an atmosphere.

2) Pick one passage from each of the lists below and prepare your own inductive Bible Study (not a group study) using the process you have learned about in this lesson.

<b>Evangelism</b>	<b>New life in Christ</b>	<b>Bible study</b>	<b>Christian fellowship</b>
Mark. 5:1-20	2Cor. 5:16-21	Duet. 17:18-20	1Thess. 5:11-15
1Peter 3:15-16	John 15:5-8	Ps. 1	Luke. 22:24-27
2Cor. 3:1-3	Gal 3:26-28	Luke 4:1-13	Heb. 10:24-25
Acts. 22:1-21	Rom. 8:1-11	Luke 4:14-21	Eph. 1:15-23
Acts. 4:1-20	Phil. 3:7-11	Josh. 1:7-9	Rom. 12:3-16
Acts. 18:24-28	Rom. 6:3-11	Prov 2:1-5	Acts 12:5-19
Mark. 16:9-20	Col. 3:1-4	Prov 4:20-22	Acts. 2:38-47

## **WORKSHEET: INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY ON MATTHEW 20:17-28**

**Introduction:** Begin the study by praying for God to remove other distractions from your mind, and allow you to focus on learning the truth of the passage so you can be a better Christian leader.

You may want to begin the discussion by saying something like “*There are many kinds of ‘leaders’ in the world, but Jesus presented a very different understanding of what it means to lead others. As we will see in Matthew 20:17-28, even His disciples had a difficult time grasping the implications of this new kind of Christian leadership.*”

Read the passage carefully and thoughtfully. One person can read it all, or you can divide the reading among the members of the study group.

### **I. Observation**

Our first task is to discover what the passage *says*. Look closely at the verses and answer the following questions:

- In what way might Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 19:27-28 have sparked James’ and John’s desire to rule in the kingdom?
- What is the main point of the Matthew 20:1-15 parable, as summarized by Jesus in verse 16?
- Where were the disciples and Jesus are going, and what was going to happen to Him there?
- What favor does Mrs. Zebedee ask of Jesus?
- How did the other disciples react to her request, and why?
- Who decides who sits where in the kingdom, and what are the criteria for this seating?
- How do these criteria differ from the world system (of the Gentiles)?

### **II. Interpretation**

Now we are ready to look at the *meaning* of this passage. Think carefully about the following questions as you refer back to your observations:

- How would you summarize the attitudes of Mrs. Zebedee and the disciples as they went to Jerusalem?
- What did they anticipate it would be like there (think about the meaning of "right hand and left hand")?
- What does this imply about their reasons for following Jesus?
- What did Jesus mean by "the cup?" (Note: we have the benefit of hindsight!)
- What did it involve in Jesus’ life, and how was it later fulfilled in the disciples’ lives? Is it a specific kind of service, an act, an attitude, or something else?
- Is it OK for me to desire to be honored in God’s kingdom? Was the problem that the disciples wanted to be honored, or that they wanted to be honored now rather than when Christ returns?
- What is the main principle of this passage?

### **III. Application**

Now you need to think about how this principle can be applied in your own life and ministry today. Think carefully about the following questions:

- What are my motives for serving Christ as a church planter? What do I hope to get out of it, and when?
- If my desire is to please Christ, how should my leadership differ from that of others around me? What specifically should I be doing in order to lead as a servant and to give my life for those Christ ransomed?

**Summary:** As the leader wraps up the Bible study he or she may want to say: “*As we have worked through this passage, we have a better understanding of Jesus’ approach to leadership. We also thought about what that means for us personally in our lives. Now is the time to begin to pray to God for help in living that kind of life. Specifically ask Him to help you in those areas where you now see that you have weaknesses or wrong motives.*”

## **WORKSHEET: INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY ON LUKE 15:1-7**

**Introduction:** Begin the study by asking God to help you understand how these verses should affect your life, and your ministry of church planting.

Consider asking a few reflective questions as you introduce the study: *“Have you ever lost something important? How did you feel? What did you do to try to find it? If you found it, how did you feel? In Luke 15, Jesus explained how He and His Father feel about God’s “lost” children.”*

Read, or have others read, the passage carefully and thoughtfully.

### **I. Observation**

Look closely at the passage and try to discover what it says by answering the following questions:

- What kind of people has Jesus been saying that we need to invite to come and associate with us and with the Lord (see earlier context 14:13, 23)?
- To whom was this parable addressed—the sinners or the religious Pharisees and teachers of the law (v. 3)? What do you know about this group?
- What was the complaint of the Pharisees and teachers of the law against Jesus?
- How many lost sheep are equal to how many sheep that are safe in the fold?
- What was the response of the shepherd to one lost sheep?
- What does Jesus say is the point of this parable (v. 7)?

### **II. Interpretation**

Now we need to think about what this story of lost sheep *means*. This is somewhat easier than usual, since Jesus stated the theme in verse 7. The following questions can help you think through the principle that He was teaching:

- Remember to whom Jesus addressed this parable. How would the idea of “rejoicing over one who repents” relate specifically to them? Why do you think Jesus chose to use a parable rather than just state the truth?
- Why do you think they needed to hear this parable? What should have been different in their lives?
- What is the principle of the passage?

### **III. Application**

We now need to decide how to apply this teaching to our own lives. Think carefully through the following questions to help you do that:

- Do you really believe that one lost sinner trusting Christ is more important than a church full of, say, 99 believers living righteous, holy and faithful lives? If so, what implications would that have for our ministry?
- How do I respond when someone associates with sinful people in order to win them to Christ? Can we do that and remain “holy?” Is it possible to build close relationships with unbelievers in order to live out our testimony before them (1Co 5:9-12)?
- How do I react when a ‘sinner’ repents, but has not yet ‘cleaned up his life’ so that he is as holy as I am? Do I rejoice with him and help him or her to grow, or do I condemn the things that are still not right in his or her life?

**Summary:** As the leader wraps up the Bible study he or she may want to say: *Throughout the history of the world, as recorded in the Scriptures, God has been seeking lost men to repent and return to Him. Christ left the glories of heaven and became a man in order to pay the price of our redemption and make our reconciliation to Him possible. He has left us with the command to fulfill the Great Commission by taking the message of the Gospel to everyone. What will be your contribution? What will be our contribution?*

## CELL GROUP MINISTRY

### Lesson 2 - Introducing Cell Group Ministry

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This is a course about Saturation Church Planting. We want what God wants – for every person to have an opportunity to receive Jesus Christ as Savior, and become a part of a fellowship with other believers. For new churches to start, it is necessary to evangelize, encourage new believers in their faith, and raise them up as leaders. As we will see in this lesson, cell groups are a strategic part of a church planting strategy which includes these elements of evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development.

#### I. WHAT IS A CELL GROUP?

What is a “cell” group? And why is it called a “cell group” and not a “small group” or “home group”? What are the main characteristics of cell groups? How do they differ from usual groups? What is their goal for existing? How do they function and what are their advantages?

To better understand a cell group, we can look at an example from biology. We understand that a living, growing organism consists of cells which are also alive. These cells grow and multiply on a regular basis. One cell divides into two, and from these two cells soon comes four, and from those four there are eight, and so on.

In the same way, the main characteristics of a cell group are that it is alive, it is growing, and it is able to multiply. This growth and multiplication is what distinguishes a cell group from other types of groups. Cell groups, in contrast to many other groups, understand that they exist to reach out, raise up new believers, and reproduce themselves by starting new cell groups, which in turn repeat this same process.

The main task of the Great Commission is to make disciples of all the nations. Cell groups can be used as a church planting strategy to help fulfill the Great Commission through:

- Evangelism
- Encouraging believers
- Raising up new leaders
- Multiplication

Though the term “cell” is not used, we see these kinds of groups in the New Testament Church. The book of Acts records how small groups met in homes in order to fellowship, grow in faith, and share the gospel with their friends and neighbors (Acts 2:42-47). These groups met together in big meetings for general worship, teaching, and evangelism.

#### II. FUNCTIONS OF CELL GROUPS

What happens in a cell group meeting? To help us find the answer, we need to clearly understand its functions. The functions of a cell group are the same as the functions of a local church fellowship. These functions may be expressed differently, but a cell group, like a healthy local church, will practice fellowship, worship, teaching and evangelism.

The following table describes four functions seen in the early church which are also a part of a modern day cell group. These four functions can be thought of as four relationships: to one another (fellowship) to God (worship) to truth (teaching) and to the world (outreach).

*Comparing the functions of New Testament churches to cell groups*

New Testament Church	Cell groups
<p><b>Fellowship</b> <i>Relating to each other</i></p> <p>The fellowship of believers was one of the main characteristics of the early Church (Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3,7). They taught and encouraged each other (Heb. 10:25; 1Thess. 5:11) and gathered together often (Acts 2: 46).</p>	<p>In cell groups, fellowship helps meet the needs of each person for love, acceptance, unity and support. It encourages openness and helps to deepen relationships in the group.</p>
<p><b>Worship</b> <i>Relating to God</i></p> <p>Prayer and praise are a recurring theme in the New Testament church (Acts 1:14, 2:47, 6:4; Col 4:2). Their worship came from hearts that were "glad and sincere." It was a natural response to God for the joy they had found in Christ.</p>	<p>In cell groups, worship reveals itself in singing, prayer, thanks and praise to God. It is a time to give God glory for what He has done and for who He is.</p>
<p><b>Teaching</b> <i>Relating to truth</i></p> <p>In the early Church a great deal of attention was given to the “ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4). The first believers “abided in the Apostles teaching” (Acts 2:42), and as the church grew, it was their custom to read the letters of the Apostles to the churches (Col. 4:16; Phil. 1:1; Gal. 1:2).</p>	<p>In cell groups, teaching from the Word of God provides a solid foundation in the lives of new believers, and helps them to grow in their faith and walk with Christ. Along with learning the truths of Scripture, there is also a strong emphasis on practical application of those truths in order to help people with their daily problems and difficulties. This process of learning and doing results in spiritual growth and maturity.</p>
<p><b>Outreach</b> <i>Relating to the world</i></p> <p>Sharing the good news of Jesus came naturally to the believers in the early church. Evangelism was not a "program" that they had to develop, nor was it something they had to be specially trained for – it was the love of Christ expressing itself through their lives and words to the people around them (Acts 4:20, 5:42).</p> <p>The first believers spoke about Christ “publicly from house to house” (Acts 20:20) under the leadership and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31). As a result, people begin to believe in the name of the Lord Jesus for receiving salvation (Acts 8:12; 16:31-34).</p>	<p>In cell groups, evangelism is reaching out with the good news of Christ’s love to people in need. This care and compassion is for both physical and spiritual needs. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, these people come to know God as a Father and Christ as their loving Savior.</p>

**Question 1: How are cell groups similar to the early church, and how are they different?**

### **III. ADVANTAGES OF USING CELL GROUPS AS A CHURCH PLANTING STRATEGY**

#### **Cells Provide An Effective Method For Evangelism**

Cell groups provide a natural bridge to non-believers. In a good cell group, meaningful relationships and warm fellowship are the norm. Non-believers find it much easier to come to a small, informal fellowship meeting with their believing friends, rather than to a church where they don't know anyone and aren't sure what to expect. When new people begin coming to a group, often the thing which speaks most to their heart is seeing how the members of the group care for each other. When the visitors begin to experience that love and care firsthand, they will be more attracted to the source of that love – Jesus himself. When a new person says “I have never in my life seen such people” or “I never in my life felt such love”, then you know that evangelism is happening the way the Lord intended (John 13:35).

#### **Cell Groups Preserve The Fruit Of Evangelism**

It is impossible to start a new church without evangelizing. It is, however, possible to evangelize and never succeed in planting a church. Many church planters use evangelism methods which clearly communicate the Gospel. However, these methods often result in conversion only, and do not help assimilate new believers into the body of Christ.

People come to Christ through a variety of methods. Some discover Christ through evangelistic media like gospel radio, film, or literature, and others through preaching on the street or in a crusade. We are thankful whenever people come to Christ, no matter what the method. Still, one of the concerns of using these methods is that many of the converts are not discipled and fail to become part of a local fellowship of believers. Sometimes Christians think that after an evangelistic outreach, it is “someone else's” job to disciple the new converts – the church, the pastor, etc. All too often, the new converts are not discipled by anyone, and they remain “babes” in Christ instead of growing in maturity.

By contrast, when people come to Christ through a cell group, there is a natural opportunity for ongoing discipleship and fellowship with other believers. Evangelism through the group is followed naturally by discipleship in that same group. The same people who lead new believers to Christ are available afterwards to help them grow in their newfound faith.

***Question 2: Someone once said that “evangelism is a process, not an event”. How can you explain this statement?***

#### **Cell Groups Focus On Relationships**

In a cell group, the members spend time together, participate in ministry together, encourage and pray for one another, and help each other with struggles and needs. There is strength and maturity in their love and devotion to God and to each other. They feel a sense of belonging, of being part of a community that cares for them. As the group members grow in their love for each other, there is something very special about the time they spend together in worship, expressing together the love they have for God.

A cell group also provides an ideal environment for the development of mentoring or discipling relationships. More mature believers are able to come alongside younger believers to encourage them, to teach them, and to do ministry together with them. Since one of the goals of a cell group is to grow and multiply itself, the members will continually be looking for ways to reach out to the lost around them. They will be able to share ideas with each other and to learn from each other different ways that they can share Christ with their family and friends. There is a commitment in a cell group to building relationships with unbelievers, in order to share with them the good news of Jesus.

#### **Cell Groups Result In New Churches**

There are many ways to start a church. Existing churches will sometimes start daughter churches. Some churches are started with the help of missionaries, sent by their church to another area. Some are started without

the help of an existing church. Starting a new church is a difficult task which is often hindered by the following obstacles:

- ineffective evangelism
- little or no discipleship of new and existing believers
- lack of finances
- lack of qualified leaders
- lack of vision to continually evangelize the lost

The cell group method, when applied to church planting, addresses the problems stated above. Cell groups provide a natural and effective way to evangelize, to disciple new believers and to develop new leaders.

Working in cell groups allows a greater number of people to be involved, giving them the opportunity to “own” the ministry and develop their spiritual gifts.

If the groups meet in peoples’ homes, there may never be a need for a formal church building. Eliminating this cost enables the church (which is comprised of one or more cell groups) to start new churches when the cell groups are ready, not when funds are available. In other words, lack of funds is not a hindrance to natural church growth and multiplication.

Cell groups provide the ability to develop a strategy whereby an entire neighborhood, town or country can be saturated with an effective witness for Christ. Without traditional barriers to growth (finances, leaders and vision), the cell groups can flourish, and the church can accomplish the task Christ gave in the Great Commission.

## **CONCLUSION**

Every cell group must function as a “microcosm” of Christianity. Worshipping God together in close fellowship leads each person in the group to love, support, and help each other share the good news with the lost around them. Cell groups are critical to the success of a church planting movement. They are the primary context for evangelism, discipleship and leadership development. Your excitement for and dedication to cell group ministry can largely impact your church planting success!

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What are the basic differences between cell groups and usual church groups?
- What are the four primary functions of a cell group?
- How can cell groups be used to help start a new church?
- Write down your understanding of cell groups and their advantages. How do you see the practical opportunity of using such advantages in your ministry?

## Lesson 3: Leading Cell Groups

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How do you lead a cell group? Are you prepared to guide people in fellowship, worship, Bible study and evangelism? Are you ready to train others to lead according to their gifts? You may not feel ready – but if God has called you to be involved in church planting, then you can be prepared to participate in leading a cell group meeting. In fact, it is actually quite simple!

There is no "correct" format for a cell group meeting. It is the responsibility of the leader to decide how the meetings will be organized and run. However, each meeting should include some time for each of the four functions of a cell group (fellowship, worship, teaching, and outreach).

The leader has the responsibility to help the group move naturally from activity to activity. Each of the four functions of the cell is vital to the growth and maturity of the members, so the leader must make sure that the group spends time in each. A cell group leader is responsible for the planning and direction of each of the cell meetings. As the cell grows and matures, the leader will be able to delegate various activities in the meeting to others in the group.

### I. FELLOWSHIP – RELATING TO ONE ANOTHER

The time spent in a cell group meeting should be informal and should feel natural. A cell group meeting does not have to “look and feel” like a traditional church service. Although cells can fulfill the functions of a local church, the forms are designed to appeal to non-believers or recent converts.

The fellowship time gives an opportunity for group members to get to know what is going on in each others’ lives, to support each other, to share their joys and sorrows, and to help with advice. If new people come to the group, it is a good idea to take some time to ask questions or do an activity which will help them get to know others in the group. In addition to the following questions, see “Cell Group Appendix: Ice Breakers” to find ways to help people become better acquainted with each other:

#### Typical questions to stimulate fellowship in a cell group meeting

- Which person do you respect the most?
- What would you like to do in the next five years if there were no barriers to those dreams?
- Who knows the most about you, and why?
- Who was the first person who really understood you?
- What makes a person a good listener?
- What do you value the most in relationships with others?

***Question 1: What types of questions would be appropriate for a visitor, and what types would be inappropriate? How can you tell?***

### II. WORSHIP – RELATING TO GOD

Worship helps a person focus on God, so that God can speak to him. The worship time in a cell group meeting is an ideal time to praise God because of His work in the lives of the members. If a member of the group has musical ability, then the worship time may include some great singing. If there are no musicians, then it is important to remember that God is pleased with the praises that come from a pure heart, even if the songs are a little off-tune. Prayer and praise are also a natural part of worship. The following questions can be used to help people express praise to God.

### Typical questions to stimulate worship

- When did you first realize that God loved you?
- What is your strongest conviction about the nature of God?
- (for believers) How did you come to know Christ as your savior? (Give a personal testimony)
- How has God been gracious this past week?
- How has God been powerful this past week?

**Question 2: Besides prayer and singing, what other forms of worship could happen in your cell group?**

### III. TEACHING - RELATING TO TRUTH

Why study the Bible? According to 2 Tim 3:16 the Bible has the following uses:

- Teaching: the Bible tells us what we must know.
- Reproof: the Bible tells us what we must avoid and stop doing.
- Correction: the Bible tells us what we must do differently.
- Instruction in Righteousness: the Bible tells us how we must grow.

How do you teach the Bible to a group of people who have various levels of understanding and spiritual maturity? In this course, we are encouraging you to develop your skills in teaching the Bible through two methods. One method is the Chronological Bible Storying method and the other is Inductive Bible study method. Feel free to use one method or the other – or combination of the two - in teaching the Bible in a cell group. Whatever method you use, it should focus on discovering and applying truth. The method should stimulate discussion – not be a lecture from the leader. Remember as well that the study should be at the level of the group members. The following questions, or questions like them, can be used to lead the group to discovering God's truth.

#### Questions for studying the Bible

*Observation – what is it about?*

- Who is involved in the event?
- What is happening? What is the main idea? What is the result? What is the goal?
- Where did this take place?
- When did it take place?
- Why did it take place?
- How did it happen?

*Interpretation – what does it mean?*

- What does it mean for the person involved in the event?
- What does it mean now?
- What is the main idea?
- What place does this passage play in the chapter/book?
- What do other passages in the Bible say that could shed light on this?

*Application - what must I do now?*

- Is there a sin to confess and repent of?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there a command to obey?

- Is there a condition to meet?
- Is there a challenge to face?
- Is there a doubt I must recognize in myself?
- Is there a way I have not believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior – i.e., that he is all the righteousness I need?

*Discussion – general questions*

- What did you understand in the passage?
- What do you remember the most from the passage?
- What is the main idea in the passage?
- What must you do now that you know what is written in the passage?

The following passages can be used for preparing Bible studies based on some of the basic teachings of the Christian life:

<b>Authority of Scriptures</b> Rev. 1:1-3 Luke. 24:27-48 Ps. 118:94-118 Ps. 118:159-168 2Peter 1:19-21 1Peter 1:24-25 2Tim. 3:14-17	<b>Evangelism</b> Mark. 5:1-20 1Peter 3:15-16 2Cor. 3:1-3 Acts. 22:1-21 Acts. 4:1-20 Acts. 18:24-28 Mark. 16:9-20	<b>Forgiveness</b> Gen. 45:4-15 Ps. 102:2-18 Matt. 6:12-15 Luke. 15:11-32 Eph. 4:31-32 Mark. 11:24-26 Matt. 18:21-35
<b>Prayer</b> Ps. 54 Matt. 26:36-44 Matt 6:5-13 Matt 5:44-48 James 5:13-18 Mark 11:20-26 Rom. 8:26-28	<b>Sacrifice</b> 2Cor. 8:1-5 2Cor. 9:6-11 Mark10:17-23 1John. 3:16-18 Mark 4:24-25 Matt 6:1-4 1Cor. 16:1-2	<b>New life in Christ</b> 2Cor. 5:16-21 John 15:5-8 Gal 3:26-28 Rom. 8:1-11 Phil. 3:7-11 Rom. 6:3-11 Col. 3:1-4
<b>Bible study</b> Duet. 17:18-20 Ps. 1 Luke 4:1-13 Luke 4:14-21 Josh. 1:7-9 Prov 2:1-5 Prov 4:20-22	<b>Temptation</b> Rom. 6:1-14 Luke 4:1-13 Heb 2:17-18 1Cor. 10:13 Gal 6:1-11 Rev. 3:7-11 James. 1:12-15	<b>Self-discipline</b> Prov. 6:6-11 1Peter 1:13-16 John 14:21 Rom. 12:1-3 Col. 3:15-17 James 1:19-25 Luke 6:47-49
<b>God's will</b> Phil. 4:6,7 Prov 3:5,6 Prov. 16 Eccl. 2:1-26 Matt. 4:18-23 Luke. 22:39-42 James. 4:1-10	<b>Repentance</b> Luke. 5:29-32 Luke. 13:1-9 2Peter 3:8-9 Ex. 1:10-20 1John. 1:8-10 Acts. 26:20 Jonah 3:1-10	<b>Christian fellowship</b> 1Thess. 5:11-15 Luke. 22:24-27 Heb. 10:24-25 Eph. 1:15-23 Rom. 12:3-16 Acts 12:5-19 Acts. 2:38-47

#### IV. OUTREACH – RELATING TO THE WORLD

The group must prioritize evangelism and outreach to non-believers. This can be done through studying passages of the Bible which clearly explain the gospel. Additionally, members should be encouraged to share their faith with their non-believing friends and neighbors. The body life of the group is also a testimony of the

gospel. The leader can help group members understand how important it is that each contribute to the good of the group.

This is an excellent time to share testimonies about how God is working in and through the lives of the cell group members to reach out with the love of Christ. It is also a time when the cell group leader can remind the group of both the need for and expectation of multiplication – that is, starting new cell groups in the future.

“Prayer triplets” are groups of three people who pray about the salvation of three friends or acquaintances of each person (which means they will pray for a total of nine people). Another variation might be to pray in groups of two which might help a new Christian gain confidence in praying aloud in groups. These prayer triplets can also share other personal requests for prayer.

#### **Typical questions to encourage outreach**

- When people look at your life, do they see Christ in you?
- What can I do to share Christ in a natural way with my friends and relatives?
- What can I do to develop more sincere relationships with non-believers (to win them to Christ)?
- What are the biggest needs of our society?
- What do you feel are the greatest injustices in our society?
- What can we do as a group to help solve these needs and/or injustices?

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Why are good questions such an important part of leading a cell group meeting?
- For you personally, which part of a cell group meeting seems most difficult to lead?
- Besides asking questions, what other type of activities can be used to help the members of a cell group get to know each other better?

## **CELL GROUP APPENDIX: ICE-BREAKERS**

"Ice Breakers" are fun, non-threatening ways to get to know people better. These are often used during the fellowship time of a new cell group. Some notes:

- An icebreaker must be appropriate for the cell group. If it's too childish, people will not feel comfortable. If it's too threatening, people will draw back.
- Make it clear that everybody is expected to participate.
- Some icebreakers can be used many times.
- Be sensitive to people who might become uncomfortable with the game or activity.
- Icebreakers become shorter and less important as the group becomes tightly knit over the course of the cell group life cycle. You might spend half the time on an icebreaker the first two meetings, but you only need to spend 10 or 15 minutes after a few months.

### **Opening Questions**

When you were between the ages of 7 – 12....

1. Where did you live? How many brothers and sisters did you have?
2. What kind of transportation did your family use?
3. Who was the person you felt closest to?
4. When did God become more than a word to you?

### **Who Am I?**

Write the names of famous and/or Bible characters on slips of paper. Tape them on everyone's back. The person cannot read his or her own slip. They are to go around the room asking one question at a time about who they are until they guess who they are.

### **I'll Bet You Don't Know This**

Each person in the group writes down on a blank piece of paper something that he/she thinks that nobody in the group would know about him/herself. The pieces of paper are folded, mixed well, and numbered consecutively. Then a designated person starts to read them, saying the number first. Each member of the group begins to compile a list of people that they feel best matches the number of each clue. After the last clue is read, the person with the most correct matches wins.

### **Coin Game**

If you have new people in your meeting sometime, you might keep the Coin Game in mind for an icebreaker. Give everyone ten coins. Each person must name one thing about himself/herself that is different from everyone else. (For example, an adventurous group member might say, "I have climbed Pikes Peak.") The speaker puts a coin in the middle. If another player has also climbed Pikes Peak, he/she can put in a coin as well. The first person to get rid of all his/her coins wins.

### **Team Charades**

For this activity you need two teams and two rooms. Divide the group into two teams. Team A thinks up some sort of motion or activity for Team B to act out (e.g. eating breakfast) without using any words. Team A tells only one person (we'll call her "Laura") from Team B what the activity is, and Laura is not allowed to tell anyone else on her team. Team B waits in the first room, while Laura takes one other person from her team (we'll call him "Michael") into the second room. In the second room, Team A watches while Laura acts out the activity for Michael (remember, no words!) Then Laura returns to the first room and sends in someone else from Team B. Michael then acts out the activity for the next person, and Michael returns to the first room and sends in someone else from his team. This process is repeated, until the last person from Team B watches the

activity. This last person then must guess what the activity is. The teams then switch roles and Team B thinks up an activity for Team A to act out.

### **Answers and Authors**

On pieces of paper, write down four or five non-threatening questions that might reveal something about a person (e.g. What's your favorite possession? What do you wish you could do that you can't do now? What's your ideal vacation?) People should answer all of them, or at least three, but instruct them not to put their names on the sheet. The leader then collects the sheets and reads out the answers, and everyone tries to guess who gave those answers.

### **All My Neighbors**

Everyone begins by sitting in chairs arranged in a circle, except one person who begins by standing in the middle. The person in the middle needs to find some "neighbors." To do this, he needs to make a true statement about himself, which hopefully will also be true about his neighbors (e.g. "All my neighbors play the piano"). Every person who can also truthfully say this statement must stand up and find a new seat. He cannot return to the seat where he was sitting. The person in the middle is also looking for a chair, so each time there will be one person who remains in the middle without a seat. He or she must then make a true statement and look for some "neighbors" for whom this statement is also true.

### **Group Discussions**

Below is a series of quite a few questions that can be used during the fellowship time. Note that some of these questions are appropriate for new groups, and some questions are better suited for groups in which the members already know each other a little. Normally, only one question will be used in each cell group meeting.

1. What was the happiest moment in your life?
2. What was the greatest compliment you ever received?
3. Who is your best earthly friend? Describe him or her.
4. What is the one thing you want to accomplish next week?
5. Where did you feel warmest and safest as a child?
6. If you had a time machine that would work only once, what point in the future or in history would you visit?
7. When was the last time you did something for the first time?
8. If you could take a pill that would enable you to live until you reach 1,000 years, would you do it? Why?
9. Would you like to know the exact date of your death?
10. Who is your favorite relative? Why?
11. Who did God use to bring you to the point where you knew you needed Jesus?
12. If you could change places with a Bible character, whom would you choose? Why?
13. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
14. Imagine your house is on fire and you only have time to take one possession with you (your family is all safe). What would you take?
15. Who has had the greatest influence on your life since we last gathered?
16. Recall a time when you failed recently.
17. Name someone you admire who had to overcome great obstacles to get where they are now.
18. What is your favorite time of day?
19. What was your greatest disappointment in life?
20. What gift (apart from your conversion) will you never forget?
21. What gift (spiritual, emotional, mental, etc.) do you believe you are bringing to this meeting? In other words, what do you think you are bringing that might contribute to the encouragement of others?
22. What was a significant experience in your life that changed your value system completely?

23. What are some of your goals for the year ahead?
24. If you became the leader of any country in the world, which would it be and why?
25. What were the best and worst experiences of your week?
26. If you could take a free two-week trip to any place in the world, where would it be and why?
27. If you could talk to any one person now living, who would it be and why?
28. Tell the cell group three things you appreciate about your family and three ways in which you find them difficult at times.
29. Who is the best friend you have at this point in your life?
30. What is your occupation? What do you enjoy about it?
31. What do you think delights God above everything else in your life?
32. What made you decide to attend this church/cell group?
33. What is your most embarrassing experience?
34. How would your life be different if you knew Jesus was returning in one week?
35. Who is the most interesting person you have met?
36. What is your favorite holiday spot and why do you enjoy it?
37. How do you relax?
38. What is your favorite type of music/song, etc.?
39. If you could not fail, what would you like to do?
40. What do you want written on your tombstone?
41. What do you want said at your funeral? What don't you want said at your funeral?
42. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about God?
43. What are the biggest questions that you have about your relationship with God?

## **Lesson 4: Preparing to Start a New Cell Group**

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### **I. FORM A PRAYER SUPPORT TEAM**

The most important step in starting a new cell group is prayer. The leader of the group should recruit a team of intercessors which will regularly lift up this new group to God. It can be people from a local church, friends and members of the family, or Christians from other churches in the area where the new group is will be formed.

Pray for God's clear leading and ask for wisdom concerning timing, location, etc. Pray for revival in the hearts of existing believers in the target area. Pray for each new cell group that is to be started. Satan will try to attack a new cell group church being started. Paul, in his ministry of church planting, specifically requested intercessory prayer (Eph 6:19, 1Th 5:25, Rom 15:30). The church planter must be a person of prayer, and must be surrounded by prayer.

### **II. FORM A LEADERSHIP TEAM**

Although you can start a cell group alone, a significantly better way is to have a team of leaders made up of two to four people. A leadership team can more effectively do the research, evangelism and initial startup of the cell group. In addition, they are able to pray for one another, to hold each other accountable and to disciple the new believers who are brought into the group. Jesus Himself modeled this when He sent out the seventy disciples in pairs for their first ministry experience (Lk 10:1). One person from the leadership team should be chosen to be the primary leader of the new cell group.

### **III. FIND CONTACTS**

Based on the research you did in Book 1, think about your target group and the felt needs which they have. Pray about how your group can start to help with these needs. Pray that God would show you some key people in your target area. These are the people who are influential in their community, and who have vision, ambition and energy. Often, key people are already in some type of leadership position. They have the potential as Christians to be powerful witnesses in the lives of the many people with whom they have relationships.

If your target area is where you already live, the process of bringing family, friends, and acquaintances to your group will not be so hard. You already have some sort of relationship with these people. Pray that God would use these relationships in order to give you an opportunity to invite them to the cell group.

#### **Exercise: Discovering Contacts**

Take a few minutes to write a list on paper of all the people in which you regularly see during a week or a month. Write one name on each line. Limit the list to 20 people. If you have more, choose those people who have a closer relationship with you.

Keep an eye on your list. After each name put a check by those who are already believers. After that, make a check by those who are not saved, but seem to be open to discussing spiritual things, study the Bible and seek God's will for their life. After their name put a letter A.

Look at the other names. If there are people who are not interested in spiritual things or studying the Bible, or want a life for God, put a letter B behind their name.

Save this list. People who have a check by their name are those who can help you start a cell group. Of the people who have a letter A after their name, you can begin to pray for them about inviting them to your group. The letter B after the name means that you need to keep praying for more opportunities to develop a relationship with that person.

You might be surprised to see that there are few unbelievers on your list. Most Christians have very few non-Christian acquaintances. Usually it is new Christians who have the most relationships with unsaved people.

When a person has been a Christian for a while, he tends to stop spending as much time with non-Christian friends.

***Question 1: Who else besides yourself would benefit from working through the “Discovering Contact” exercise?***

If your target area is not your immediate neighborhood, then the process of developing relationships is slower. You must first get to know those whom you would invite, and begin developing relationships with them. Spend time with them, look for ways to serve them and help them. Be "salt and light" to them even before you start the group. No matter who your target group is, begin praying for their salvation even while you are developing relationships with them. If in your target area is a specific social or ethnic group, you might have to start a special cell group with them in mind. Begin with one segment of the population and have a plan to start other cell groups to eventually reach all the people groups in your target area.

Even if your target area has no churches and no Christians, the process is the same. Get to know people in your target group, spend time with them, learn about them, and try to serve them and demonstrate through your words and actions the love of God. If you are involved in this type of pioneering work, make it a priority to spend time in prayer to break down spiritual strongholds. Expect a lot of resistance from Satan, who will not easily give up an area that has no Christian witness.

#### **IV. CHOOSE THE LOCATION**

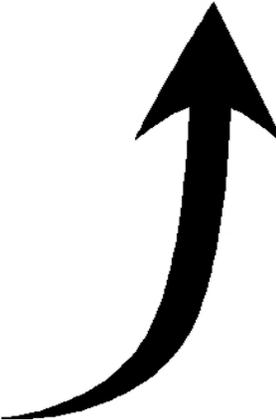
The most natural location for your cell group to meet initially is at your home or apartment. If this is not possible, the second choice would be the home of someone on the leadership team. The next choice would be the home of someone with whom you are developing a relationship. If this is your only option, pray first about approaching them with your request.

Try to avoid a location where you have to pay rent. It's an unwanted expense for the cell group, and can cause many problems. Decisions about rent money can quickly become the main focus of the meetings, and visitors may feel pressured to help financially. This could cause them to stop coming to future cell meetings.

#### **V. PLAN THE CELL GROUP MEETING**

There isn't one "right" way to lead a cell group meeting. The organization and leading of a group is decided by the leaders. However, a typical cell group meeting can take place in the following way: the beginning of the meeting is a time for fellowship, exchanging news and greeting one another. This is followed by a time of worship, which includes praying, singing, and praising God. After worship is time for inductive Bible study or chronological Bible storying, and the final phase is a time to discuss ministry plans and pray about how to personally and corporately evangelize friends, neighbors, and other groups of people in the target area. Time can also be spent in prayer for specific people who are not yet coming to the group.

**Sample plan of a cell group meeting**

Fellowship	Worship	Teaching	Outreach
Person to person	Person to God	God to person	Children of God to the world
“inward”	“upward”	“downward”	“Outward”
 <p>Possible types of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Play games together</li> <li>- Eat a meal together</li> <li>- Get to know each other better</li> <li>- Encourage each other</li> <li>- Share joys with each other</li> <li>- Share problems with each other</li> <li>- Pray for one another</li> </ul>	 <p>Possible types of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sing songs</li> <li>- Thank God for His greatness</li> <li>- Thank God for answers to prayer</li> <li>- Worship God</li> <li>- Pray out loud or quietly</li> <li>- Read a passage of worship (from the Psalms, for example)</li> <li>- Read Christian poems</li> </ul>	 <p>Possible types of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Study Bible passages inductively as a group</li> <li>- Learn and repeat chronological Bible stories</li> <li>- Help the leader with some aspect of the cell group meeting</li> <li>- Discover and use your spiritual gifts</li> <li>- Memorize verses</li> </ul>	 <p>Possible types of activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pray in groups of three for 3 unsaved friends</li> <li>- Plan to invite non-believers to the group</li> <li>- Plan to meet the general needs of people in the target area</li> <li>- Decide how to invest in friendships with non-believers</li> <li>- Determine to share the Gospel with non-believers</li> </ul>

End the meetings with prayer. Don't be too quick to head home! Often visitors will be more comfortable “after the meeting”, and this can be a great time to interact with them on a deeper level.

**Question 2: What are some other activities you can think of for each of the four phases of a cell group meeting in your target area?**

## VI. CELL GROUP PLANNING SHEET

The leader is responsible for planning and running each meeting. In order to help with the spiritual growth of the members, several group members can also participate in leading the meetings. The cell group leader is normally responsible for starting and ending the meetings, and for moving from one part of the meeting to the other. Additionally, there should be a person who is responsible for preparing the location, setting up the chairs (preferably in a circle, so that everyone can see and interact with each other). It is his responsibility to be the host and provide hospitality for the guests, or to delegate this responsibility to someone else in the group.

The following worksheet will help you think about the various aspects of each cell group meeting:

Date and time of meeting:	
Location and host:	
<b>Fellowship: Getting to know each other</b>	
Encouragement and prayer:	
Activities, games:	
<b>Worship: Giving glory to God</b>	
Song leader:	
Prayer:	
Other activities:	
<b>Teaching: Discussing the Bible</b>	
Bible study leader:	
Bible passage:	
<b>Outreach: Vision for ministry</b>	
Time for sharing testimonies:	
Action for the whole group:	
Individual action:	

After the guests leave, take time with the leadership team to discuss how the evening went, what went well and what needs to be better. It's best to do this as soon as possible after the meeting so that impressions are fresh. Write the suggestions down so that changes can be put into place.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What main points would you include in a plan for starting a new cell group?
- What would you say to a believer who is a member of your cell group but is afraid to open the door of his home to a stranger?
- Should the leader of a cell group eventually delegate his responsibilities to all the group members or only to one assistant? Why?

### ASSIGNMENT

Review the three cell group lessons in this manual. Develop a prayer support team, a leadership team (if possible), and determine your target area for your church plant (if you haven't already). After a time of prayer

and seeking the Lord, start a cell group in your target area. Remember that a cell group meeting is not a church service – it is a time for you to get to know people in the region, develop relationships with them, and over the course of time to naturally share what Jesus has done in your life. You will need to do some planning ahead of time so that the meeting runs smoothly, and so that the atmosphere is relaxed and informal. Decide how often the group would like to meet, where it will meet, etc. Be ready to share at the next training session about your progress, and bring any questions you might have with you for discussion.

## SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

### Lesson 5: Understanding and Overcoming Sin

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A believers relationship with God is built solely upon Christ's forgiveness and perfect righteousness given to us by faith. This truth should enable us to defeat the sin in our lives, resulting in profound personal transformation. Yet many believers still struggle with sin and sometimes wonder how to be transformed. This can even be true for those involved in church planting.

Why do believers still struggle with sin? And, what can be done about it? How can we find victory over sin? How can we help others do the same? In this lesson we will take a serious look at these questions. Looking deeply at your own struggles may lead you to feel somewhat uncomfortable. But do not despair. We will also explore the solution to the sin struggle which is found in Jesus Christ!

#### I. SIN - NOT JUST A SURFACE ISSUE

##### What is sin?

Is it a matter of poor behavior, disobedience, or outward rebellion? Of course, sin includes all of these, but it is much deeper. **Sin is any behavior, belief or attitude that does not conform to God's will.** It is not only a matter of behavior. Wrong behavior is merely the outward manifestation of the sin in our lives. As we grow in holiness we should become more aware of existing and deep-rooted sin, which should lead us to greater dependence upon and gratitude toward our Savior. Our battle with sin is a slow but definite victory, only completed with our glorification.

**Question 1: Read Galatians 5:19-21 and Colossians 3:5-9. Write down all the sins listed in these passages.**

Note that in these passages sin is not simply a matter of behavior. These lists point mostly to heart conditions as well as isolated actions. In order to gain victory over sin, it is vital that we understand the root of it.

##### The sin nature

In writing many of the New Testament letters, the Apostle Paul often used the Greek term *sarks* (flesh) to refer to the sinful nature. The flesh, or sinful nature, is "the fallen human personality apart from the renewing influence and control of the Holy Spirit." The sinful nature's desire "is toward independence from God, his truth and his will, as if man himself were God". The sinful nature behaves like an allergic reaction to God, or like a centrifugal force pushing us away from Christ as the center of our universe. Indeed mankind is plagued by such a nature. The implication of this truth is simple and yet profound: **people are not sinners because they sin; people sin because they are sinners.**

**Question 2: Read Jer. 17:9, Mt. 15:19, Rom. 7:15-24, Heb 3:13. What do these passages say about our sinful nature? How extensive is the influence of sin in our lives?**

The sinful nature remains an influence on us throughout our whole earthly life. The great Apostle Paul wrote Romans 7 (which you just read a portion of) after he had been a Christian for many years. Paul continued to experience a great struggle in his life. He strove for change, for a life that would bring glory to God. He knew what was good, right, and proper. Yet at the same time, he felt an inclination towards evil, and it troubled him.

This was not simply a topic for intellectual discussion. Paul, one of the greatest thinkers in history, says in verse 15, *"I do not understand what I do"*.

The struggle with sin that Paul describes in Romans chapter 7 shows us how powerful and widespread the sinful nature is in the life of a Christian. The sinful nature, the flesh, comes with many faces, so that we are not always aware of it. Our pride, arrogance, lust, envy, and anger are all parts of the sinful nature. To understand the sinful nature, we must understand the root of sin itself.

**Question 3: What do you think the root of sin is?**

## II. SIN PATTERNS

In many ways, everything concerning all sin is rooted in the same fundamental problem: a self-reliant independence from God. Wanting independence from God creates insecurity in our hearts. We compensate for this by becoming selfish and self-centered in all kinds of ways.

There are three basic sinful patterns which commonly keep people from enjoying fellowship with God:

	<b>Pride/legalism</b> (Self-righteousness)	<b>Sensuality/license</b> (Self-indulgence)	<b>Unbelief</b> (Self-pity)
How Independence from God is expressed	<i>"I have to make myself worthy"</i> Independence from God leads this person to total self-effort.	<i>"I have to make myself happy"</i> Independence from God leads this person to reckless indulgence.	<i>"I have to make myself acceptable"</i> Independence from God leads this person to doubt and depression.
How the person feels inwardly	<i>"It feels good to be right and to be better than others. I despair when my goodness is undermined, when I am exposed as a fraud."</i>	<i>"I am fun and I make sure I have fun! It feels great to have my desires met. I despair when my family or my body is harmed by my indulgence."</i>	<i>"My suffering is noble and impresses others. It feels right to be sad and good to have others feel sorry for me. I despair when I fail again ... and again."</i>
Sinful habits	Gossip, anger, criticism, fighting, boasting.	Gluttony, drunkenness, impurity, gambling, drugs, and laziness.	Depression, gloominess, despair, and self-contempt.
Relationship to others	Impresses others to get their praise or criticizes them to make themselves feel superior.	Selfishly uses other people for pleasure, e.g., sexual lust. Avoids meaningful relationships.	Blames others for their struggles. Cannot trust others.

Most people will identify in some way with one of these three patterns. However, note that these three patterns are generalizations, and in reality there is often a lot of overlap between them. A person full of pride may not appear so on the outside. Another person may be legalistic, but his laws may not be the Christian ones others expect. Likewise, a sensual person may not struggle with sexual lust and one who struggles with unbelief may not look sad or depressed outwardly.

**Question 4: Review the sins listed in Galatians 5:19-21 and Colossians 3:5-9 (see question 1). What are the roots of the sins in the list? Is it pride, sensuality, unbelief?**

**Question 5: Which of the three sin patterns described in the table do you struggle most with? Explain your answer.**

**Question 6: Think of a recent conflict in your life. Using the table above, describe the sin pattern that was at work in your heart that contributed to the conflict.**

### **III. THE GRACE OF GOD AND SIN**

We have taken a serious look at sin. We have seen that sin is extensive and powerful. It influences our lives in ways we cannot even see. It destroys the quality of our life in ways that we do not even know. Sin is bad, but it has been said that the worst sin you can commit is to fail to believe the fact that *God really loves you*. He loves you not because your sinfulness is OK, but because of what Jesus has done. Sin is no match for what God did on our behalf through Jesus! Paul came to see this in Romans 7:24-25.

**Question 7: What two truths does Paul describe side by side in Romans 7:24-25. Can these truths be separated?**

When we admit our sin as Paul does in Romans 7, we see how powerful and precious the grace of God is. Your Heavenly Father rejoices over you with gladness (Zeph. 3:17) and is disciplining you for your own good (Heb. 12:5-11). As His son/daughter you have His Spirit living in your heart (Gal. 4:6). It is this Spirit who fights against sin in your life. However, your relationship with Him can be affected by sin (Eph. 4:30). You may disturb this relationship for some time by such sins as anger or gossip. When this happens, you are ignoring the conviction of the Holy Spirit, which grieves Him. As you turn from your sin, the Spirit continues to work in your life to transform you more and more into the image of Christ.

### **IV. THE POWER NOT TO SIN**

We often fight against the temptation to sin through self-discipline and rules. But the real corrective for sin is related to the inner transformation of the believer. In Romans 6, we learn of the new freedom we have from the power of sin. This is a vital part of victorious Christian living. In our salvation, God has provided the solution to our two most fundamental problems: He has delivered us from the penalty of sin, and He has delivered us from the power of sin, so that we might live in true freedom to love Him.

**Question 8: Read Romans 6. How did we die to sin?**

Three times in this passage Paul has commanded us to “know” this truth (vv. 3, 6, 9). The truth that he wants us to understand is what has happened to us in Christ. In verse 11, Paul concludes, “*In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*” In this verse, the Greek word *logizomai*, “count,” was a mathematical term used when someone was calculating a problem or counting numbers. It is used figuratively in this passage to fully affirm the truths that are taught here. We are being exhorted by Paul to put our

confidence in and fully believe this fundamental truth about us. The “old man” no longer lives within us. He was a slave to sin, but was crucified when we were united with Christ in His death and resurrection, and we are now transformed into new men and women. We now must affirm and believe that we have been made alive in Christ and that we have been made new creatures inside. Since we are united with Christ, we died and were resurrected with Him. His victory over sin was our victory over sin. Sin is no longer our master. But this great Christian reality does not mean that sin no longer seeks to enslave us. Sin is not our master, even though it is always striving to regain its authority and power over us.

Our Christian life is a life in which we walk by faith in this truth. Even though we don't perfectly experience this all the time, it does not change the reality of what has happened. We must continue every day to repent of our sin and believe that we are one with Christ, and that we now live in union with Him.

You might be thinking, “I believe that I am in Christ, but I still struggle with sin. How can I beat it?” No list of rules or self-discipline alone can lead to a victorious Christian life. We can try and try in the power of the flesh and we will eventually fail because our flesh is prone to sin. The real corrective for sin is related to the inner transformation of the believer. We fight sin by strengthening our awareness of who we are in Christ. Remember that the real corrective for sin is related to the inner transformation of the believer because of all that Jesus has done for us. When one totally depends on Jesus he cannot at the same time depend on himself. In doing so he is cutting out the root cause of sin – self-reliance.

### **Understand the New Nature**

There's a Greek word used many, many times throughout the New Testament as a source of sin in the believer's life. It's the word flesh. What is the flesh? It's the part of our mind, emotions and will that has been conditioned or trained to sin. Habits and patterns of thinking are passed on to us by the world, by ungodly influences, and by Satan's direct attacks. Our worldly experiences programmed our brains to live independent from God and according to the world's ways.

When you became a Christian, you didn't add a divine nature to your old sinful nature. You exchanged natures—you became a new creation (2Co 5:17). You were transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, when you became a child of God. *“Our old self (old nature) was crucified with him”* (Ro. 6:6). The old nature is powerless and should be considered as such (Ro. 6.11)

### **Live in the Spirit**

Romans 8:5-7 contrasts those who live according to the flesh with those who live according to the Spirit. There you find that it's the mind that is set on either the flesh or the Spirit. Your flesh, which was trained by the world, generates worldly thoughts and ideas leading you to sin. As believers, we are no longer to be in the flesh, but in the Spirit (Ro 8:9, Gal 5:16). But it's possible for us to walk according to the flesh (Ro 8:12,13). Unbelievers have no choice – they walk in the flesh because they live in the flesh. But we are not obligated to the flesh – we have a choice. We must learn and choose to walk by the Spirit, not the flesh. As Paul says: “live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Gal 5:16).

### **Renew Your Mind**

Many sinful patterns begin with a bad thought life. Sinful patterns of thinking must be “transformed by the renewing of the mind” (Ro 12:2). The mind is the focus of the battle against sin. 2 Corinthians 11:3 indicates that just as Eve was deceived by Satan, our minds can be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Satan influenced the minds of David, Solomon, Ananias, the Christians in Corinth, and he can influence your mind as well. He can bring his thoughts into your mind and deceive you into thinking they are your thoughts, or even God's thoughts. But we “take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ” (2Co 10:5).

### **Know the Truth**

Where is sin's power? Satan, according to John 8:44, “is a liar and the father of lies.” When we are tempted to sin there is always a lie behind it. But Jesus says in the same chapter, “and you shall know the truth, and the

truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:32). Our defense against sin is the truth. By knowing our true, victorious identity as believers in Christ, we find freedom from the power of sin.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Gospel is the foundation of our relationship with God. From God's perspective, our relationship is built solely upon Christ's forgiveness and perfect righteousness given to us by faith. This truth enables us to be honest about our sin before God, and the assurance of His abundant grace toward us. It inspires us to live as righteous ones not because we have made ourselves righteous, but because that is what God, by His grace, has declared us to be.

What is truly important concerning victory over sin is a growing, dynamic faith in Christ, a faith that is founded on Christ's accomplishments on the cross, so that His power mightily works in us revealing sins and weaknesses more clearly. This faith understands and appreciates the grace of God more deeply and leads us to know God more intimately.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Why is it wrong to define sin as merely a matter of behavior?
- What is the nature of sin?
- What has happened to your sinful nature according to Romans 6?
- When fighting against sin, which brings more power into your life: trying harder or believing more?
- Where is the battle for sin in our lives? How does "taking every thought captive" affect the influence which sin has on us?
- What have you learned in this lesson about your sin that you never realized before?

## **ASSIGNMENT: "THE TONGUE ASSIGNMENT"**

### **For one week do not:**

- Gossip (do not speak badly about others)
- Complain
- Criticize
- Boast
- Blame or accuse others of wrong (do not transfer the fault to others)
- Defend yourself
- Deceive others

As you do these things, keep a short journal noting what this experience teaches you.

## **SOURCES**

- Lovelace, pages 89-90
- Sonship, Key Concepts
- Some concepts adapted from Gospel Transformation, Leaders Guide, p 65.

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# MONTH 6

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## Review of Month 5

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By now you have begun working on a strategy for gathering believers and seekers into cell groups. This is a major step in your church planting ministry. We trust you have been applying what you have learned in your ministry.

The main emphasis of last month’s training was on Cell Group ministry. You were asked to do the following things. These assignments are repeated here to provide an opportunity for review with your mentor if you have not done such a review already.

From Lesson 1: “Group Inductive Bible Study”:

1) Several sample Inductive Bible Studies follow this lesson. These samples may be used as a workshop to help you be more familiar with Group Inductive Bible Study. Your assignment is to pick one of the Inductive Bible studies and practice using it in a group.

The leader should not feel the need to ask every question, or ask only these questions. Be creative and flexible according to the situation. Normally you will need to come up with questions on your own to lead a study. This exercise will give you a feel for how the method works in a small group and also provide an example of the kinds of questions that work well in such an atmosphere.

2) Pick one passage from each of the lists below and prepare your own inductive Bible Study (not a group study) using the process you have learned about in this lesson.

<b>Evangelism</b>	<b>New life in Christ</b>	<b>Bible study</b>	<b>Christian fellowship</b>
Mark. 5:1-20	2Cor. 5:16-21	Duet. 17:18-20	1Thess. 5:11-15
1Peter 3:15-16	John 15:5-8	Ps. 1	Luke. 22:24-27
2Cor. 3:1-3	Gal 3:26-28	Luke 4:1-13	Heb. 10:24-25
Acts. 22:1-21	Rom. 8:1-11	Luke 4:14-21	Eph. 1:15-23
Acts. 4:1-20	Phil. 3:7-11	Josh. 1:7-9	Rom. 12:3-16
Acts. 18:24-28	Rom. 6:3-11	Prov 2:1-5	Acts 12:5-19
Mark. 16:9-20	Col. 3:1-4	Prov 4:20-22	Acts. 2:38-47

Discuss how this went with your instructor or mentor.

From Lesson 4: “Preparing To Start A Cell Group”:

Review the three cell group lessons in this manual. Develop a prayer support team, a leadership team (if possible), and determine your target area for your church plant (if you haven’t already). After a time of prayer and seeking the Lord, start a cell group in your target area. Remember that a cell group meeting is not a church service – it is a time for you to get to know people in the region, develop relationships with them, and over the course of time to naturally share what Jesus has done in your life. You will need to do some planning ahead of time so that the meeting runs smoothly, and so that the atmosphere is relaxed and informal. Decide how often the group would like to meet, where it will meet, etc. Be ready to share at the next training session about your progress, and bring any questions you might have with you for discussion.

From Lesson 5 Understanding and Overcoming Sin: "The Tongue Assignment":

For one week do not:

- Gossip (do not speak badly about others)
- Complain
- Criticize
- Boast
- Blame or accuse others of wrong (do not transfer the fault to others)
- Defend yourself
- Deceive others

As you do these things, keep a short journal noting what this experience teaches you.

*Review your journal with your mentor. What did you learn about yourself from this exercise? Describe a time when it was hard, or when you failed to keep the tongue assignment. What were you thinking or feeling when at the time?*

*Read Matthew 12:34b-35 and James 3:10-12*

*It may surprise you to learn that this assignment is not intended to be about tongue control. Controlling your tongue is important- but it is even more important to have a clean heart. The heart is really what this assignment was all about. Any struggle you had in keeping the tongue assignment is a reflection of what is going on in your heart. So, what did you learn about your heart? Is there something you need to repent of?*

This month we will emphasize discipleship. We will begin to discuss ways to train new believers in their faith. Let's get going!

**CHURCH PLANTING SKILLS**

**Lesson 6 - Perseverance Through Persecution**

No religious group has been persecuted more than Christianity. Today many church planters are suffering under persecution. Perhaps you have been a victim of persecution, or are familiar with persecution in you region. In this lesson we will look at what the Bible has to say about persecution, and how a persecuted believer should respond.

**I. NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON PERSECUTION**

The persecution of Christians begins with the persecution of Jesus. Jesus was not persecuted and brought to the cross for arbitrary reasons, mere misunderstandings, or unfortunate accidents. Instead, His sufferings resulted logically and inevitably out of the very center of his message and life. He was persecuted because of the person he claimed to be and the gospel of the kingdom which he preached.

So then, the path of following Christ is, at its roots, a path characterized by a cross, not a sword. It does not surprise us then, that several passages throughout the New Testament describe the persecution of Christians as inevitable.

- *“You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them....All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”* (Mark 13:9,13)
- *“Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man”* (Luke 6:22)
- *“They will treat you this way (persecute you) because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me”* (John 15:21)
- *“For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.”* (2 Cor 4:11)
- *“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him”* (Phil. 1:29)

The table below describes all the occurrences of persecution in the book of Acts alone.

**Persecution of the Saints in the Acts**

Passage	Nature of Persecution	Result
Acts 4	Threats	Prayer (v. 24), filling with the Spirit (v. 31), unity (v. 32), witness (v. 33)
Acts 5	Beatings	Rejoicing (v. 41), witness (v. 42)
Acts 7	Killing of an individual	Saul witnesses Stephen’s death (8:1)
Acts 8	Widespread persecution, arrests	Spreading of the gospel (8:1,4), conversion of Saul (chapter 9)
Acts 9	Plot to kill Paul	Unity (vv. 26,27), witness (v. 28), more persecution (v. 29)
Acts 12	James killed, Peter arrested	Prayer (v. 5), answered prayer

Acts 13	Paul reviled (v. 36), mob incited violence, driven from the city (v. 50)	Gospel goes to the Gentiles
Acts 14:1–7	Plot to harm Paul and Barnabas (v. 5)	Left and preached the gospel (v. 7)
Acts 14:8–22	Paul stoned and left for dead (v. 19)	Believers strengthened and taught to continue in faith, to enter the kingdom of God through many tribulations (v. 22)
Acts 16	Paul imprisoned and beaten (vv. 23,24)	Praised God (v. 25), jailer and family come to Christ (vv. 32–34), their Roman rights were upheld (vv. 35–39)
Acts 17:1–12	Mob riot (v. 5)	Paul sent to Berea (v. 10), many received the message (v. 11)
Acts 17:13–34	Opposition incited by Jews from Thessalonica (v. 13)	Paul sent to Athens (v. 14), some believed (v. 34)
Acts 18	Persecutors become abusive (v. 6)	Paul takes the message to the Gentiles, many believe (vv. 6–8)
Acts 19	Mob action (vv. 23,34)	Paul advised by church to stay away from the crowd; situation settles down, church protected by authorities (v. 37)
Acts 21–23	Paul attacked by Jews and arrested by Romans in the temple	Paul appeals for his legal rights as a Ro-man; sent to Rome to testify for Christ (23:11); witnesses to political leaders (chap. 24), Festus (25:1–12), Herod Agrippa (25:23–26:32); preaches and teaches in Rome (28:31)

***Question 1: Why do you think Paul so often found himself in the midst of persecution?***

Passages like these and others teach us several biblical principles concerning persecution. Here is a summary of these principles:

**A. Persecution is part of the plan of God**

Jesus said his disciples would be persecuted (Luke 6:22; John 15:20-21). Just as Jesus predicted, Stephen is martyred by those who obviously believed that they were doing a service to God (Luke 21:16; John 16:2–4). Paul appears before kings and governors as a prisoner "for my [Jesus'] name's sake" (Luke 21:12; Acts 26:30). Paul sees his suffering as something that must take place in the plan of God (Acts 14:21-22; 20:22-24).

**B. Persecution is the rejection of God's agents**

Often in Acts the most intense persecution comes from the religious leaders of the Jews, those who are supposed to be God's people. This rejection of God's messengers is the main thrust of Stephen's sermon. In killing Jesus and Stephen, the Jews continue to walk in the footprints of their fathers (Acts 7:51-52). Persecution can authenticate that those who proclaim the gospel are God's messengers.

**C. Persecution is an integral consequence of following Jesus**

Believers share the sufferings of Christ because they carry out His life and message. Persecution is inevitable. We are sheep among wolves. It is interesting that in the call of Paul to ministry, he is told how much he will suffer for the sake of Christ's name (Acts 9:15-16). Rather than seeing persecution as an anomaly, a tragedy, or a misfortunate, it is seen in the New Testament as a logical result of following the suffering Christ (Mark 13:9,13; John 15:20-21; Philippians 1:29). Believers are persecuted because of their association with Jesus. They suffer because Jesus did. He is the focal point of conflict, and to the degree that believers represent Jesus, they will be persecuted.

### **D. Persecution is an occasion of divine triumph**

In an expression of God's sovereignty, we see in Acts that Christ's Church not only grows in spite of persecution, it even spreads because of it. The persecution of the church in Jerusalem resulted in the disciples being scattered, and as they went out, they shared the gospel (Acts 8:1,4). Paul's imprisonment and illegal beating in Philippi lead to the jailer and his family coming to faith (Acts 16). Paul's persecution often lead to his going somewhere else to proclaim the good news of Jesus. When he went to Rome, it is not as a missionary as he had hoped (Romans 15:23), but as a prisoner. The Word of God spread through his "providential failure."

God's victory is also seen in His keeping power of the disciples in the midst of their affliction, and in their ability to rejoice and remain obedient even in the midst of difficult situations.

## **II. REASONS FOR PERSECUTION**

### **A. Persecution due to Theology (Christian beliefs)**

Christian teaching and theology threaten all other religious systems. The message of Jesus resulted in persecution from the religious teachers of His day (John 16:2). His teaching had "authority", meaning that He spoke on His own behalf, instead of relying on rabbinical teaching and authority, which was common at that time. He also insisted that He was the Son of God, claiming to possess divine characteristics, which did not go unnoticed, with the response in John 5:18 being the inevitable "Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill him because he not only violated the Sabbath, but also called God His father, and thus made himself equal with God."

Stephen was arrested on charges of blasphemy, and was killed because his teaching enraged their theological sensitivities. Saul (who later became Paul) was entirely motivated by theological reasons to persecute the church. He saw Christianity and the teachings of Jesus as a direct threat to the pillars of Judaism.

And later, after Paul became a follower of Jesus, he was persecuted because he taught that observance of the Law was not necessary to gain acceptance with God. He was arrested in Jerusalem on the suspicion that he had slipped Gentiles into the temple. His teaching on the unity of the church (Jew & Gentile) enraged the Jews of his day, who believed that only by becoming a Jew could someone become part of the family of God. Paul was adamant in his rejection of this theological presupposition, and he was tortured and imprisoned for it (Acts 22:19-22).

Theology matters. To this day, Christians are persecuted throughout the world for their beliefs. For example:

- Our insistence that salvation cannot be found in any other name marks us out as "intolerant."
- The acceptance of all people regardless of social standing, gender or race makes Christians targets of attacks in India by Hindu radicals who believe that we are disturbing the natural order of things by accepting "untouchables".
- Muslim families sometimes kill their own children who become Christians. According to Islamic teaching, apostates (non Muslims) are to be killed in order to stop the spread of their blasphemy.

***Question 2: Why do the claims of Christianity cause such a strong reaction from other world religions?***

### **B. Persecution for Political Reasons**

Of course, Jesus was not crucified by the Jews but by the Romans. He was crucified for political reasons (admittedly made up), but the charge of stirring up trouble and disturbing the peace is one that Christians continue to be accused of. Jesus knew that his disciples would run into trouble with political authorities (Mark 13:9; Matt.10: 17-18). One of the things that is worth noting is that for the early church, just like Jesus, theological reasons often start persecution, but political reasons are needed to sustain it (Acts 17:5-7; 18:12ff).

By and large, scripture views civil authority not primarily as a threat, but as a God-ordained restraint on evil. Thus we have words like Judges 21:25, “*In those days, Israel had no king, everyone did what was right in his own eyes*” which is repeated throughout the book to describe the chaotic and increasingly lawless period of the judges. This is why in Romans 13:1-5, Paul can trace the hand of God in the government of his day. While the Bible insists that the state restrains wickedness, it fully recognizes that the state can also be the perpetrator of wickedness. It means that the state can protect us from suffering, but it can also be the cause of it.

Early in the church’s history, the church had to make the choice as to whether it would obey a governmental decree that violated biblical absolutes. When told to stop preaching Jesus, the disciples replied, “*We must obey God rather than man.*” (Acts 5:29). This does not justify disobedience to government in all situations. For example, in his first epistle, Peter tells slaves how to live under a system that was completely dehumanizing (1 Peter 2:18). Every Christian is to do his best to be a law-abiding citizen, because behind the government is the authority of God.

During the reign of Domitian (AD81-96) we see the real conflict arising between the church and the state that would bloom into intense persecution for political reasons. Domitian claimed that he was “lord and god” and thus was to be venerated as such. The veneration of the emperor became the official state religion, the thing that brought unity to the empire ideologically and religiously. Loyal citizens were expected to declare their allegiance and offer sacrifices to the emperor as a sign of their loyalty. This brought unity to the cultural and religious diversity that was ancient Rome.

Christians, of course, could not abide by this, and were thus viewed as rebels by the Roman authorities and society at large. From this perspective, the Romans did not persecute the early church because they believed in Jesus. The early Christians were persecuted because they were perceived to be rebels, refusing to acknowledge any other authority as equal or superior to God. The confession that Jesus was Lord was a direct challenge to the sovereignty of Caesar and, ultimately, to the Roman state. To have members of their society declare ultimate allegiance to another king was unacceptable to the Roman authorities, who insisted that Rome must be made preeminent.

To this day, Christians continue to suffer persecution because they are perceived as a threat to national security or national stability. Totalitarian governments, in particular, find it difficult to accept a group of people who will not give unconditional allegiance to the interests of the state.

***Question 3: In your target area, when would it be permissible to “obey God rather than men” (Ac 5:29)?***

### **C. Persecution Due to Economics**

In the New Testament, we also see where Christians are persecuted because they have an adverse effect on the economy. Christianity introduces honesty, fairness and other qualities which disrupt corrupt economies. Naturally, those who benefit from corruption strike out against Christianity. There are examples where Christians ruined the economic well being of a society and thus incurred the wrath of those around them:

- Acts 16:16-20 (this is actually the first recorded persecution of Christians by pagans)
- Acts 19:23-41
- James 2:6

The persecution of Christians in India in our day can sometimes be traced back to economic reasons, as can the persecution of Christian leaders by local mafia bosses or terrorist groups who see the spread of Christianity as a threat to an economic climate that benefits them.

### **III. THE PERSONAL BIBLICAL RESPONSE TO RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION**

#### **A. Biblical Truth that helps believers respond to persecution**

##### *1. God Is Sovereign*

The disciples had a clear understanding of the sovereignty of God (Acts 4). They had assurance that God was in absolute control over the events of history and that, by their sufferings, they were carrying out His purposes. God was transforming evil into the fulfillment of His plan for salvation for the world (see Acts 4:27,28). Confident in the sovereignty of God, the disciples prayed a) for boldness to continue preaching, and b) for signs and wonders to accompany their preaching so that the name of Jesus would be lifted up.

##### *2. Suffering for Christ is a privilege and an honor*

In Acts 5:41 we read, “Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.” In Acts 16:22–25, the disciples praised God while in prison and shackled, still feeling the burn of the whip. When released, they did not go back to the church to be pitied, but to “encourage them” (16:40).

The disciples accepted that suffering is the lot of the righteous (2 Timothy 3:12; Proverbs 29:10), as they fixed their eyes on the final glory of their journey —entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It is this glory that makes it easier to travel toward it on the road of many tribulations.

##### *3. Martyrdom is Glorious*

The martyrdom of Stephen is portrayed in Luke’s account as a model for Christians to emulate and strive toward. As part of their training for suffering and martyrdom, Jesus had taught His disciples that “a pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher” (Lk. 6:40). Obviously, in relating this account, Luke had the express intention of presenting Stephen as a “fully trained” pupil.

Throughout his martyrdom, Stephen is not depicted as being a passive recipient of persecution. He takes the initiative to the end. He proclaims courageously, testifies to seeing Jesus standing at the right hand of God, forgives his persecutors, and entrusts his spirit to God. He is the aggressor, not the victim. It must have made a lasting impact on the witnesses. It certainly did on the man watching over the coats, a religious zealot named Saul.

#### **B. Strategic Responses to Persecution**

Biblically, there seem to be three basic responses that the Lord allows when His people are persecuted:

##### *A. Endure Persecution*

As the early church began to grow in size and influence, opposition also grew. Jerusalem became a dangerous place for Christians. Endurance is the most common response to persecution, but should not be seen as better or worse than fleeing or fighting. Fleeing may, at times, be impossible, impractical, or inappropriate. In these cases, God’s people are called to stand firm where they are and remain faithful, even unto death.

##### *B. Fight Persecution*

There are times when it is appropriate to fight for one’s legal rights. Paul did so on several occasions (Acts 16:37; 22:24ff; 25:10,11). Like fleeing, fighting is permissible unless it hinders the furtherance of the kingdom of God. In Paul’s case, it could be argued that he defended his legal rights in order to further the kingdom of God. It is worth noting that even Jesus defended Himself at one point during his trial (John 18:23), not to protest his suffering but as a testimony of his innocence.

##### *C. Flee Persecution*

There is biblical permission to flee from persecution (see Mat 10:23; Acts 8:1; 9:25; 14:5,6; 2 Cor 11:32,33). The motive behind the fleeing, however, is what is critical. If it were primarily to avoid suffering, then this would not be a sufficient reason. Throughout the New Testament, the priority is always on the mission of the kingdom of God above all else. Flight is forbidden where obedience to God’s commandments and Christ’s commission

and love for others would be jeopardized. However, if the mission were threatened by persecution, withdrawal was permitted. When persecution arises, careful consideration must be given to determine whether or not suffering is necessary in order to accomplish the will of God.

It is interesting that in fleeing persecution, the gospel is spread. This works against the intention of the persecutors and is the will of God!

## **CONCLUSION**

As we have seen, when we suffer today for our faith in Christ, we are sharing in His suffering. Through it, we often become stronger and wiser. Additionally, those who do not yet believe will look at us and see the firmness of our faith. Our patient suffering may even draw them to believe. When God permits suffering of any kind, including persecution for our faith, it is always for the advancement of His kingdom and ultimately for our greater good. May we be faithful to Jesus – even in the midst of suffering and persecution.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- How can you believe God allows persecution for your ultimate good?
- How do you determine whether to flee, endure, or fight persecution in your life and ministry?
- How can you respond to those who persecute you in a way that pleases and honors God?

## **SOURCES**

- This lesson is adapted from “The Shadow of the Cross” by Glenn M. Penner (Living Sacrifice Books, Bartlesville OK, 2004)
- The “Additional Reading” section was obtained from <http://www.AllAboutFollowingJesus.org/christian-persecution.htm>

## ADDITIONAL READING

### Many of the Early Disciples Died for their Faith

Christian persecution was a dramatic part of early church history. Eleven of the 12 apostles, and many of the other early disciples, died for their faith. Here is an account of early Christian persecution, as compiled from numerous sources outside the Bible, the most-famous of which is Foxes' *Christian Martyrs of the World*:

Around 34 A.D., one year after the crucifixion of Jesus, **Stephen** was thrown out of Jerusalem and stoned to death (Acts 7). Approximately 2,000 Christians suffered martyrdom in Jerusalem during this period. About 10 years later, **James**, the son of Zebedee and the elder brother of John, was killed when Herod Agrippa arrived as governor of Judea. Agrippa detested the Christian sect of Jews, and many early disciples were martyred under his rule. Around 54 A.D., **Philip**, a disciple from Bethsaida, in Galilee, suffered martyrdom at Heliopolis, in Phrygia. He was scourged, thrown into prison, and afterwards crucified. About six years later, **Matthew**, the tax-collector from Nazareth who wrote his gospel in Hebrew, was preaching in Ethiopia when he suffered martyrdom by the sword. **James**, the brother of Jesus, administered the early church in Jerusalem and was the author of an Epistle by his name. At age 94, he was beat and stoned, and finally had his brains bashed out with a fuller's club ("fulling" is the process of shrinking and thickening wool to finish the cloth. A fuller would use either a short or long club to compact the material by beating it.) **Matthias** was the apostle who filled the vacant place of Judas. He was stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded. **Andrew** was the brother of Peter who preached the gospel throughout Asia. On his arrival at Edessa, he was arrested and crucified on a cross, the two ends of which were fixed transversely in the ground (this is where we get the term, St. Andrew's Cross). **Mark** was converted to Christianity by Peter, and then transcribed Peter's account of Jesus in his Gospel. Mark was dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria in front of Serapis, their pagan idol. It appears **Peter** was condemned to death and crucified at Rome. Jerome holds that Peter was crucified upside down, at his own request, because he said he was unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord. **Paul** suffered in the first persecution under Nero. Paul's faith was so dramatic in the face of martyrdom, that the authorities removed him to a private place for execution by the sword.

In about 72 A.D., **Jude**, the brother of James who was commonly called Thaddeus, was crucified at Edessa. **Bartholomew** preached in several countries and translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of India. He was cruelly beaten and then crucified by idolaters there. **Thomas**, called Didymus, preached the Gospel in Parthia and India, where he was martyred by being thrust through with a spear by pagan priests. **Luke** was the author of the Gospel under his name. He traveled with Paul through various countries and is supposed to have been hanged on an olive tree by idolatrous priests in Greece. **Barnabas**, of Cyprus, was killed without many known facts in about 73 A.D. **Simon** the zealot preached the Gospel in Mauritania, Africa, and even in Britain, where he was crucified in about 74 A.D. **John**, the "beloved disciple," was the brother of James. From Ephesus he was ordered to Rome, where it is affirmed he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil. He escaped by miracle, without injury. Domitian afterwards banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death.

Christian persecution didn't slow the growth of the Christian faith during the first few centuries after Christ. Even as its early leaders died horrible deaths, Christianity flourished throughout the Roman Empire. How can this historical record of martyrdom be viewed as anything but dramatic evidence for the absolute truth of the Christian faith – a faith, unlike any other, founded on historical events and eye-witness testimony.

## Lesson 7 - Prayer and Fasting

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As church planters are involved in the many activities necessary to start a new church, it is easy to neglect basic spiritual disciplines like prayer and fasting. If we attempt to do spiritual work in the flesh, the results will not be God-honoring. Let's take a fresh look at the role of prayer and fasting in the life of a church planter.

### I. THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF PRAYER

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

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

##### *Exodus 3:7*

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

##### *Exodus 32:7-14*

Israel had turned away from God and made a golden calf to worship. God said to Moses, "Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation." (v. 10) But Moses prayed to the Lord, reminding him of his promises. "Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened." (v. 14)

##### *Question 1: Did the prayer of Moses change God's mind?*

##### *2 Chronicles 7:1-14*

After Solomon built the temple, he prayed, dedicating it to God. God responded by sending fire from heaven to consume the burnt offering and sacrifice. And his glory filled the temple. He told Solomon, "I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a temple for sacrifices." (v. 12) Furthermore, he promised that "if My people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place." (v. 14)

#### B. New Testament Examples— God Responds To Prayer

##### *James 5:13-18*

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

##### *Luke 6:12-16*

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

##### *Matthew 26:36-44*

As Jesus approached His death, He prayed in agony, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." The second time Jesus cried out, "My Father, if it is not possible for this

*cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”* Jesus cried out a third time, praying the same thing.

***Matthew 6:5-18***

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

***Matthew 7:7-12***

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

***Question 2: Is there something that you are hesitant to ask God for?***

God can do anything that He desires to do. However, at times He will wait until His people express their agreement in prayer. Then He will act. From the examples and teachings of Scripture, it appears that God has linked Himself and his actions to our prayers, choosing to accomplish His purpose through these prayers.

God desires for man to pray in agreement with His will and in opposition to the will of Satan. Prayer is the expression of our desire for God’s will to be done and is one way in which we work together with God to accomplish His purposes. Prayer is not a battle to convince and compel God to change His mind to suit our own pleasures. Rather, through prayer we discern His will and then bend our own will to God’s desires and purposes.

**Prayer and Church Planting**

Prayer plays a critical role in church planting. In order to see new churches established in every town and village of your target area, there needs to be intentional, focused prayer in these towns and villages. We realize that God doesn’t need our prayers to accomplish his work. But He has chosen, in His divine and sovereign plan, to work through our prayers.

In your church planting task, it is important to remember that it is God's desire to reconcile people to Himself. As such, it is likely that the Holy Spirit has already given other people in your target area a burden to pray for the lost in their neighborhood, city and region. It may be necessary to seek out these people who have a burden to pray for the lost.

These prayer warriors should be have regular communication and fellowship with those who are active in church planting ministry. Too often, the people who pray are isolated from the evangelism and church planting, and they can only pray in generalities. Your prayer supporters need to receive regular updates by letter, phone, email, or word of mouth. Your ministry will benefit from prayer for very specific needs, and your supporters will be encouraged as they see God working through their prayers. You may be on the “front lines”, but their ministry of prayer is even more powerful and strategic. Together you form an effective team for the advance of the Gospel.

***Question 3: How are your prayers linked to the work of evangelism and church planting?***

***Question 4: What kind of prayer support do you have? Are people praying for your outreach ministry? How do they know what to pray for? Do they hear when their prayers have been answered?***

## II. THE ROLE OF FASTING

Fasting is our deliberate abstinence from some or all food or drink for the purpose of undistracted prayer. Also there may be times of withdrawal from activities and the fellowship of friends in order to devote one's self more fully to fellowship with the Lord—to seek Him and His will. Fasting is a spiritual discipline, not a commandment. Therefore, if a person has medical problems or for some other reason cannot fast, that person should not be made to feel guilty or be accused of sinning. Fasting is done in some cultures and religions as a ritual, tradition or as a way to earn favor with God. The function of biblical fasting is to focus one's undivided attention on the Lord.

### A. The Teaching Of Christ

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

### B. The Example Of The Early Church

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

#### *Acts 13:1-3*

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

#### *Acts 14:23*

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

### C. The Nature Of Fasting

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

- Spiritual strengthening
- Advancement of the kingdom of God.

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

*Question 5: Describe how a person should look when he fasts.*

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What can you do to improve your prayer life?
- What can you do to increase your prayer support?

- Have you ever spent time in prayer and fasting? What was your experience like? Did you sense a spiritual strengthening or see God answer your prayer in a special way?
- Read Matthew 6:16-18. Describe how the “hypocrites” looked as they fasted. Why did they do this?

### **ASSIGNMENT**

Plan and experience the spiritual discipline of fasting. Below are a few ways that some Christians do this. You may wish to follow one of these, but the form is up to you.

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

## DISCIPLE MAKING

### Lesson 8 - Introduction to Disciple Making

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Disciple making is essential to church planting and is the responsibility of the local church. Churches reproduce because disciples reproduce themselves in the lives of others through disciple making. If evangelism is spiritual birth, disciple making is spiritual child rearing. In the process of raising children, it is not our desire to have children who will be perpetually dependent and immature. In the process of disciple making we assist our brothers and sisters in Christ to grow to full spiritual maturity, partnering with God in the process of mutual edification and sanctification.

Though disciple making is the task of the local church, it may be accomplished in a variety of ways. Rather than propose a rigid program of disciple making, this series of lessons will help you to understand the function of disciple making in the church planting task and to think through how to effectively accomplish that function in your own church planting ministry.

#### I. THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

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

**"All** authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Therefore, going, make disciples of **all** nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe **all** that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you **all** the days, even to the end of the age" (author's literal translation of Matthew 28:18-20 from the Greek text).

Disciple making is the very heart of the Great Commission. The dominant word which ties this passage together is "All": All authority, all nations, all things (that I have commanded you) and all the days. Remember that in the original Greek, only the verb "make disciples" is in the imperative tense. Other verbs ("going", "baptizing" and "teaching") are participles and modify the basic command to "make disciples."

With these simple yet profound words, Jesus gives His Church both her main assignment until He returns and the promise upon which her success is guaranteed. In the remainder of the New Testament, especially in the writings of Paul, we see how the early church lived out its obedience to this command.

#### II. DEFINITIONS CONCERNING DISCIPLE MAKING

##### A. Disciple

A disciple can be defined as one who has turned to Christ and is becoming like Christ. More specifically, he has placed his faith in Christ and, through baptism, has identified himself as a follower of Christ and as a member of Christ's Church. As a member of Christ's covenant community, he has pledged submission to Christ and is striving to live a life of obedience to the whole will of Christ. This obedience is not merely an external conformity to Christ's will, but springs from a heart of love, faith and hope. The disciple's growth in obedience is a lifetime process. The Scriptures describe a disciple as one who will "*deny himself and take up his cross and follow (Christ)*" (Mt 16:24). The disciple serves others (Mt 20:25-28). He has a supreme love for Christ (Lk

14:25-27). People will know that he is a disciple of Christ by his love for others (Jn 13:34-35). His life will bear the fruit of the Spirit (Jn 15:8).

***Question 1: In your own words, define what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.***

### **B. Disciple Making**

Disciple making can be defined as the process by which the Church, depending on the authority and presence of Christ, takes the initiative...

- to lead people to faith in and submission to Christ,
- to incorporate them into Christ and his covenant community, the Church, through baptism
- to lead them into a life of obedience to the whole will of Christ.

Leading people to faith in and submission to Christ is often referred to as evangelism, which you have studied earlier. For the purpose of this part of your training, we will also assume that they have already been incorporated into Christ's covenant community through baptism, and are part of His Church. In this part of the course we turn our attention to leading them into a life of obedience to the whole will of Christ.

### **C. Disciple Maker**

A disciple maker is a believer who is active in leading others to come to Christ and become like Christ. Every believer is required to be a disciple maker. Paul disciplined Timothy and instructed Timothy to be a disciple maker to others (2 Tim 2:2).

***Question 2: Read 2 Tim 2:2. What did Paul expect Timothy's disciples to do?***

A disciple maker reproduces himself. He makes disciple makers. The means a mature Christian may still not be disciplined. A Christian is disciplined when he is discipling others.

We may say the Paul disciplined Timothy, Moses disciplined Joshua, etc. There is nothing wrong with this. However, it is important to note that ultimately Jesus is the real disciple maker of us all. We are to make disciples not of ourselves, but of Jesus. After all, Paul did not want Timothy to be exactly like himself. He wanted Timothy and any other disciple to become like Jesus.

## **III. THE PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS**

Your ministry as a church planter may have impact on many people. You may preach to many, share Christ with many and in all kinds of ways serve many. In all of this, your goal should be to make disciples. However, you cannot personally disciple everyone, nor should you try. You should seek to impact a fewer number of people through deep personal discipleship. Here are some steps in that process:

### **A. Selection - Lk 6:12-13**

Early in his ministry, Jesus gathered a small group of followers to himself (Mt 10:2-4). He did not seek volunteers, or call the first people who showed interest in him, or who had nothing else better to do. Instead, Jesus prayed all night before selecting these twelve men (Lk 6:12-13).

The men whom Jesus chose to be his disciples were ordinary people at best. Some were backward villagers, barely literate; one was a tax collector, a profession despised by the general population; a few were fishermen. They were not "great" men from whom one would expect great things. In spite of all these disqualifiers, these

unlikely followers were the ones that Jesus personally picked to stand with him as the foundation for the church. Jesus knew that His time spent discipling them would qualify them (Mk 3:14-19).

You too will need to take the time to pray carefully about who you select to pour your life into (disciple). Look for eagerness and faithfulness. Do not expect the people you to be perfect – if they are, they will not need Jesus! The most important thing is to be sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Do not be surprised if the Holy Spirit leads you to select some unexpected people!

***Question 3: At what point in the Church planting process should a church planter select disciples?***

### **B. Association - Mk 3:14-19**

Jesus had a great public ministry. However, rather than focus on the multitudes, Jesus prioritized and guarded his time with the disciples. He expected to multiply himself through them so that they would then help him in the transformation of the multitudes.

Jesus chose the twelve to *be with* him. He lived with his disciples as if they were his own family. For three years they traveled, ate, worked, and rested together. In all this, Jesus lived out his values with his followers. Yes, Jesus commonly preached to enormous crowds (Mk 4:1) and healed, etc. But often he would retreat with his disciples to the countryside where he would discuss his teaching in great detail (Mk 4:33-34). The disciples were with Jesus and came to know Jesus in a way that the crowd did not. Paul followed the same pattern with Timothy (2 Tim 3:10).

You too will have to pour you lives into those you are called to disciple. Being together in a variety of settings (home, church, at play, in ministry) will reveal a lot about a person's true commitment to Christ. In such settings, your disciple will learn about your commitment to Christ as you model the Christian life. Likewise you will learn about their spiritual condition. Do not avoid or minimize such times. Here are a few suggestions:

- Spend time with them. Rejoice with them at special occasions and holidays showing that you are of one heart and mind with them.
- Work together, play together, have meals together. Surprise growing believers with your sincere, intense interest in them.
- Pray together about problems in situations. Be specific.
- Its important that your disciples know you are available for answering questions and counseling concerning doubts that arise in everyday life.

### **C. Instruction**

Jesus taught his disciples constantly. Jesus did not normally do this in a formal way. Instead, he was masterful at using whatever was on hand to teach spiritual truth. Wheat blowing in the field, a storm on the lake, or children playing in their midst were not considered interruptions or insignificant, but were opportunities to talk about the kingdom of God.

Jesus taught his disciples spiritual truth as well as ministry skills. He taught ministry skills by modeling ministry (Lk 8:1) and then by instructing them and sending them out to actually do it (Lk 9:1-6 and 10:1-20)! Likewise, part of your task as a disciple maker is to equip your disciples for ministry. Teach your new converts to fruitfully serve others, employing the spiritual gifts God has given them. Do this by taking them with you on ministry visits, or by asking them to take leadership in some aspect of your cell group ministry.

### **D. Multiplication – Jn 20:21-23**

When Jesus left the earth to return to His Father, he commanded the disciples to make disciples as he had done (Mt 28:18-20; Jn 20:21-23). The disciples undoubtedly did not feel ready for this. But Jesus had sufficiently prepared them and would send the Holy Spirit so that if they applied what they had learned from him, they would have a similar (even greater) impact (Jn 14:12).

Just as Jesus expected his disciples to make more disciples, so today the discipleship process is in full effect when your disciples are discipling others. Sometimes they will be even better disciple makers than you are! When people are faithful in disciple making, the result is a rapid increase of co-workers in the ministry. Among these new co-workers will be those who will join in the church planting task. This is one of the ways that discipleship is one of the most critical factors in the establishment of a church planting movement.

#### **IV. HOW DISCIPLE MAKING CONTRIBUTES TO CHURCH PLANTING**

As you can already see, disciple making lies at the very heart of church planting. Your success in establishing new churches will depend not just on winning new converts to Christ, but in making true disciples who obey Him more and more faithfully.

**Saturation Church Planting is in reality the establishing of communities of disciples where none had existed before.** The initial phase of church planting involves leading people to faith in and submission to Christ. Conversion is the first step in making disciples. It must always be remembered that conversion for conversion's sake is never the goal. Conversion must be understood as simply the first step in a lifelong process. Disciple making leads these new converts to an ever deepening understanding of Christ's will for them and builds them up in such a way that they obey more and more fully. This increased understanding and obedience comes from hearts of love that are growing in union with Christ and one another. In other words, true "community" is created when disciple making is done properly. If church planting involves the establishing of new "communities" of disciples, then disciple making, as we understand it here, is absolutely essential.

#### **V. BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND**

As you put together a comprehensive disciple making plan for your church planting effort, you need to work through three critical steps:

- Understand your disciple making goal.
- Understand the present spiritual condition of your people.
- Develop a plan how to help your people grow from where they are now toward your disciple making goal.

Your concern here is to identify what your disciple making goal is and to allow that goal to shape what you are doing now. God is the one who determines the goal. Our responsibility is to clearly understand what God is calling us to be and do and then to respond in faith and obedience. Any planning we do is nothing more than our obedient response to God's revealed purpose. We plan because we want to obey God with all our heart and mind. We plan because we **intend** to obey and order our lives accordingly. Such planning is always done in conscious dependence on God. It is birthed and maintained in prayer.

With regard to disciple making, your goal is lives of obedience to the whole will of Christ. Your beginning point is the present spiritual condition of the people you are discipling. Finally, you must develop a strategy how you are going to help your people grow from where they are now towards the goal of obedience to the whole will of Christ. You must find a practical way to help them understand more deeply what it means to live as members of Christ's covenant community and enable them to live accordingly in obedience to the whole will of Christ. Disciple making occurs in many places over a period of time. It is a dynamic, multifaceted process and can be accomplished through a variety of settings and people.

#### **CONCLUSION**

God is working to create a holy community, a people to be truly one with Him and each other, to be participants in the very life that characterizes the Trinity. The Church will finally bring to God the glory He deserves, reflecting His holy character and worshipping Him "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:23). **In summary, Christ's command to make disciples is His call to take part in the creation of God's holy community, a perfect and holy bride set apart for Christ.**

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What is wrong with evangelism without discipleship?
- What difference would an effective disciple making ministry make in establishing a new church? ... in establishing a church planting movement?

### **ASSIGNMENT**

- Describe what kind of disciple making goals your church presently has in place.
- List the disciple making goals you think you should have.
- List the people you believe God is asking you to disciple.
- Begin to think about a discipleship plan for each of the people whom God wants you to disciple.

## Lesson 9 - Forms for Disciple Making

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As we have said, Saturation Church Planting is really all about making disciples. So then, what forms, structures and methods should you adopt as you make disciples of others? We want to suggest four basic forms or structures that can be used in disciple making. These forms may be used independently, or several of them can be used at the same time.

### I. FORM 1: INDIVIDUAL GROWTH

**Example:** Jesus' intercessory prayer in John 17

**Setting:** A disciple works on his own. This includes self-study as well as doing other things on his own, such as witnessing, praying, etc.

**Size:** One person

**Ministry Style:** Self-learning

**Function:** 1) the communication of vital truths, i.e. deepening understanding of truths already touched on in the large group, small group and one-on-one meetings, 2) the development of essential skills.

**Advantages:**

- A greater amount of knowledge and experience can be more quickly gained.
- Reading can be targeted to the specific needs of the person.
- The leaders are more free to give their time and energy to other ministry needs.
- The disciple can learn at his own pace and take time for reflection and application.

**Limitations:**

- Unless tested in some way, there is no way of knowing how much was understood or absorbed.
- There is no opportunity to observe the disciple as he is engaged in ministry so that you may give him helpful advice.
- Other kinds of spiritual support are still needed.
- It is somewhat of an impersonal approach which models individualism and not community.

### II. FORM 2: ONE-ON-ONE DISCIPLESHIP

**Example:** We can see Jesus using this form in conversations with Nicodemus (John 3) and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4).

**Setting:** A leader, or mentor, meets separately with various individuals.

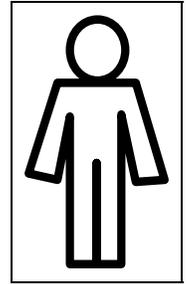
**Size:** 2 people per meeting.

**Ministry style:** Mentoring.

**Functions:** 1) the communication of vital truths, 2) the development of essential skills, and 3) the provision of needed spiritual support.

**Communication:** Two-way communication. The mentor receives feedback from his disciple.

**Who ministers:** Mostly the mentor. However, the mentor should make it a priority to train and involve his disciple in ministry to others.



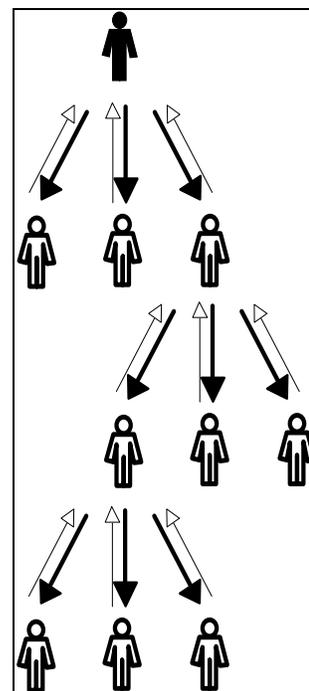
**Multiplication:** Every mentor should have apprentices who are learning how to disciple others one-on-one as shown in the corresponding figure. These apprentices will learn by “observing” and “doing” under supervision. Training seminars may also be provided.

**Advantages:** In many cases, one-on-one contact is the only way you will find out what is happening spiritually within the person. Many new converts will grow only when individual attention is given to them.

- There is maximum opportunity to give the person the support he needs.
- Teaching and training can be targeted to the specific needs of the individual.
- There is maximum opportunity for feedback, to discern how much is understood and absorbed.
- There is maximum opportunity to help him put what he is learning into practice and to help him become involved in ministry to others.
- The leader can easily identify and train those with the potential to do one-on-one ministry with others. This leads to the multiplication of one-on-one ministry.
- This is a wonderful structure for teaching skills.

**Limitations:**

- One person can’t meet all the spiritual needs of an individual. However, this can be countered with several different on-on-one meetings.
- A leader can have a one-on-one ministry with only a few people. Multiplication of new mentors becomes critical.



### III. FORM 3: CELL GROUP MINISTRY

**Example:** We see Christ demonstrating this form in his Upper Room discourse, found in Gospel of John chapters 13-16.

**Setting:** Cell groups, small Sunday school groups, small Bible study groups, Prayer groups, house-church groups, committees, etc.

**Size:** Less than 10-15 people.

**Ministry style:** Facilitation. The leader’s goal is to facilitate the others in the group to mutual ministry. Teaching is not the only form of ministry.

**Functions:** 1) communication of vital truths, 2) development of essential skills, and 3) provision of needed spiritual support.

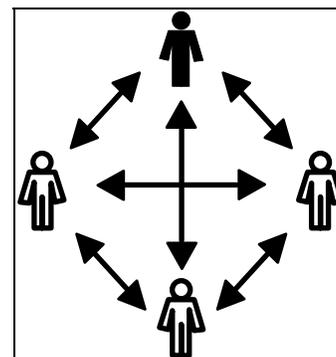
**Communication:** Communication is multi-directional.

**Who ministers:** Everyone in the small group.

**Multiplication:** Every group leader should have an assistant who is being trained to become a group leader. This assistant will learn by “observing” and “doing” under supervision. Training seminars may also be provided.

**Advantages:**

- You don’t need to be an “expert” to facilitate this type of group, giving younger leaders an opportunity to grow in their leadership skills.
- Everyone can be involved. Communication is multi-directional. Everyone has the opportunity to use and develop his or her ministry gifts.



- Those with teaching or other leadership gifts can be more easily identified and developed. This makes multiplication of the ministry easier.
- There is greater opportunity for feedback, to discern how much is understood and absorbed.
- It is easier to focus the teaching and training on the real needs of the group members.
- There is much greater opportunity to understand the deeper spiritual needs of people in the group and to give the kind of support they need. There is greater opportunity to help them put what they are hearing into practice.

**Limitations:**

- Many leaders are needed if a large number of people are to be involved in small groups (This can be offset if the small group is used as a training ground for new leaders.)
- Many people will not share their deepest spiritual needs, even in front of a small group. If the group is mixed (men and women), there may be even less openness.

#### **IV. FORM 4: LARGE GROUP MINISTRY**

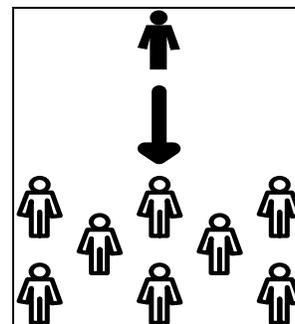
**Example:** An example from the life of the Lord can be found in Matthew chapters 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount. Peter’s sermon to the Jews at Pentecost in Acts 2 is another fine example.

**Setting:** Sermons during worship services, Sunday school, large Bible study groups, seminars, etc.

**Size:** 15, 30, even 100 people or more.

**Ministry style:** The leader mostly lectures.

**Functions:** Main focus is the communication of those vital truths that are relevant to most people in the group.



**Communication:** Mostly in one direction—from the leader to the listeners.

**Who ministers:** The leader(s). Ministry flows in one direction—from the leader to the rest of the group.

**Multiplication:** The leaders should be always training new people for this kind of ministry. The trainees will learn by “observing” and “doing” under supervision. Training seminars may also be provided. The most capable may be selected for more formal training.

**Advantages:** Fewer qualified leaders/coworkers are needed to teach a larger number of people.

**Limitations:**

- Few people other than the main speaker(s) have an opportunity to use and develop their ministry gifts.
- This approach is not very useful for developing future leaders. Unless other means are found to develop leaders, it will be difficult to multiply the ministry into a church planting movement.
- To be done well, you need someone who is gifted as a teacher/preacher. Often it is difficult to find enough qualified people.
- A single leader does not have all the gifts necessary to meet all the spiritual needs of the group.
- There is little opportunity for feedback, so it is difficult to know how much is understood and absorbed.
- There is little opportunity to understand the deeper spiritual needs of people in the group and to give the kind of support they need. There is little opportunity to help them put into practice what they are hearing.
- There is a tendency for most of the listeners to become passive.
- No one ministers to the leader(s).
- If this is the primary form of ministry, then most people will not mature spiritually. The leaders often become overworked because there are too few co-workers.

## **CONCLUSION**

As you think about your church planting ministry situation, what kinds of forms will meet peoples needs? Remember that everyone is different. For example, some people learn best in a group, others are good self-learners, still others need one-on-one attention. Part of your disciple making plan should be to evaluate how each person learns best and provide discipleship.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- In your context, which “forms” do churches most often use in discipling their people? How effective have these forms been used to provide what young disciples need?
- What forms do you think would be most appropriate for meeting these needs in your church planting ministry context?
- What forms do you feel most comfortable using? What forms do you feel most uncomfortable using? Why?

## Lesson 10 - Chronological Bible Storying in Discipleship

We learned about Chronological Bible Storying (CBS) earlier in this course. At that time we emphasized evangelism. However since, CBS is really telling God’s story, we can use the method to communicate just about everything that God wants us to learn. In this lesson we will discuss how to use CBS for discipleship in the church planting process.

### I. CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLE STORYING REVIEW

Remember CBS is telling God’s story beginning with creation, describing His redemptive activity while sequentially revealing the person of God in all His Glory. You may think of this as a large tree with its various parts.

#### A. Evangelism – the Roots

A tree needs a significant root structure to secure it and ground it. This is the first series of stories taught – **EVANGELISM** -- designed to clearly inform about:

God	Need for a Savior
Perfect Creation	The Savior
Man/Woman	Salvation Plan
Satan	Holy Spirit
Sin	Believer’s Fellowship
Character of God	Equipping Church
Depravity of Man	Spiritual Reproduction

#### B. Discipleship – the Trunk

The tree needs a sturdy trunk to support it. This is the second series – **DISCIPLESHIP** – learning how to follow and obey Jesus (this is only a partial list of concepts):

Grace	Accountability
Faith	Evangelizing
Obedience	Discipling
Baptism	Discovering spiritual gifts
Personal Prayer	Fruit of the Spirit
Worship	Christian problem solving and discipline
Repentance	Servant leadership
Forgiveness	Recognizing false teaching
Christian marriage	Family

#### C. Believers Fellowship – the Branches

The tree needs branches to spread out. This is the third series – **BELIEVER’S FELLOWSHIP** – learning how to function in the Body of Christ (a local Church):

Gathering together for:	
Fellowship	Meals together
	Testimonies – what in my life is God doing, showing, teaching, blessing, pruning, refining, removing etc?
Worship	Prayer
	Singing
	Giving of offerings/Sharing through distribution of offerings by leadership
	Lord’s Supper
Edification	Bible
	Discussion/dialogue of Bible story
Evangelism	Baptism
Leadership training/equipping	
Church discipline	
Accountability	
Roles and qualifications of leaders	
Unity	

## II. THE DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

All of your contacts, whether they accept Christ or not, should be encouraged to join a group designed to go deeper into what it means to follow Christ. This is a series of “discipleship” stories. In this series we suggest 76 passages (note several of the same passages are also used for evangelism).

<b>Discipleship</b>		
	<b>Event</b>	<b>Passage</b>
1	God Creates the World	Gen. 1:1 - 2:3
2	Man & Woman	Gen. 2:7-25
3	Man & Woman Disobey God	Gen. 3
4	Cain & Abel	Gen. 4:1-17, 25-26
5	The Flood	Gen 6:3-22; Matt 24:38; Gen 7:1 - 9:17
6	Tower of Babel	Gen 9:18-27; 10:6-12; 11:1-9
7	Lord Calls Abram	Gen 11:27 -30; Acts 7:2-4; Gen 11:31 - 12:20
8	Abram Saves Lot	Gen. 13 - 14
9	Lord's Covenant - Land	Gen. 15
10	Abram, Sarai & Hagar	Gen. 16
11	God's Covenant - Circumcision	Gen. 17

12	3 Visitors	Gen. 18:1-16
13	Sodom & Gomorrah	Gen. 18:17 -19:38
14	Abraham, Sarah & Abimilech	Gen. 20:1-18; 21:22-33
15	Isaac Born ... Ishmael Away	Gen. 21:1-21
16	Abraham & Isaac	Gen. 22
17	Brothers Betray Joseph	Gen. 37
18	Joseph Resists Temptation	Gen. 39:1-20
19	God Calls Moses	Exo. 3 – 4:20
20	Passover	Exo. 12:1- 46 13:19
21	Red Sea	Exo. 13:17 – 15:20
22	God Provides for People	Exo. 15:22 - 17:7
23	Ten Commandments	Exo. 19:1-19; 20:1-21; 24:3-8
24	Golden Calf	Exo. 24:12-18; 32:1-31a; Deut. 9:18-20; Exo. 31b-35
25	Laws: Sacrifices	Lev. 1:1-7:37; 11-14; 16-17
26	Miriam & Aaron Criticize Moses	Num. 12
27	Moses Sends 12 Spies	Num. 12:16-13:2; 13:17-14:45
28	Jericho	Joshua 1:1-9; 5:13 - 6
29	Ai & Sin in Camp	Joshua 7-8
30	Samuel	1 Samuel 1-3:21
31	Samuel anoints David King	1 Samuel 16
32	David vs. Goliath	1 Samuel 17
33	David & Bathsheba	2 Samuel 11-12:25a
34	Elisha & Angelic Army	2 Kings 6:8-23
35	Tall Gold Statue	Daniel 3
36	Daniel and the Lions	Daniel 6
37	God Promise Messiah	Isaiah 53
38	Angels Prepare for Jesus Birth/ Jesus Born	Luke 1:5-65; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-38
39	John the Baptist & Jesus is Baptized	Matthew 3:1-17
40	Temptation of Jesus	Matthew 4:1-11
41	Disciples Follow Jesus & First Miracle	John 1:29-51; 2:1-12
42	Jesus Cleanses Temple	John 2:13-21
43	Nicodemus	John 3:1-6, 9-10, 12, 16-18
44	Samaritan Woman	John 4:4-42
45	Great Catch of Fish	Luke 5:1-11
46	Paralytic	Mark 2:1-12
47	Mathew - Tax Collector	Mark 2:13-17
48	Roman Centurion	Matthew 8:5-13

49	Woman Sinner Anoints Jesus' Feet	Luke 7:36-50
50	Jesus Calms Storm & Madman's Soul	Mark 4:35 - 5:20
51	Bleeding Woman & Jarius' Daughter	Mark 5:21-43
52	Jewish Traditions	Mark 7:1-23
53	Jesus Heals Deaf Man	Mark 7:31-37
54	Peter Walk on Water	Matthew 14:22-33
55	Jesus Heals Son with Deaf Spirit	Mark 9:14-29
56	If Brother sins	Matt 18:15-17
57	Woman Caught in Adultery	John 8:2-11
58	Jesus Send 2 by 2	Luke 10:1-20
59	Good Samaritan	Luke 10:25-37
60	Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost Son	Luke 15:1-32
61	Poor Lazarus & Rich Man	Luke 16:19-31
62	Death & Resurrection of Lazarus	John 11:1-54
63	Divorce	Matt 19:3-9
64	Zacchaeus	Luke 19:1-10
65	Be Ready!	Matthew 24:36-51, 25:14-27
66	The Last Supper	Lk 22:7-20 Mt 26:28; Jn 13:4-30 Matt 26:30
67	Vine & Branches	John 15:1-8, 12-14
68	Jesus Pray Garden	Matt 26:31-35; Matt 26:36-39; Luke 22:43-44; Matt 26:40-44; Matt 26:45-50; Luke 22:50-51; Matt 26:52-56
69	Jesus Trial 1, 2, 3	Jn 18:12-24; Lk 22:55-58; Mt 26:59-66; Lk 22:59-65; Lk 27:66-71; Matt 27:3-5
70	Jesus Trial 4, 5, 6	Jn 18:28-38; Lk 23:7-16 Mt 27:15-23; Lk 23:23; Mt 27:26-30; Jn 19:4-15; Mt 27:24-26
71	Jesus Is Beaten, Crucified & Buried	Mt 27:32-33; Lk 23:32-33a; Mk 15:23-25; Lk 23:33b-34; Jn 19:19-24; Mt 27:39-43; Lk 23:39-43; Mt 27:45-46; Jn 19:28; Mt 27:47-49; Jn 19:30; Lk 23:46; Mt 27:51, 54; Jn 19:31-34; Mt 27:57; John 19:38-41; Mt 27:60
72	Jesus Resurrection	Matt 28:1-4; Mk 16:1-8; Jn 20:2-29
73	Emmaus Road & Jesus Appear Disciples	Lk 24:13-35; Jn 20:19-29
74	Jesus Commissions Disc - Ascend	Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:4-12
75	Holy Spirit Come & Thousands Believe	Acts 2:1-8, 12-24, 30-31, 29, 34, 32-33, 36-39, 41
76	Believer's Fellowship	Acts 2:42-47

### III. TELLING THE STORY

To use the CBS approach in discipleship, pick an event or a series of events which will relate to the level of your group. Remember you should read and study ahead of time all the passages pertaining to a particular event in your preparation to tell a story.

When you tell the story, first give an introduction to the story – this includes a brief review of the previous story, possibly a map of where the story took place, a brief factual explanation that will help make the story clearer. Then show the Bible and tell the participants, “*This is not my story. This story comes from the Bible – God’s Word*”. Then tell the story as clearly and accurately as possible. Be careful not to think of yourself as a “teacher” or “corrector”. Make sure they understand what happened in the story and watch the Holy Spirit move in their hearts.

In this series you are encouraged to learn use the “**5-Step Dialogue**” method. After telling the story ask the following questions in order.

**Step 1** - Ask the first series of questions:

1. *Who was in the story?*
2. *Where did the story take place?*
3. *When did the story take place (i.e. 40 days and 40 nights, 40 years, one night, 1 day, evening, 7 days etc?)*

**Step 2** - Tell the story again. Then ask the second series of questions:

4. *Who said what? Next said? Next said?*
5. *What happened? Then what? Then what?*

**Step 3** - Tell the story again. Then ask the third series of questions:

6. *What was the person thinking?*
7. *What was the person feeling?*
8. *What would you have thought or felt if you had been there*

**Step 4** - Tell the story again. Then ask the fourth series of questions:

9. *What was positive or good in this story?*
10. *What was negative or bad in this story?*

**Step 5** - Tell the story again. Then ask the final questions:

11. *Why did God tell us this story?*
12. *What are the main points of the story*
13. *What does God want me to:*
  - *Do?*
  - *Start?*
  - *Stop?*
  - *Change?*
  - *Improve?*

#### **IV. THE GOAL**

The goal of CBS is to establish local Churches in such a way that every man woman and child can hear and understand the gospel message, and those who accept Christ can be integrated in to a local fellowship and equipped for the work of ministry. This means that if you have a CBS group, intentionally work in such a way that it will become a church as it matures. Lead the participants into doing the functions of the church.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What is the difference between Inductive Bible Study and Chronological Bible Storying?
- In the “Five-Step Dialogue”, the speaker re-tells the story before each step. Why is repetition important in CBS?
- With whom in your target area would CBS be an effective way to witness and/or build up in their faith?

**SPIRITUAL CHARACTER:**

## **Lesson 11 –Understanding and Overcoming Self-Pity**

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Jesus gives us abundant life. We are forgiven, accepted as his adopted children and showered with unspeakable blessings. And yet, many Christians appear to live as if this were not true. Understanding the seriousness of sin while not understanding the effectiveness of Christ's sacrificial death leads them to misery, depression, and despair – all forms of what we will call self-pity. While self-pity may seem noble and even spiritual to some, it is actually an enemy of healthy spiritual growth. It will stifle your witness, your ministry, and your walk with God.

### **I. THE ROOTS AND RESULTS OF SELF-PITY**

Everyone experiences shame, remorse, depression and other forms of self-pity at some point. At its foundation, self-pity is nothing more than unbelief. It often results when problems cannot be solved, sins cannot be conquered, or hardships cannot be overcome. Self-pity is unbelief because it doubts the power of God to work through or in a situation. It might appear very spiritual, as if we have high standards, when in fact it is very prideful as in essence it is saying “my problems are so big even God cannot solve them.”

*Question 1: Describe a time when it seemed you had a problem that God could not solve.*

*Read 1 Samuel 31:1-4; 2 Samuel 16:23 and 17:23; Matthew 27:1-5*

Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas all committed suicide after their plans and lives went astray. These three examples show us the ultimate extreme that self-pity can lead to.

*Question 2: In the above passages, what words are used to describe Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas at the end of their lives?*

*Question 3: What brought about this state of affairs in their lives?*

Saul, Ahithaphel and Judas all wanted life on their own terms and had their own strategies, which we might call “false gospels”, to solve their problems. King Saul lived for the *approval* of the people (see 1 Samuel 15:24, 30). Ahithaphel enjoyed *being a great advisor* to the King. Judas *loved money and power*. When their false gospels seemed to be working, they were no doubt filled with pride. When they failed, these men fell into despair and self-pity. Self-pity happens when we lose hope that we can help ourselves, and we don't believe that God can help us either.

Note that self-pity is actually a form of pride. A person struggling with self-pity cannot stand the idea that he is in need of a savior other than himself. Therefore, in this kind of despair, Saul, Ahithaphel and Judas take their own lives. In these instances, suicide is the pride of self-pity taken to its ultimate extreme.

In 1555 a church leader known simply as John of Landsberg wrote "A letter from Jesus Christ to the Soul that Really Loves Him." In it, he imagines Jesus as saying, "*This near-despair and self-pity are actually a form of*

*pride. What you think was a state of absolute security from which you've fallen was really trusting too much in your own strength and ability. Profound depression and perplexity of mind often follow a loss of hope, when what really ails you is that things simply haven't happened as you expected and wanted. In fact, I don't want you to rely on your own strength and abilities and plans, but to distrust them and to distrust yourself, and to trust me and no one and nothing else. As long as you rely on yourself you are bound to come to grief."*

When viewed in terms of idolatry, self-pity occurs when our idols (false gospels) fail. Despair over ourselves comes from pride combined with failure, and often includes anger at God for taking our idols away.

## II. GODLY SORROW VERSUS WORLDLY SORROW

Satan, who is called "the accuser" (Rev 12:10), incites us to feel guilty. Satan wants nothing more than to keep people in a sad, doubting, and depressed condition because of their sin. When we give in to the accusations of Satan and fall into self-pity, we find ourselves carrying the burden that Jesus died to take away. We do this in ignorance of the rich, free, and everlasting love of God; in denial of the powerful, sacrificial suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ; and in rejection of the righteousness of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit which are ours as gifts. Getting people to see the disease (sin) without seeing the cure (Jesus), is one of Satan's most clever devices.

Of course just because Satan, who accuses us, is a liar does not mean we are without sin. Sometimes we may be guilty of the things that Satan accuses us of. That is why it is the job of the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin (John 16:8). There is a big difference between the conviction of the Holy Spirit and accusations of Satan. The Holy Spirit convicts in order to bring people to repentance and restoration, while Satan leaves us feeling unworthy and separated from God. The Apostle Paul explains the difference in his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 7:8-11).

### **Read 2 Cor. 7:8-11**

In this passage, the Apostle Paul notes the sorrow felt by the Corinthians while contrasting godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. The table that follows describes the difference.

	<b>Godly Sorrow</b> Conviction of the Holy Spirit	<b>Worldly Sorrow</b> Guilt from the world, the flesh and Satan
<b>Basic Focus</b>	Focuses on the wrong: <i>This act or attitude is unworthy of Christ and is destructive.</i>	Focuses on self-condemnation: <i>I am unworthy.</i>
<b>Primary Issue</b>	Deals with loss of our moment-by-moment communication with God: <i>This sin is destructive to me and interferes with my walk with God.</i>	Deals with the sinner's loss of self-esteem and wounded self-pride: <i>What will others think of me?</i>
<b>Primary Fear</b>	Produces fear of the danger of the act itself: <i>This is destructive to me and others, and it robs me of what God intends for me.</i>	Produces a fear of punishment: <i>Now I'm going to get it!</i>
<b>Agent</b>	Conviction comes by the Holy Spirit.	Satan, self-righteousness and pride produce guilt.
<b>Basic Results</b>	Leads to repentance that leads to salvation (2 Cor 7:10), the turning from sin to Christ: <i>Lord, I agree with You that my sin is wrong and destructive. What do you want me to do?</i>	Leads to death (2 Cor 7:10) depression and more sin: <i>I am just a low-down, dirty, rotten sinner, I quit.</i> ... or it leads to rebellion: <i>I don't care; I'm going to do whatever I want to do.</i>

<b>Interpersonal Results</b>	Restoration and a desire to remedy the harm done to others: <i>Father, what would You have me to do to right this wrong and restore the relationship with the one I have offended.</i>	Alienation and shame drive me away from the person wronged: <i>I can never face him again.</i>
<b>Personal Result</b>	Ends in the realization of forgiveness and joy: <i>Thank you, Lord that I am completely forgiven and totally accepted by You.</i>	Leads to depression, bitterness and self-pity: <i>I'm just no good.</i>

**Question 4:** *Describe a time in your life when you were confronted with a sin and responded with worldly sorrow (out of guilt).*

**Question 5:** *Describe a time in your life when you were confronted with a sin and responded with godly sorrow (out of conviction).*

### III. THO AND HUY DEAL WITH SELF-PITY

#### **Huy**

Huy feels that he doesn't have any close friends. Recently Quang, who serves as a church elder with Huy, has let him down again. Huy was hoping that Quang would go to a conference on evangelism with him. Their church really needs some help in this area and this conference seemed like a perfect way to kick off a new outreach emphasis. Huy got off work at the school where he teaches history to go to the seminar. Quang runs a small business that allows him to be flexible enough to go to anything - but he has decided not to go to the evangelism conference. Huy does not like to go to these things alone - and he does not think it will be good for the church for him to go alone. But Quang does not feel like going.

Huy had always thought that he and Quang were friends. But when he stops to think about it, he has always been the one to call Quang, to drop by for tea, and to invite Quang for tea. When Huy is with Quang they get along fine. But Quang never reaches out to Huy. Huy is really hurt by Quang's decision not to attend the conference. He feels pushed away, and this is not a new feeling. Huy is not aware of any sin he committed - but he is filled with depression and self-pity. He feels that he does not have any friends.

**Question 6:** *What is the root of Huy's pain?*

**Question 7:** *What should Huy do?*

#### **Tho**

Tho has been invited to be a judge for a Bible drama contest at a Bible college in a nearby city where he teaches one day a week. Three teams compete, and Tho and some other pastors have to decide which one portrays their Bible story the best.

As it turned out it was easy to be a judge for this contest. One of the teams was outstanding, another was average and the other team is terrible and everyone knows it. Tho announces the winner on behalf of all the judges. But he does not just announce the winner; he goes on to publicly scold the team that preformed so poorly. He says that team did not portray the Bible stories very accurately and that as Bible college students, they should know their Bible better than that. He calls them an embarrassment to the school.

What a mess this creates. Some students react to Tho very defensively, others break into tears. Tho realizes immediately that he has created a huge problem. His criticism hurt many people.

Realizing that he has sinned, Tho becomes unbelievably embarrassed - and this realization depresses him more than he can bear. He feels like a failure. He wonders how he can ever face his students again. He is filled with self-pity.

***Question 8: What is the root of Tho's pain?***

***Question 9: What should Tho do?***

#### **IV. BATTLING SELF-PITY**

##### **The Psalms**

The Psalms are filled with the inner thoughts of people dealing with some of life's most difficult struggles. Psalm 13, like many Psalms, starts out with a cry of despair to God and ends with praises and thanksgiving to God for who he is.

**Read Psalm 13** and note how David dealt with self-pity.

***Question 10: Describe the pain that David is feeling? Do you agree that he is facing self-pity?***

***Question 11: What does David do in his state of despair?***

In case you did not see the key thought here, note that David: 1) honestly bears his soul to God - he acknowledges his need in verses one and two. 2) He asks God for help - he does not try to fix things himself in verse three. 3) He believes in the unfailing love of God in verses five and six.

The real secret to fighting self-pity is to preach the Gospel to yourself. Note that these three things which David does correspond to the basic points of the Gospel. David admits his need and that he cannot do anything about it - but he acknowledges that God is able to save him and he puts his trust in that fact. In summary, the key to overcoming self-pity is to believe the gospel.

##### **Jesus' example**

Jesus lived a perfectly sinless life. Although he was tempted to sin, he never gave in to temptation (Heb 4:15). At his lowest hour, Jesus fought off self-pity in a way that is instructive for us. **Read Matthew 26:36-41** and note the way in which Jesus dealt with this.

<i>"He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee..." (v. 37)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He chose close friends to be with them</li></ul>
<i>"He said to them 'I am deeply grieved, even to death'"(v. 38)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He opened his soul to them</li></ul>
<i>"Stay awake and pray" (v. 41, see also 38)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He asked for their intercession and partnership in the battle</li></ul>
<i>"He threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me;" (v. 39)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He poured out his heart to his Father in prayer</li></ul>
<i>"yet not what I want, but what you want" (v. 40)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• He rested his soul in the sovereign wisdom of God</li></ul>

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- In what way do you struggle with self-pity?
- How is self-pity actually a form of pride?
- In your own words, explain the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow.
- What is the remedy for self-pity?

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# MONTH 7

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## Review of Month 6

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In the last month of training the main emphasis was on disciple making. You were asked to do the following:

From Lesson 7: Prayer and Fasting

Plan and experience the spiritual discipline of fasting. Below are a few ways that some Christians do this. You may wish to follow one of these, but the form is up to you.

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

From lesson 8: Introduction to Disciple Making

- Describe what kind of disciple making goals your church presently has in place.
- List the disciple making goals you think you should have.
- List the people you believe God is asking you to disciple.
- Begin to think about a discipleship plan for each of the people whom God wants you to disciple.

*Take some time to make a list of the things you have learned in your church planting ministry.*

## DISCIPLE MAKING

### Lesson 12: Discipleship – Toward Maturity

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On the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit brought the church into being and set in motion her worldwide evangelistic mission. Those who were converted by the preaching of the gospel that day were immediately baptized and incorporated into the Jerusalem fellowship. From that day on, dynamic, living “cells” – groups of disciples – began to reproduce and multiply into hundreds of congregations in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the world.

No matter where you are today, if you are involved in church planting, you are the result of and a continuing part of the process that began in Acts 2. You are called to lead others to turn to Jesus and to help them become more like Jesus. In other words, you are called to make disciples. How well are you doing that? In this session we will discuss some common causes and remedies of spiritual struggle in the lives of new believers.

#### I. MAKING DISCIPLES IN THE EARLY CHURCH

##### A. The Example and Commission of Jesus

Jesus Christ spent three years in earthly ministry. While his goal was to reach the whole world, and he did minister to large crowds, his main objective was to pour his life into 12 chosen men (Mt 10:2-4), believing that they would carry on the work which would lead to the transformation of the world.

Jesus trained these twelve by living out his beliefs and deeply loving them as if they were his own family. They lived, ate, rested and ministered together as they traveled from village to village. Jesus often preached to large crowds (Mk 4:1), but a main priority was to spend time alone with these 12 to explain his teaching (Mk 4:33-34). When they were ready, he sent them out to do the miraculous things that he did (see Luke 8:1, 9:1-2). Before Jesus left the earth, he commissioned his followers to carry on the work in his place (Mt 28:19-20, Jn 20:21).

**Question 1: Read Mk 3:14-19. What qualified these twelve to carry on Jesus’ work?**

##### B. The Day of Pentecost – Many turn to Jesus

The Holy Spirit of God descended upon 120 believers on the Day of Pentecost like never before (Acts 2). In a miraculous way about 3,000 people from all over the Roman Empire became believers after Peter’s sermon. Praise the Lord! This was a great harvest. But, this is not the end of the task. The gospel is to be preached in all the world (Mt 24:14, Ac 1:8). For that task, “converts” are not enough. They must be trained and nurtured to be able to disciple others. They must become part of the “harvest force”.

##### C. The Ministry of the Apostles – Many become like Jesus

What do you do with 3,000 converts? Disciples cannot be mass produced. How do you disciple them? The disciples did with these converts what Jesus had done with them. They stayed together, learned together, sharing everything – and they continued to grow (Ac 2:42-47)! The mature disciples became examples to the new ones. The new converts watched and learned as their leaders were persecuted (Ac 4:17; 5:18, 40-42) and as they preached the gospel at every opportunity (Ac 3:14-15; 4:10, 33; 5:30-31).

***Question 2:*** *Read the passages in the previous paragraph. What do you think the early believers learned from the Apostles?*

## **II. THE GOAL – SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

What is the goal of discipleship? **Christ-like believers who can reproduce!** This is also a definition of Christian maturity. It is what you want to see for all your converts. A person can live right, have the right theology and be a leader in a church, but if he or she does not know how to share their faith and train another in it, can you say that they are mature? The answer clearly is “no”. A believer is mature when he can be said to be Christ-like and can effectively help others be Christ-like (Mt 28:20 “... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”). Many believers will not reach this level of spiritual maturity unless they are challenged and nurtured toward it.

Of course disciples becoming disciple makers is exactly what Paul the Apostle advocated in his teaching and practiced in his ministry. This is clearest in 2 Timothy 2:2. Here, Paul instructs Timothy, who he himself has disciplined, to be a disciple maker of others, who will be disciple makers of others.

How can converts be brought up into maturity? There are many ways in which this can happen. Often attending church and participating in a small group is important, but it is not enough. Everyone has different areas of struggle, and individual, one-on-one attention is necessary to address these. After all can a baby feed itself? No, babies must be fed. So it is with spiritual food. Believers normally need to be disciplined concerning how to live the Christian life. This can happen in a loving relationship with a mature believer, meeting regularly (perhaps weekly) for prayer, Bible study and discussion concerning the needs of the younger believer.

***Question 3:*** *Do you know people who would say that they have been disciplined, but are not disciplers themselves? Why is this so? What can be done to prevent this from happening?*

## **III. IDENTIFY COMMON CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE**

One of the first things you should do in a discipleship relationship is to identify needs that should be addressed. What are the most common reasons for spiritual struggle? What keeps new believers from living lives which are committed to the Lord? What prevents believers from ministering effectively to others? In order for your disciples to grow, you must find ways to address these needs.

### **A. Security**

The first thing a new believer needs is to know that he is eternally saved from the moment he turns to Jesus. Problems may persist, sinful habits can be hard to break, and Satan will always try to discourage a new believer in his new-found faith. These struggles may cause a new believer to wonder if salvation is sure. However, as Paul says “*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*” (2Cor 5:17).

### **B. Fellowship - Love**

A new believer has become part of the family of God. They need the support, care, love and friendship of this new family if they are to grow to maturity. Mature believers should seek out newer ones and be their role models, teachers and friends. Likewise, new believers need to make an effort to be part of the Body whenever possible (Heb 10:25). Paul set this pattern for us in his words to the believers in the church he planted in Thessalonica: “*We loved you so much that we delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us*” (1Thess 2:7-8).

### **C. Spiritual Food - Truth**

Natural babies need to be fed several times a day. Spiritual babies need to be feed regularly as well. And their spiritual food is the truth found in God’s Holy Word (1Pet 2:2-3). A new believer needs to know that God speaks to him through the Bible and that he can trust the truth found in God’s Word (2Tim 3:16). He needs to be taught the Bible as he learns to study it himself. This is a critical part of the discipleship process.

***Question 4: How can you teach someone to study the Bible for themselves? How do you help them understand that the truth they are learning needs to impact their daily lives? How can you measure this impact?***

### **D. Training**

Paul instructed the Thessalonians “how to live in order to please God” (1Thess. 4:1). A disciple needs to know how to study God’s word, how to pray, how to resist temptation, how to repent of sin, how to worship, how to use his spiritual gift, how to share his faith, how to love others... This of course is a life long process.

***Question 5: What other needs do new believers have?***

***Question 6: Think back to when you were a new believer. What struggles did you have trying to live out your faith? How can you help your disciples when they face similar struggles?***

When you have identified their greatest area of need for your disciples, you must ask yourself: what kind of support must these people receive in order to address these needs? What must they have to effectively minister to others? At this point you must be realistic. Every one of your people faces problems – and so do you! Few are able to overcome everything they face alone. In fact that is one of the functions of the Body of Christ – to help one another grow spiritually.

## **IV. HELPING BELIEVERS OVERCOME SPIRITUAL HINDRANCES**

### **Your Role**

Who makes disciples? Only God is able to do that. You cannot simply teach all the right things and expect an automatic transformation of a person into a mature disciple. Yet, this task of discipleship has been given to the church! How can this be? The answer is that we must make disciples together with Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

As you work with your disciples, you will begin to understand their areas of struggle. Once this happens, it may be tempting to try and quickly “fix” these areas. However, anyone experienced in discipleship knows that this task is not so simple. How do you change people’s minds? How do you motivate their hearts to turn to God in all areas of life? Is it just a matter of telling them? Showing them? Requiring them to be different? Although a discipler may do all of these things, he also needs to meet the disciple where they are, love them, identify with them, suffer with them and point them to Jesus. We know this because it is how Jesus disciplined his own. Note the following points.

- Jesus taught by example (Luke 8:1, 11:1).
- Jesus taught through living situations (Mark 9:28-29).
- His ministry was personal (Mark 10:17-21).
- He did not hide his struggles (Heb 4:15).

- Jesus loved his disciples deeply (John 13:1).
- He identified with his disciples calling them “friends” (Jn 15:15). This was a radical departure from the cultural understanding of student teacher relationship in that day.
- Jesus delegated important work to his disciples (Lk 9:1-2, 10:1-4).

Remember, when helping people grow, the goal is not perfection but progress. Are people moving toward maturity, or away from maturity? Are they moving at all, or are they content to stay at a “comfortable” level of spiritual immaturity? They may not have many marks of maturity – but if they are moving in the right direction, continue to encourage them, and in time they will emerge as mature believers.

### **The Role of the Body**

Scripture makes it very clear that teaching and preaching, though they are part of discipleship, are not enough to help people grow. The Bible talks about many other essential ministries within the Body of Christ, such as:

- warning, encouraging, helping one another (1Th 5:14),
- correcting and rebuking (2Ti 4:2),
- refuting (Tit 1:9),
- helping one another turn from sin (Jas 5:19-20),
- speaking the truth in love (Eph 4:15),
- counseling one another (Col. 3:16),
- encouraging and building each other up (1Th 5:11),
- stimulating one another to love and good deeds (Heb 10:24),
- strengthening weaknesses (Heb 12:12),
- comforting and urging (1Th 2:11-12),
- restoring one another, carrying each other’s burdens (Gal 6:1-2),
- bearing with one another (Eph 4:2),
- forgiving one another (Col 3:13),
- praying for one another (Eph 6:18, Jas 5:16, 1Jn 5:16),
- confessing sin to one another (Jas 5:16),
- serving one another (Gal 5:13),
- accepting one another (Ro 15:7),
- honoring one another (Ro 12:10),
- doing good one to another (Gal 6:10).

If your disciple has truly set his heart on following Christ, he will welcome this kind of help. Talk with him about this and get his permission to help him in these ways. Thus, when it becomes necessary to help him deal with some issue, it won’t come as a surprise.

### **CONCLUSION**

Discipleship is crucial to any dynamic church planting movement. If we think of SCP as a train, then the wagons would be analogous to churches and the wheels would be analogous to discipleship. Discipleship keeps the whole train moving forward and on track. Just as you cannot have SCP without church planting, so you cannot have church planting without disciple making.

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- How long does it take for a new believer to reach maturity?

- What are the most important truths new believers struggle to understand or believe?
- What kinds of support are most critical for new believers in light of their needs?
- What is the relationship between discipleship and church planting?

**ASSIGNMENT**

- Prepare a discipleship plan for at least 10 people in your church or small group. Note that you don't have to personally disciple all 10 people; rather, you need to coordinate the discipleship ministry so that it happens. Your plan should describe the goals for each person, the primary discipler for each person, as well as how, when and where people will meet and what will be discussed. Share your plan with your mentor.

## CELL GROUP MINISTRY

### Lesson 13: Caring for Others

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#### I. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

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

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

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

In the same way, you want the members of your group to develop relationships between themselves. You need to model the process of building relationships, as well as provide opportunities for this to happen in your cell group. In order for relationships to grow and develop in a cell group, three components are necessary: love, prayer and time spent together.

#### A. Love One Another

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

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

#### B. Pray for One Another

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

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

### **C. Spend Time Together**

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

***Question 1: What are some ways that you could spend time with people from your cell group outside of the group meetings? What activities could you do together?***

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

## **II. DISCERN PEOPLE’S NEEDS**

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

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

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

***Question 2: Often it is not culturally appropriate for people to openly share about their problems or needs. What can be done to find out what needs exist, so that the group can begin to help?***

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

### **III. CARE FOR NEEDS IN YOUR CELL GROUP**

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

#### **A. Respond to Needs**

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **B. Exercise: Care for People**

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

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

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

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

### **ASSIGNMENT**

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

## TEAM WORK

### Lesson 14: Team Ministry

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Almost any difficult task is easier when a group works on it together. This includes church planting. A typical church planter may find that his work is never done. There is always a convert to disciple, always a sick person to visit, always an opportunity to share the gospel. He might say to himself, “I can’t do all this, even though I’m using every ounce of energy I have.”

It may surprise some to learn that not only is it hard for a church planter to do all the work that is required, it is wrong for him to do so. Any church plant should have team of leaders sharing the responsibility. This is the biblical model.

#### I. WHAT IS A TEAM?

What exactly do we mean by “team”? By “team” we are referring to *a small number of people who have complementary skills and who are committed to a common purpose, to which they hold themselves mutually accountable*. Working as a team involves working together with others on a task (such as planting a church), rather than doing it alone. As such, teamwork requires an agreed-upon goal that the group is working to accomplish. By doing the work together, the members of a team make use of the varying gifts and abilities of each member.

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

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

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

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

**Question 1: In your own words, how do you define the concept of team?**

**Question 2:** *Do you work with a team in your church planting ministry? Why or why not?*

## **II. BIBLICAL BASIS FOR TEAMWORK**

### **A. We Were Created to Be ‘Together’**

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

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

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

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

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

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

*But how can one keep warm alone?*

*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.*

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

### **B. Leaders Should Not Work Alone**

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

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

**Question 3:** *Why shouldn’t leaders work alone?*

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

We see teamwork again at several points in the New Testament. Jesus called His disciples and worked with them as a group. When Jesus introduced them to ministry, he multiplied their efforts by sending them out ‘two by two’ (Mk 6:7, Lk 10:1). Peter went with *other Christians* to evangelize in Caesarea (Ac 10:23). The Holy Spirit set apart Paul and Barnabas as the first missionary team (Ac 13:2). After the first missionary journey, this team became two teams (Ac 15:36-41). Paul had an open door for ministry, yet he held off from taking the

opportunity because he was alone at the time (2Co 2:12-13). When leaders were appointed in the early church, normally a group of elders was appointed to lead each church (Ac 14:23).

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

### **III. CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEAMWORK**

#### **A. A Common Vision and Understanding of the Task**

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

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

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

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

Here are some examples of purpose statements:

- Our team exists to plant a healthy, multiplying church in \_\_\_\_\_.
- We are working together to facilitate the birth and development of a Saturation Church planting movement in \_\_\_\_\_.

***Question 4: If you already work on a team, what is your purpose? Why does your team exist? Would all of the team members answer the same way?***

#### **B. Time Spent Together for Prayer and Planning**

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

##### *1. Pray Together*

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

##### *2. Discuss Individual Ministries*

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

### 3. Plan Together

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

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

### 4. Edify and Equip Each Other (As Needed)

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

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

## C. Relationships Characterized By Love

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

In order to achieve this kind of closeness, relationships among the group members must be based upon a special kind of love—God’s love. This love does not love another person because of his personality, looks, ability or intelligence. It is motivated by God’s infinite and unconditional love for us. When we apply this kind of love we encourage and build up one another as Paul says to the Thessalonians (1Th 5:11). Jesus Christ is the model for the leader who wants to learn to “consider others better than themselves” (Php 2:1-8).

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

***Question 5: If a team works together to accomplish a common task, what role does love play in the process?***

## D. Clear and Diverse Roles

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

- Evangelism
- Discipleship
- Worship leadership
- Cell group ministry
- Care for the sick
- Hospitality

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

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

***Question 6: How can you prepare people to be responsible for a particular aspect of ministry on a church planting team?***

### **E. Honest and Open Communication between Members**

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

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

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

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

If the conflict is interpersonal, remember:

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

***Question 7: Describe a good experience you had on a team either in ministry or in another situation. Which of the characteristics described above contributed to making it a good experience?***

### **QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

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

## Lesson 15: Developing the Church Planting Team

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There are all kinds of teams and even all kinds of church planting teams. Some church planting teams are formed before the ministry is launched. Some teams form as people come to Christ, mature in their faith, and join the team. In either case, knowing how to mobilize people to work effectively in teams is essential to the health of any church plant.

### I. FORMING THE TEAM

As you assemble a team for the spiritual task of church planting, you will need to seek out people who have three basic characteristics:

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

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

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

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

***Question 1: Where can you find people to join your church planting team? What criteria will you use to choose them? Who would you not want to be part of your team, and why?***

### A. Commitment to the Goal of Planting Churches

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

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

## **B. Godly Character**

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

Paul he told Timothy to choose “faithful” men (2Ti 2:2). In the same verse, he says they should be “able” to teach others. This reference to “ability” has led some to emphasize education or skill. However, a study of the Greek work used there (*ikanos*), shows that a better translation would be “worthy.” This shows us that godly character is the most important issue. Without godly character, we are not “worthy” of serving the Lord. It should be the primary quality that you look for in a team member. God will bless such choices. Whether your team members are men, women, or both, the same biblical principle would seem to apply. This does not mean that training, ability, or experience are of no value. But these things are secondary to a godly, Spirit-filled life.

***Question 2: What is the difference between being “worthy” to do something and being “able” to do something? Can a person be able without being worthy?***

## **C. Agreement to Maximize Strengths through Clear Roles**

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

Like the body, this diversity is valuable only if guided toward the common goal. It must have a head. In the same way, a team must have a head, or leader—probably you. The emphasis is on guiding the members into ministry, rather than being a dictator.

## **II. LEADING THE TEAM**

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

### **A. Develop Your Team Members' Relationships with God**

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

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

### **B. Develop Your Team Members' Relationships with Each Other**

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

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

### **C. Develop Team Members' Vision for Ministry**

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

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

**Question 3: *How often should a team talk about their vision, and why?***

### **D. Develop Your Team Members' Ministry Skills**

Most people avoid ministry if they do not have the skills required to carry out the task. Many people do not evangelize or study the Bible because they feel that they do not know how. Be willing to take time to improve the ministry skills that your team will need to plant the new church. Practice inductive Bible study together. Talk about and demonstrate several different ways to do evangelism. When training people for ministry, do not assume that good example and general instruction are sufficient. Some people need direct and personal contact (1Th 5:14).

### III. PHASES OF TEAM LIFE

Your team will not immediately or automatically function the way you might desire. Every team goes through a process of growth and maturation. The table below describes four common phases that teams normally go through as they grow and mature together. It is essential for the leader to be able to identify where his or her team is in regard to leadership, common purpose, relationships, roles, flexibility, communication and spiritual life. Each of these areas represents an important aspect of the overall health and maturity of a church planting team.

**Four Phases of Team Development**

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

You might expect a team to develop at the same level in all areas. However, in reality, they may be very immature in terms of leadership and specified roles, but more advanced in the area of relationships and communication. This is more realistic to expect.

This table has a two-fold purpose. One, it can be used by the leader to help identify where his or her team is in terms of development and maturity. Second, it can be used to help the leader to see how the team needs to

develop further, and how to tell when they have reached a higher level of development. For example, in the area of leadership, a team might let the leader make all the decisions and always tell them what to do. Using the chart, the leader sees that the team members need to participate more in making the decisions. He or she can then think of several ways to ask for input, request others to help, etc. in order to help the team grow and mature. This process can and should be repeated for all the areas that are listed.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

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

### **ASSIGNMENT**

Recruit people to be on your church planting team. On a regular basis (perhaps every four months), refer back to this chart to evaluate where the team is in the different areas and what you need to do as team leader to help them move towards being a mature, effective team. Set goals for yourself and discuss them with your mentor.

## **Lesson 16: Styles of Interaction**

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Interpersonal relationships are a large part of ministry effectiveness. As a church planter, your effectiveness is greatly influenced by your ability to understand and relate to other people. In this lesson we will look at several styles for interacting with others. This lesson will not be a lecture or even a mere discussion. Instead, you will have an opportunity to discover your own tendencies in dealing with others. This lesson will also be useful in helping you to understand others better.

### **I. EXERCISE: DISCOVER YOUR STYLE OF INTERACTION**

God has made us all different and calls us to different tasks. This means **everyone else is not just like you**. When we expect others to behave like us, to think like us, and to see things the way we do, then we end up building relationships only with people like ourselves. We then fail to appreciate others, and often find ourselves in conflict.

We need to take an objective look at ourselves in order to see how we affect others. We may offend others and not know it. We may feel unable to motivate others and not know why. The following section contains an exercise which can help you to discover your style for interacting with others. When you discover your interactive style, you can begin to make changes to maximize your strengths and minimize your weaknesses. This can reduce conflict with others, and help you to be more effective.

**A. Directions for Discovering your Interaction Style**

The table below contains four columns of statements. Respond to all of the statements in the table by putting a 0, 1, or 2 in the space provided beside each statement.

0 = This statement never describes you.

1 = This statement sometimes describes you.

2 = This statement describes you very well.

**Evaluating Your Interaction Style**

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
I grasp the big picture more quickly than others around me _____	I am a person who generates enthusiasm in people around me _____	People say I demonstrate patience and understanding _____	I can be counted on to carry out a task I am given _____
I like to make things happen quickly _____	I work best when I am free from the control of others _____	People say that I am easy to get along with _____	One of my greatest strengths is paying attention to detail _____
I am not very good at details _____	I often put people ahead of programs _____	I am a good listener _____	If a job is worth doing, it is worth doing very well _____
I often challenge the status quo _____	Management of time is difficult for me _____	People are just as important to me as the ministry program _____	I need to know exactly what is expected of me _____
When necessary, I will take control to make things happen _____	People like to be around me _____	I do best in situations where people work together in harmony _____	I don't want to make decisions without having all the facts _____
I sometimes find it hard to be a good team player _____	I tend to take it personally when people disagree with me _____	I am most effective when my work situation is stable and secure _____	I have difficulty in expressing my feelings _____
Some people say that I am not a very good listener _____	I don't do very well with facts and detail work _____	I do best when people let me know that I am appreciated _____	I am a cautious person who hesitates to take risks _____
I often get bored when my ministry becomes routine _____	I find it easy to express my thoughts and feelings _____	Too much change threatens me _____	I function well within known guidelines and policies _____
I get frustrated when other people resist my ideas _____	I do best when I sense that others really like me _____	My superiors can count on my loyalty _____	I am critical when my performance falls short of standards _____
I welcome challenge and change—the more the better _____	I am effective in motivating others to work together _____	I do everything I can to meet the needs of those who are close to me _____	People often wonder what I am thinking about _____
<b>Total for Column 1:</b> _____	<b>Total for Column 2:</b> _____	<b>Total for Column 3:</b> _____	<b>Total for Column 4:</b> _____

### B. Tallying

When you are finished, add up your answers in each column and write the totals in the spaces below each column. Refer to these numbers as you continue to work through the rest of the lesson.

### C. Interpreting the Results

There are four basic styles of interaction. The four columns in the above table represent these four styles.

You can now determine your normal interaction style by filling in the totals for each column in the spaces provided below. Next, find the highest number and place a “1” beside it in the space under “Rank.” Then, rank your second highest style as “2,” your third highest as “3,” and the lowest as “4.” If you have two columns with the same total, the rank for both would be the same (i.e. you might have a rank of “2” for both “Doer” and “Team Player”).

#### Your Style

<b>Totals</b>	<b>Style</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Total from Column 1:	<b>DOER</b>	
Total from Column 2:	<b>MOTIVATOR</b>	
Total from Column 3:	<b>TEAM PLAYER</b>	
Total from Column 4:	<b>THINKER</b>	

You now know which of these four interaction styles are your strongest and weakest. You are ready to look at what each one means, the various strengths and weaknesses of them, and what you can do to improve your interaction.

## II. THE FOUR INTERACTION STYLES

None of these four styles is better than any others. They all have their own strengths and weaknesses. God uses all personalities in His kingdom.

### A. The Doer

“Takes charge and rises to the challenge of bringing about change to make ministries more effective.”

Doers tend to be capable people, able to accept challenges and solve problems in a quick and effective way. They are people of action and can be depended on to get things done. Doers are not afraid to take risks; sometimes they take on too much work and may appear impatient when there is no apparent progress.

Example: Paul (Php 4:13)

<b><i>Desires Situations Which Allow:</i></b> Freedom, authority, variety, difficult tasks, opportunity for advancement, encourage individuality	<b><i>Responds Best to Others Who:</i></b> Provide direct answers, stick to business, stress logic, provide pressure
<b><i>Those who are similar may see you as:</i></b> Decisive, independent, efficient, practical, determined	<b><i>Those who are different may see you as:</i></b> Harsh, pushy, dominating, severe, tough

#### ***SOME ACTION STEPS FOR YOURSELF IF YOU ARE A DOER***

- Learn to listen, be patient
- Be less controlling
- Develop greater concern for people
- Be more flexible and supportive with people
- Explain why things are as they are

### B. The Motivator

“Motivates and influences others to work together to achieve important outcomes”

Motivators are optimistic and enthusiastic people who are very good at relating to others. They are often very articulate and can explain ideas and possibilities in a way that inspires others to get involved. Their tendency to get excited about new things may make it difficult for them to follow through on some tasks.

Example: Peter (Mt 14:28, 16:16)

<b><i>Desires Situations Which Allow:</i></b> Prestige, friendly relationships, freedom from control and detail, opportunity to motivate and help others, free expression of ideas	<b><i>Responds Best to Others Who:</i></b> Are friendly and democratic, provide for recognition and acceptance, seek social involvement
<b><i>Those who are similar may see you as:</i></b> Stimulating, enthusiastic, dramatic, outgoing, personable	<b><i>Those who are different may see you as:</i></b> Excitable, egotistical, reacting, manipulative, talkative

#### ***SOME ACTION STEPS FOR YOURSELF IF YOU ARE A MOTIVATOR***

- Be less impulsive—evaluate your ideas
- Be more results-oriented
- Control actions and emotions
- Focus more on details/facts
- Slow down, listen, don't talk as much

### C. The Team Player

“Cooperates readily with others to carry out the vision and plans”

Team players are supportive, loyal people who have strong sensitivity to the needs of others. They can be counted on to carry out tasks as assigned by their leaders and will not offend those they are committed to. Team players may not work well alone as they sometimes lack personal initiative.

Example: Barnabas (Ac 15:37-39)

<b><i>Desires Situations Which Allow:</i></b> Individual specialization, group identity, established work patterns, security, clear goals and job description	<b><i>Responds Best to Others Who:</i></b> Serve as a friend, allow time to adjust to change, allow freedom to work at your own pace, provide support
<b><i>Those who are similar may see you as:</i></b> Supportive, willing, dependable, reliable, agreeable	<b><i>Those who are different may see you as:</i></b> Conforming, awkward, dependent, slow, reticent

#### ***SOME ACTION STEPS FOR YOURSELF IF YOU ARE A TEAM PLAYER***

- Be less sensitive to what others think
- Be more direct
- Be more concerned with the task itself
- Face confrontation and be more decisive
- Learn to say ‘no’
- Do more to initiate action

### D. The Thinker

“Is motivated to carry out visions and plans with excellence and attention to detail”

Thinkers are conscientious, orderly people who have great perception for details. They can be counted on to follow through on projects that others find too complex. Thinkers are challenged by unexpected changes and tend to become rigid in the face of ambiguity.

Example: Luke (Luke 1:1-4)

<b><i>Desires Situations Which Allow:</i></b> Specialization, precision, planning, security, stability, limited risk of failure	<b><i>Responds Best to Others Who:</i></b> Provide reassurance, maintain supportive atmosphere, specify methods and standards
<b><i>Those who are similar may see you as:</i></b> Thorough, persistent, orderly, serious, industrious	<b><i>Those who are different may see you as:</i></b> Critical, stuffy, picky, indecisive, moralistic

#### ***SOME ACTION STEPS FOR YOURSELF IF YOU ARE A THINKER***

- Focus on doing the right things—not just on doing things right
- Respond more quickly
- Begin to trust your intuition and be less fact-oriented
- Be more willing to take risks
- Be more open and flexible
- Don’t be afraid to develop relationships

Do the results describe you? You may want to share your results with a spouse or someone who knows you well to see if they can verify these results. Remember that the styles do not match people perfectly. You may find that you do not fit exactly into any one of these four styles. For most people the two groups in which they scored highest will shed light on their style.

*Take some time to share what you have learned about yourself up to this point with the other trainees. In small groups answer the following questions:*

- What is your preferred working environment?
- What kind of people do you respond best to?
- Describe your actual working environment. How is it like or unlike your preference?
- Have you had difficulty influencing those whose style you suspect is different from your own?
- What have you learned about yourself that you did not realize before?
- What steps can you take to be more effective with those around you? Do you need to be more direct? Do you need to listen more? Do you need to be more outgoing?

## **SUMMARY**

What can you do, now that you know a few things about yourself, to be more effective with others? As was already said, each of these styles has its unique strengths as well as weaknesses. You will want to utilize your strengths and learn to grow through your weaknesses.

## **QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

- How do “doers” approach the church planting task? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- How do “motivators” approach the church planting task? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- How do “team players” approach the church planting task? What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- How do “thinkers” approach the church planting task? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

## **ASSIGNMENT**

- As a way to understand these four categories, pick out five people that you know from your circle of friends and quietly observe them in various situations and discreetly note their actions or statements that verify their interaction style.
- Consider the “action steps” that follow each of the styles. Identify two that you will consciously work on before the next training session. Share this with your mentor, and ask your mentor to give you feedback on how you are doing.

## SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

### Lesson 17: True Repentance

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Growth in holiness begins with the repentance that we experience at salvation. As we grow, God continues this work of making us holy by breaking our hearts of stone in order to make them new. Repentance then is an essential component of the Christian life. Note that the first words of Jesus recorded in the book of Mark (1:15) is a call to repent. Repentance is not only our introduction to the life God offers us in Christ, but it should be a way of life which continually leads us back to the grace of God. As Proverbs 6:23 says, “*Corrections of discipline are the way to life.*”

This is true even for church planters. That is church planters should be people characterized by repentance – people who make repentance a way of life – who model in word and deed their need for the grace of God. This is the mark of true repentance. It is an issue for the people in your church – and it is an issue for you!

#### I. WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is a deep recognition of sinfulness and ongoing independence from God. It is brought about by the work of the Spirit and brings a change of heart that includes the naming of specific sins, and returning to Jesus for cleansing and renewal. The fruit of repentance is joy and a life which is changed.

It is easy to fool ourselves with false repentance, such as surface changes in behavior, penance, promises to do better, or self-pity. True repentance is painful because it breaks our pride, as we see that we are more sinful than we wanted to believe. It confirms our need for Christ, and when we turn to God through Jesus, brings great joy as we are forgiven, accepted and loved, and as his power alone changes our hearts.

Repentance is a change in the perceived source of life. To repent you must forsake the thing(s) that you previously believed gave you life. Doing this feels like a death as you must die to the things (reputation, money, pleasure, etc) that you thought gave you life. Our tendency to drift away from God requires that we pray for and seek repentance as an ongoing lifestyle. Isaiah 30:15 says “*This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy one of Israel, says: In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.*”

**Question 1: Why should believers be characterized by, or known for, their repentance?**

#### II. CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE REPENTANCE

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

##### A. Acknowledge Your Sin

The first trait of true repentance is a humble acknowledgment of our sin. David confesses in verse 3, “*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.*” One of the great diseases of sin is that it blinds and deceives the heart. David lived under this deception for nearly a year, until Nathan the prophet

confronted him with his sin through a story. But the moment that Nathan reproved David, David responded by humbly confessing, “I have sinned.”

**Example**

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

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

**Question 2: What is wrong with repenting only of behavior?**

**B. Realize the “Sinfulness of Sin”**

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

**C. Be Brokenhearted Over Sin**

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

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

**D. Turn to God in Faith**

Rejecting sin is not always true repentance. Paul complements the Thessalonians in that they “*turned to God from idols*” (1Thess 1:9). The implication is that repentance has two parts: 1) rejecting sin and 2) turning to God. Just as a person may try to turn to God without rejecting sin (idols), so a person may reject their sin (idol) and fail to turn to God. Both are wrong. In turning to God, we must reject all competitors.

There is only one God and He is the source of all we need. The root of sin is trying to get what we think we need apart from God. A truly repentant person recognizes this.

**Question 3: Why must a person reject sin in order to embrace God?**

**Question 4: Turn to Psalm 51 and read it out loud. How do you know that David was truly repentant?**

### **III. FALSE REPENTANCE**

#### **Apathy and Penance**

Sin can deceive us about what it means to be truly repentant. Let us be aware that it is easy for us, on the one hand, to not sense the true “sinfulness” of sin. On the other hand, it is easy to turn our repentance into a penance by which we try to pay the penalty of our sin through our own suffering. Both are just as repulsive in the eyes of God, because both are full of arrogant presumption. To be apathetic about sin is to fail to see God’s holy standard. But to try to make ourselves worthy of God’s forgiveness through our penance is to fail to acknowledge our true need for God’s grace. We have a Savior who alone paid the terrible penalty of our sin and who provides the only righteousness acceptable in the eyes of a perfectly holy God.

The great danger for the “religious” person is to assume that his self-imposed suffering for sin (penance) will make him acceptable to God. Here again he is making little of the holiness of God, and little of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, while he is making much of himself. Someone might say, “Well, I am a Protestant. I don’t do penance for my sin.” Do you really think so? Do you cry over your sin and beat yourself up inside for the wrong you have done? Do you sometimes feel that God cannot truly forgive you, because your sin is too terrible? Do you sometimes try to do something to make up for your sin so that you think that God now accepts you? These are forms of penance and are not true repentance, and if your repentance doesn’t produce the “fruit of repentance,” maybe it is because you are not repenting, but simply doing penance.

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

#### **Examples of False Repentance**

Having read the previous description of true repentance, consider the following passages. Are these examples of true repentance?

**Question 5: 1 Sam. 15. - Is Saul repentant? Why or why not?**

**Question 6: Hosea 6:1-6 - Are the Israelites repentant? Why or why not?**

**Question 7: Matthew 27:1-5 - Was Judas repentant? Why or why not?**

**Question 8: Luke 15:17-21 – Was the prodigal son repentant? Why or why not?**

#### **IV. TRUE REPENTANCE AS A WAY OF LIFE**

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

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

##### **A. The Father is Waiting to Forgive Us**

Children may hide important information from their parents out of fear of punishment. In the same way most people will not be honest enough to acknowledge their sin unless they are certain that they will be able to bear the punishment. It is important to learn that repentance begins and ends with the love of God. Note Isaiah 44:22: *"I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you"*; and Romans 2:4: *"God's kindness leads you toward repentance."* We will not repent unless we know we have a loving heavenly Father. The prodigal son would never have returned home if he had believed his father was a mean, vindictive old man. Genuine repentance is impossible apart from genuine faith. Repentance includes a renewed desire to be in fellowship with God, and to be embraced by the Father again.

We have nothing to fear when we repent of our sin. We cannot bear the punishment for our sin. Jesus Christ already has in our place! Truly *"there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Ro 8:1). We can be honest about our sin since we know that God is waiting to forgive us (1Jn 1:9, Heb 4:16). God invites us to the deep wells of His grace, that we might not be afraid to sincerely draw near to Him in all His holiness. Honesty and transparency grow best in the soil of unchanging love, and this is what He offers to us by his grace.

**Question 9: Do you believe that God is waiting to forgive you when you have sinned?**

##### **B. Repentance is an Honest Admission of our Real Problem**

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

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

### C. God is Committed To Working In Us

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

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

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

### V. THE BLESSINGS OF TRUE REPENTANCE

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

When we repent of our sin – God not only forgives us (one blessing) – but He transforms us as well (another blessing). We find victory over the sins that we admit to God. As 1John 1:9 says he forgives us and “cleanses us from all unrighteousness.” It has been said that conscience repentance leads to unconscious holiness (see also Prov 28:13).

David expresses another of these blessings when he says as a statement of fact that God “will not despise a broken and contrite heart.” (Ps 52:17). God will never turn away from a heart that is broken over its sin. This is always the way back to God, and we will always find a welcome when our heart is broken over our sin. He delights in this kind of heart and will draw this heart near to Himself.

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

### CONCLUSION

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

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is true repentance?
- What is the difference between repentance and penance? Define both. How can I recognize when my repentance has turned into penance?
- List some of the blessings of true repentance.
- Read Luke 24:46, 47 and Acts 2:38. Since repentance is our message, should it not also be our practice?
- Do you feel that God rejects you when you have repented of your sin? Why do you sense this rejection?
- Do you think that you should be the first to repent in your church? Why or why not?