



# FOUR LEVELS OF THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

# LEVEL 4



**MULTIPLY**  
TWO MONTHS

DISCIPLESHIP MANUAL

STRATEGY OF JESUS SIMPLIFIED

**strategy**



**APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY  
OF THE FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS**

## **STRATEGY OF JESUS**

SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

LEVEL 4 MULTIPLY

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SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

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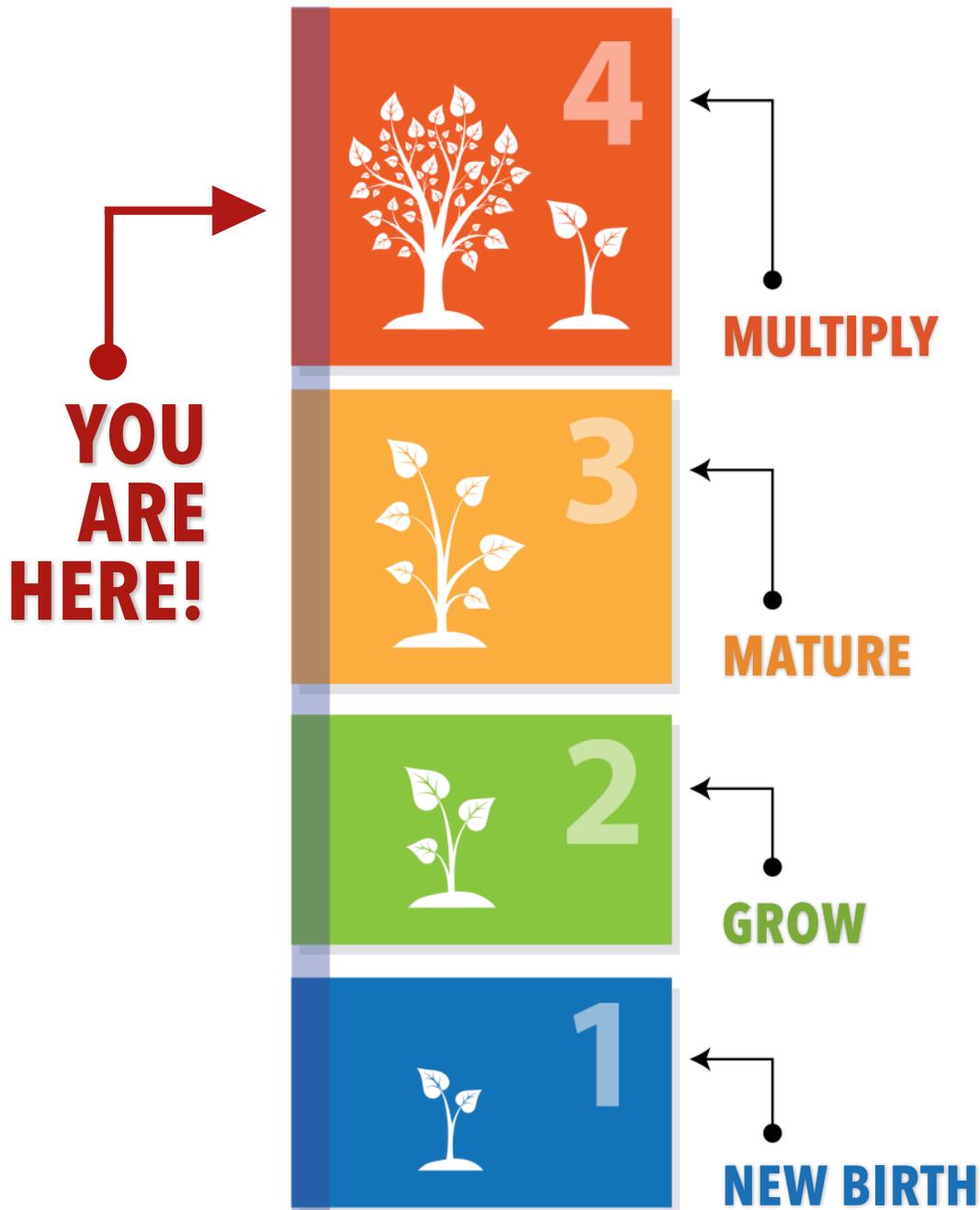
DISCIPLESHIP  
MANUAL

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## FOUR LEVEL OF THE SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP





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## Lesson 1 - Bearing Fruit and Death to Oneself

*For what purpose has God called us? What does it mean to bear fruit for Him and how do we get it? How are bearing fruit and dying to oneself related?*

John 12:24-26: ***“<sup>24</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. <sup>25</sup> He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”***

### 1. INTRODUCTION

How long do we have to wait until the seed sprouts and bears fruit? A few days? Months? Years? It depends on the fruit we expect. It depends on the soil. It depends on several factors that we cannot control. We have no power to bring it to life. We can only choose to continue sowing, even though the challenge of a delay has caused many to give up. Some of our prayers will receive immediate answers. Perhaps others will only be answered after our departure. Some of our words will bear fruit in a short period of time, but other times our preaching will have to wait years, perhaps decades, before we can see results. What does all this teach us? We can only bear fruit with patience and personal surrender.

### 2. OUR PURPOSE IN LIFE IS TO BEAR FRUIT

Our main purpose in life is to bear fruit for the glory of God. Everything else is secondary. Bearing fruit for the Lord is the reason He gave us life. The fruit we bear on this Earth should be to do all the good we can. But in order for this to happen, we need to die as Jesus said: ***“<sup>24</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. <sup>25</sup> He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life”*** John 12:24-25.

What does dying mean according to this Scripture? Or what does the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies, in verse 24, represent to us? Every time my will goes against or is different from God's revealed will and I choose to obey Him, although as a human I dislike it, it hurts me, or harms me, the grain of wheat that represents my will "falls into the ground and dies". To sow that grain of wheat, which represents me, is to die to my own personal interests; death to the prestige of this world, to my own plans and projects; to be able to confess with the Apostle Paul: ***“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...”*** Galatians 2:20. To embody the life of Christ means a conversion that is not limited to what we believe doctrinally, but revolutionizes and transforms our genuine way of life, our values, our desires and our priorities.

That is why loving the world and following Christ are completely incompatible (John 12:25). Leaders: What are your priorities in life? What are your genuine dreams and desires? How you answer these questions will depend directly on whether you love this world or hate it for Christ's sake; in other words, have you died yet so that the life of Christ may be embodied in you? Your answer will show everyone whether the grain of wheat, which represents your will, has fallen to the ground or still remains intact and unfruitful.





May Christ be in us and with us; that is what an abundant life embodies (John 10:10). The rest will only result in emptiness, vanity and death. What will become of you at the end of your life when the final accounting is made? How will the Lord evaluate your service to Him? 1 Corinthians 3:13 - ***“Each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.”*** The only thing that will remain at that time will be the fruit that you have been able to bear in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God. This is why John says that ***“And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever”***<sup>1</sup> <sup>1a</sup> John 2:17.

### 3. THE FRUIT IS OBTAINED WITH PATIENCE

James 5:7 ***“...See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.”*** Our acts of love and kindness in the lives of our children, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the people around us are not always met with immediate gratitude and a just reward. Recognition is not always instantaneous, nevertheless we are still challenged to keep sowing:

***“In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good”*** Ecclesiastes 11:6. Therefore, we will persevere in prayer even if we do not see the answers on the horizon. We will preach, even when we only have passive listeners. We will love, even if cold-heartedness surrounds us because He who sent us to sow never said it would be easy.

We will all ask ourselves at certain times in our life if our love is worth it. At other times, we will cry in the midst of so much indifference. Even divine silence will make us doubt the efficacy of prayer. However, time has shown us that those who sow in tears shall reap in joy: ***“<sup>5</sup> Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. <sup>6</sup> He who continually goes forth bringing his sheaves with him ,shall doubtless come again with rejoicing ,bearing seed for sowing ,weeping*** Psalms 126:5-6.

It is very likely that much of the fruit of our efforts will only be seen in eternity. But eternity is precisely the only thing that counts. That is why we do not want to be with those who go back. We want to believe until the end, fight until the end, sow until the end because the Spirit raises His voice within us to remind us that our work has a reward and that a delay in receiving an answer should never prevent us from walking. The Spirit tells us that there is a God at the end of this journey, which assures us that working for Him will never be in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:56-58: ***“<sup>56</sup> <sup>57</sup> .and the strength of sin is the law ,The sting of death is sin But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>58</sup> ,be steadfast ,my beloved brethren ,Therefore .knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord ,always abounding in the work of the Lord ,immovable***

Galatians 6:8-10: ***“<sup>8</sup> or he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. <sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. <sup>10</sup> especially to those ,let us do good to all ,as we have opportunity ,Therefore .who are of the household of faith***

Hebrews 6:10: ***“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”***



Isaiah 55:10-13: ***“<sup>10</sup> For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup> So shall and it ,but it shall accomplish what I please ,it shall not return to Me void ;My word be that goes forth from My mouth .shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it <sup>12</sup> For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. <sup>13</sup> Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”***

#### 4. THE FRUIT IS OBTAINED BY DYING

In John 17, when the Cross was imminent, Christ the Lord rejoiced, not in the miracles, not in teaching about Himself (those were means, but not the end) but in the lives saved, formed and led; in other words, in the fruit of everything that He had sown. His very life had to be sown to bear that fruit, and it should be the same in our case.

The eternal salvation of those who recognize us as a spiritual authority (our spiritual children) is our treasure and goal. Our job is to collaborate with the work of the Holy Spirit so they can mature and be established in Christ, since they will be our fruit. This is a job with individual responsibilities, but one that encompasses the whole Church and can only be fulfilled from within because at the center of God's will for our life, individually, and for His church, as a group, is that we bear fruit.

Someone said, "Life is like a coin. You can spend it any way you wish, but you only spend it once." Our work and word will be judged by the Lord in light of the fruit they produced. When the Church has passed from here, when we are no longer in the world, when this world has also passed away, what else will be valuable? Absolutely nothing. God will honor only those who have borne fruit. The rest, things such as man's opinions, prestige, fame or recognition, will no longer exist. The world will pass away along with all its desires, and only those who have done God's will can be with Him forever (1 John 2:17).

Luke 9:23 - ***“let him deny himself ,if anyone desires to come after Me” ,said to them all [Jesus] Then He“ .and follow Me ,and take up his cross daily*** The term cross that Jesus so often spoke of has been misinterpreted among christians. For many, carrying the cross has to do with an illness or a family problem. For others, the cross is a job they do not like to do or a lack of character. But none of that has to do with the biblical meaning of the Cross in the life of a christian disciple. The Cross represents death, and most of all death to oneself.

On several occasions, Jesus said that carrying the cross is a prerequisite of the discipleship process.: ***“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”*** Mark 8:34 NIV. The christian writer William McDonald defined the believer's cross as follows: “The cross is the emblem of persecution, shame and abuse that the world placed upon the Son of God, and that the world will place upon all those who choose to go against the tide.”

Therefore what does "carry the cross" mean to the Lord's disciple? It means at least these seven things:

- (1) Keeping ourselves dead to sin and, therefore, in victory over the world and Satan: ***“<sup>5</sup> And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. <sup>8</sup> He who***



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- sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” 1 John 3:5,8 “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” Galatians 6:14.***
- (2) Tell the truth at all times, walk in the light, and rebuke with our testimony the works of darkness: ***“7 Therefore do not be partakers with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), 10 finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.” Ephesians 5:7-12.***
- (3) Do not be ashamed of the Lord before men: ***“8 Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. 9 But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God” Luke 12:8,9.***
- (4) It means the power of God, although for many—including certain kinds of believers—it is foolishness: ***“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” 1 Corinthians 1:18.***
- (5) It is persecution and a stumbling block: ***“And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased” Galatians 5:11.***
- (6) All kinds of suffering: ***“4 But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, 5 in ,in imprisonments ,in stripes 23 ;in fastings ,in sleeplessness ,in labors ,tumults Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches” 2<sup>a</sup> Corinthians 6:4,5; 11:23-28.***
- (7) Prison and death: ***““5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” Timothy 4:5-8.***



We have to carry our cross as disciples of the Lord, if we want...

- ...to know Jesus: Those who did not know Him turned back, but the disciples said, **“<sup>68</sup>to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup>Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”** John 6:68,69.
- ...to demonstrate our love for Jesus: **“...I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”** Luke 7:47. Study Luke 7:36-50.
- ...to have a life with Jesus: **“...For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him”** 2 Timothy 2:11; John 12:24-26; Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35.
- ...to reign with Jesus: **“If we endure, we shall also reign with Him...1 ”** Timothy 2:12; Luke 22:29,30; Matthew 19:28; 25:34; Revelation 20:4.
- ...to receive the reward from Jesus: **“for he...” [Moses] “looked to the reward** Hebrews 11:24-26; Matthew 5:11,12; Revelation 11:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:8,14.

There are many who want to be disciples of Jesus and work for His kingdom, but they reject the Cross; and that, dear brethren, is simply not possible. We cannot seek the glory of God and at the same time that of men (John 12:42,43; Galatians 1:10). Being fruitful for the Lord and dying to ourselves are inseparable matters. How many of us are willing to walk along the path of the Cross? How many of us are willing to put to death all that we are today? Let us remember what Christ said: **“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple”** Luke 14:27.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Our life here, our walk with him, bears fruit or consequences of eternal significance. The things we do for His kingdom on Earth, the difficulties we face daily, and the afflictions we suffer; everything has a why, a purpose and a final goal. Let us not forget! Also, let us carry the cross even if it causes us pain. Let us deny ourselves whenever necessary, because right now we are weaving **“fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”** Revelation 19:8.

May the Lord help us invest our life, to "sow" in generosity and "lose it" in the concept of the world; so that we may be the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies, but at the same time manages to bear much fruit for the glory and honor of His blessed name! Amen.

The assignment for this lesson is to give a brief answer to these two questions: What are your priorities in life? What are your true dreams and desires?

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## Lesson 2 - God's Supreme Call

*What is God's call? How does it occur and what is its main purpose? Why is personal ambition in leadership dangerous? What should be the goal or objective of every servant of God?*

Jeremiah 20:7-9: ***"O Lord, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; everyone mocks me. <sup>8</sup> For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, "Violence and plunder!" Because the word of the Lord was made to me a reproach and a derision daily. <sup>9</sup> Then I said, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name." But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not."***

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The scripture we just read records one of the lowest points in the journey of Jeremiah the prophet. Not that sin had caught him by surprise or that he made a wrong decision. Rather, he had become depressed and wanted to end once and for all the torment that his ministry was to him. This type of "decline" is common to those of us who have been called to serve as leaders among God's people. Every leader will feel the desire to walk away from everything at least once in their life. Jeremiah's experience and words provide us with an interesting perspective on the origin of true leadership in the Bible.

### 2. IN SPITE OF THEMSELVES

The effective leader, the leader God uses, rarely seeks to become a leader. On the contrary, in biblical history we can see that in general the leaders who became prominent at first resisted God's call on their lives. These people would have preferred to be somewhere else, fulfilling a different mission than the one the Lord had in mind. Let us look at four examples.

- (1) Moses argued at length with Jehovah, looking for a way to convince Him that he was not the right person to speak with Pharaoh again.: ***"<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" <sup>1</sup> Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'" <sup>10</sup> Then Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." Exodus 3:11; 4:1,10.***
- (2) Gideon delayed, with several tests or signs, accepting the instruction that the angel of God had brought him.: ***"<sup>15</sup> So he said to Him, "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." <sup>17</sup> Then he said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who talk with me. <sup>36</sup> So Gideon said to God, "If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said- <sup>37</sup> look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on***



***all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said"***  
Judges 6:15,17,36,37.

- (3) David was busy taking care of his father's sheep when Samuel came to anoint him as king.: ***"<sup>11</sup> And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep. And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here."<sup>12</sup> So he sent and brought him in. [...] And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!"<sup>13</sup> Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward..."*** 1 Samuel 16:11-13.
- (4) Jeremiah argued that he was too young to be a prophet of God.: ***"<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: <sup>5</sup> "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."<sup>6</sup> Then said I: "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth."<sup>7</sup> But the Lord said to me: "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak." Jeremiah 1:4-7. This young man did not give in easily to the divine call, but the Lord was stronger than him and overcame him.: ***"O Lord, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed..."*** Jeremiah 20:7.***

Simply put, these men became leaders in spite of themselves. The humble beginning of each one and their subsequent journey of faithful service to God, mark a clear difference with the other type of leadership that results from personal ambition.

### 3. DESTRUCTIVE AMBITION

How many times do we hear people, who are restless and complainers, reveal "how miserable they are in the church" because they were made "for bigger things"? they do" , "I am a nobody here" , "Nobody takes me into account" .are frequent expressions of these people "not appreciate me Actually, "leaders" like these have endless stories of lament for the opportunities that, supposedly, others did not give them.

But beware: God is not going to use a leader who complains. The leader who works anonymously, who is faithful in the little, will be the one who usually occupies higher level positions—positions that he would have preferred not to occupy. He will have God's blessing in his work, and will be very effective in what God has called him to do (Proverbs 22:29).

A few years ago, a congregation lost its pastor. The man of God had managed to form a good group of leaders but when he died, a battle began to inherit his position. What happened in the end? The ambition of those men eventually neutralized their ministries and caused a serious crisis in the church. The interesting thing about the case is that the only minister who did not wish to occupy the position, the only one who did not fight for it, was chosen!



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This is the way things are in the Kingdom. Often those who are willing are not taken into account and those who are not willing are called. That is the Lord's most effective way for ministry not to be driven by anyone's ambition, but by a sense of unworthiness, gratitude, and commitment to the supreme calling.

Philippians 3:13-14: <sup>13</sup> ***Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.***

#### 4. JESUS' CALLING

What is the supreme calling? Basically, it is to win Christ as the apostle Paul said: ***“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ”*** Philippians 3:8

The supreme calling is a goal, and at the same time a process. To gain Christ is to seek Him until we know Him. It is to persevere until we develop a relationship of trust with Him and come to know what He expects from each of us; to do what He entrusted to us and thus receive His approval: ***“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”*** 2 Timothy 2:15.

To follow the supreme calling is to seek God's favor on our lives: ***“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ”*** Galatians 1:10. As God's servants, we were not called to be well liked by others, please everyone, prosper in our careers, accumulate goods, experience pleasures, enjoy life, be successful, be accepted and honored, nor to have many friends, contacts, influence, fame, power, renown, etc.

There will always be voices in our life that call us to all those things, but as children of God we must learn to differentiate the divine voice from the voices that only want to distract us. Let us always remember this! The voice of the Lord is totally different from the others. Jesus calls us to serve Him, not to serve ourselves. He calls us to be where He was, to walk where He walked, and experience what He experienced for us...the Cross: ***“...If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily...”*** Luke 9:23.

Some time ago, during a service, I witnessed how one brother "prophesied" to another, telling him that one day he would become a bishop. Later, when I met up with the "future bishop," I counseled him:

“Please, brother, do not look downward. I know that what you were told sounds great, but you need to understand that it amounts to very little compared to all that God has for you. He has prepared greater things for you than a religious position or title. Please, do not get distracted by fame. Do not listen to all the voices that speak to you. It is better to set your eyes on the goal; and the goal is Christ. A disappointment related to the "prophetic" word you received could undermine your trust in God in the future and even cause you to be lost, as has happened with so many men. Of course, there are prophecies from God but there are also those of man, as was the case during the time of Jeremiah.



Perhaps the one who prophesied to you that you would become a bishop had good intentions, but that does not take away from the fact that his words probably did not come from God but from his own emotions. Be careful."

With good reason Solomon recommends not taking to heart everything that is spoken! (Ecclesiastes 7:21) And how beneficial it is to our leadership for us to be faithful where we are right now, so that in God's perfect timing, He may place us where He desires.: ***"<sup>10</sup> He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. <sup>11</sup> Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? <sup>12</sup> And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?"*** Luke 16:10-12.

### 5. CONCLUSION

A true leader, an authentic servant of God, is certainly not the one who has the desire to shine, but it is the one who is obligated to assume a certain function or role at God's insistence, and because of the urgent need all around him as was the case with Moses, Gideon, David, Jeremiah and many others.

The world is facing a moment of extreme urgency. The end of Grace is fast approaching and God's call to us is more audible and urgent than ever. Please let us hear Him and seek the face of God, serving Him with all of our heart. Let us preach His word. Let us win souls for Him. Let us make disciples. Let us expand His kingdom. And let everything we do be for His glory.

***"Entre tanto que voy, ocúpate en la lectura, la exhortación y la enseñanza. <sup>14</sup> No descuides el don que hay en ti, que te fue dado mediante profecía con la imposición de las manos del presbiterio. <sup>15</sup> Ocúpate en estas cosas; permanece en ellas, para que tu aprovechamiento sea manifiesto a todos. <sup>16</sup> Ten cuidado de ti mismo y de la doctrina; persiste en ello, pues haciendo esto, te salvarás a ti mismo y a los que te oyeren."*** 1 Timothy 4:13-16. This is God's supreme call!

The assignment for this lesson is to write a brief statement about Luke 16:10-12.

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## Lesson 3 - Receptive to Counsel and Instruction

*Why is it important to develop an ability to receive counsel and instruction? How can we have a heart receptive to constructive criticism? How does the heart and ability play a role in learning?*

Proverbs 1:5 ***“A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,”***

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Increase learning, attain wise counsel, learn constantly. Proverbs 1:5 tells us about the elements that are essential for the development of a healthy life; especially in the area of leadership. One of Israel's characteristics was their rejection of advice and instruction because they were hard-hearted. As leaders, we are aware of the need to receive advice or instruction, which, in the end, encourages us to improve and continue serving the Lord with excellence.

### 2. A HEART RECEPTIVE TO COUNSEL

Ecclesiastes 4:13 is an interesting passage from the Bible that says: ***“Better a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more.”*** It is not difficult to understand why an old king, especially if he was foolish, thought and felt that he was above receiving any admonition or exhortation. After years of giving orders, he could have easily developed a mindset that, plain and simple, was no longer able to harbor the notion that he might need to receive advice from others.

His words and commands had become law a long time ago. For him, good had become synonymous with his will, and evil had become synonymous with everything that was contrary to his desires and will. Soon, he would not even consider the idea that someone with enough wisdom existed who could be capable of admonishing him.

He had to be a foolish king to get himself tangled up, and an old king to allow it to tighten to the point that he himself could not unravel it. Furthermore, he had to have allowed it long enough that he no longer realized its existence.

Without studying the moral process that led him to become hard-hearted, the time had come for the bell to ring. In all aspects he was a lost man. His old, weakened body was held together to provide a portable tomb that housed a soul that was already dead. Hope had departed long ago. God had given him over to his haughtiness and boastfulness; soon his physical body would also die, and his death would be like that of every fool.

Israel rejected counsel several times in its history, and each time it was unfailingly followed by God's judgment. When Christ came to the Jews, He found them filled to the brim with arrogant self-confidence that does not accept any kind of instruction. “We are Abraham's seed” they told him coldly when He told them about their sins and called attention to their need for salvation.

Ordinary people listened to Him with pleasure and repented, but the Jewish religious leaders felt like the rooster in the chicken coop; they had acted as owners and lords for so long that they were unwilling to surrender their privileged position. Like the old king, they had become accustomed to always being right. To them, rebuke was synonymous with insult. They considered themselves beyond all reproach.



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Some Christian organizations, churches, and leaders have shown a tendency to make the same mistake that destroyed Israel: the inability to receive counsel and instruction. After a time of growth and successful work, an attitude of self-glorification arises. Success itself becomes the cause of subsequent failure.

Leaders go as far as accepting themselves as being chosen as God's best. They have become special objects of divine favor; their success is proof enough that it is so. Therefore, they have to be right, and anyone who tries to hold them accountable is instantly dismissed as meddling, unlawful, who should be ashamed to dare to rebuke those who are their superiors and the best.

If anyone believes that we are merely playing with words, let them approach any successful religious leader and draw their attention to some of the weaknesses or sins of their leadership or organization. Such a person will receive a quick brush-off, and if they dare to continue, they will be confronted with reports and statistics that "prove" they are totally wrong and, therefore, has no right to make such observations. "We are Abraham's seed" will be the tone of his defense. And who is going to dare to find defects and faults in "the seed of Abraham"?

Those who are already in that condition, where they can no longer receive instruction, will probably not take advantage of the warning. After man has fallen off the cliff, there is not much that can be done to help him; but we can place indicators and signs along the way to prevent the next passerby from falling off the cliff. Following are a few.

### 3. HOW TO DEVELOP A RECEPTIVE HEART

First, do not defend your leadership, church, or organization against criticism. Jesus did not defend himself against His critics. If the criticism is false, it cannot hurt you. And if it is true, you need to listen and do something about it.

Second, do not proclaim or rely on what you have accomplished in your leadership. Instead, focus on what you could have achieved if you had followed the Lord without question and wholeheartedly. It will always be better for us to say and think that we are **"unprofitable servants"** because **"we have done what was our duty to do."** Luke 17:10.

When you are censured or condemned, do not pay attention to the source. Do not ask if it is a friend or an enemy who points to you. An enemy is usually of greater value than a friend because they are not influenced by sympathy.

Always keep your heart open to the Lord's admonition, ready to be disciplined by Him, no matter whose hand carries the rod. All the great saints learned to endure a good thrashing with grace. Surely that is the reason why they became great saints, **"For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights."** Proverbs 3:12 NLT.

How do we get these things? Is there a secret to continuous learning, to never stop being receptive to instruction, counsel, and new knowledge? Of course there is, and it is found in the disposition, specifically a good disposition—because there is also a bad disposition, and even a total lack thereof. A good disposition is the starting point for personal growth.

### 4. THE DISPOSITION TO CONTINUOUSLY LEARN



Let us define “disposition”. The way in which something or someone is placed or arranged in relation to other things, both at the physical and emotional level. Disposition, in the latter case, is a state of mind that allows us to do something within a given time and in a certain way. Examples: the disposition to work, to dialogue, to serve, to constructive criticism.

The latter guides us to the concrete case of our key biblical text, which advises us to be willing to listen, to hear, to pay attention, to receive counsel and thus develop our understanding, our knowledge: **“A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.”** Proverbs 1:5.

Let us look at some phrases or thoughts from famous people who have been recognized for their success or the accomplishments they achieved in their respective field of work.

- Henry Ford said: “Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.”
- Albert Einstein said: “The mind is like a parachute. It only works if we have it open.” To speak of an open mind is to speak, precisely, of a good disposition. Nothing harms the learning process more than a closed mind.
- Speaking of getting to work, the English naturalist Herbert Spencer said: “The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.”
- Going far back in time, we find Aristotle, who declared the following: “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”
- John Dewey, an American psychologist, said that education is not preparation for life. Education is life itself.
- Finally, Alvin Toffler, a sociologist and futurist recently deceased in the city of Los Angeles, said: “The illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

### 5. UNLEARN TO LEARN

Unlearning is as important a process as learning. In fact, without the former the latter cannot occur. You cannot construct a building where one already exists. First you have to demolish the current building.

The “experience”, the years, often become a problem in this process. When we receive advice, an opinion about something, an opinion different from our own, or a teaching like this—and we underline the word “we receive” because sometimes we reject what we are taught—something happens within us, and usually it is something we do not like.

When we learn, we develop what we call “a wounded ego”. Every learning process causes a break, an emotional and mental breakdown. That is why painful experiences are our best teachers. As Thomas Alva Edison said, when he lost everything in a fire: “Every failure is a lesson learned”.



That wound, that break, can only occur if we have a humble attitude, or a willingness to receive, acquire and increase knowledge. That is why the proud are unable to learn, because they are not able to unlearn or demolish first. It was for this reason that Jesus often had to begin his teachings with the well-known preface: **"You have heard [...] But I say..."**

### 6. CONCLUSION

In India there is a popular old proverb that reads: "Better than the ignorant are those who read books; better still are those who retain what they read; even better are those who understand it; the best of all are those who go to work." The Lord's Church is living in decisive times and it is worth asking: How can we succeed in our work as leaders? How do we get the results that God expects from us in terms of increasing the number of souls that are saved? The answer is go to work.

In these challenging days we live in, days of constant change and accelerating events that precede the Rapture of the Church, we as leaders of God's flock have the very important mission of guiding our people with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. We will only be able to carry this out after we acquire it first.

Today, may God give us knowledge and wisdom from On High as well as a willingness to receive counsel and instruction. May God give us an attitude of humility before Him, before His Word, and also before our leaders who instruct and teach us. May we be an example of how to be receptive to counsel and admonition from others. Amen.

The assignment for this lesson is to write a short commentary on one of these topics: (1) Developing a Receptive Heart. (2) Unlearning to learn.

*Some sections of this lesson were taken and adapted from the book *The Root of the Righteous* by Aiden Wilson Tozer. Clie Publishing, 1994.*

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## Lesson 4 - True Christian Leadership

*What is true christian leadership? What did Jesus teach regarding this topic? How can we be christian leaders of excellence?*

Matthew 20:25-28: ***“<sup>25</sup> But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. <sup>27</sup> And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*”**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

What makes a Christian leader? Their rank? The status? The Fame? The power? The style? A castle? Is this type of leadership automatically awarded by being placed on the organizational chart? Where in the equation, for an effective Christian leadership, do position and power lie? And what is the ideal model for Christian leaders? The corporate executive? The soldier? The politician? Our Lord Jesus Christ answered all these questions with simple, decisive words, presenting a point of view on leadership that is visibly different from the conventional wisdom of His era and any era. Let us read Matthew 20:25-28 again.

### 2. SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

According to Christ's teaching, authentic and true leadership demands service, sacrifice, and selfless submission. According to these parameters, a prideful, self-promoting person cannot be a good leader—no matter how many abilities they have or how much power they have obtained. On the other hand, those leaders who look to Christ as their leader and supreme model of leadership will have the heart of a servant. They will be an example of sacrifice!

Today, we know that these characteristics are not what the world generally associates with leadership, but in the biblical approach to leadership they are essential. The type of leadership the Lord wants consists of people willing to serve sacrificially, who are humble, sincere, and selfless. By the way, note that He specifically taught His disciples to look at leadership in this way; a radically different point of view from the employee at that time and the employee of today.

Oddly enough, many christians continue to assume that the best way to approach spiritual leadership is to follow the world's examples; but nothing could be further from the truth. In the Lord's church, leadership has always had and continues to have a spiritual dimension. Basically, the task of leading others in the Kingdom of God involves spiritual abilities. This principle is the same for a christian manager of a secular company or for the housewife whose sphere of leadership does not extend beyond her own children.

Every christian in any type of leadership or position is called to be a spiritual leader! It does not matter if we are missionaries, pastors, ministers, deacons, cell group leaders, corporate managers, or school teachers. We all need to



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remember that the christian leadership role is a spiritual responsibility, that we direct the people we lead for God and not for us, and that it is to Him that we will one day give an account, as seen clearly in the parable of the talents.

***“For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents [108 kg. of silver], to another two [43.2 kg.] and to another one [21.6 kg.], to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’” Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”*** Matthew 25:14-30 NKJV

If we as leaders clearly understand our responsibility to God, we can also understand why Christ represented the leader as a servant. He was not suggesting, as many presume, that modesty alone is the essence of leadership. There are many humble, meek, caring and very helpful people who are not leaders. Someone who has no followers can hardly be called a leader; even though leadership requires a servant's heart, not everyone who has such a heart is a leader. Leadership is much more than serving. True leadership is one that inspires people. The true christian leader is one whose life and character motivate people to follow him. Leadership, simply put, is influence.

So the true leader affirms his authority with a good and just personal example, and not simply in the power of his prestige, personality or position. In contrast, much of the world's leadership is nothing more than a manipulation of people through rewards, threats, and punishments. That is not true leadership. That is exploitation! The true leader seeks to motivate people internally; appealing to the heart and not to external pressure or coercion. Finally, leadership is not about ability, style, or technique, but rather about character; and character is who we are. Esteemed leaders, what kind of character are we developing? Does our character influence our followers in a positive way? Simply put, who are we really?



### 3. JESUS, THE MOST EXCELLENT LEADER

The best way to focus on excellence in christian leadership is by studying the life of Jesus. Let us look at ten characteristics that made Him the greatest and most excellent leader who ever lived..

1. Christ ***“has come to seek and to save that which was lost”*** Luke 19:10. He ***“came into the world to save sinners”*** 1 Timothy 1:15. And He is delaying His second coming to Earth for this very reason; because He is ***“...not willing that any should perish”*** 2 Peter 3:9.
2. Jesus continuously prayed for His disciples. ***“So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed”*** Luke 5:16. ***“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray”*** Luke 6:12. Later, read John 17.
3. Jesus kept the attitude of a servant. as we already read, He ***“did not come to be served, but to serve,”*** Matthew 20:28. He told His disciples: ***“<sup>13</sup> You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. <sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”*** John 13:13,14,34.
4. Jesus spoke Aramaic—the popular language of His time—and with a northern accent. He chose to live His childhood and adolescence in Galilee, the poorest region of Israel at that time. For this reason, Jesus suffered discrimination—for being a Galilean, from Nazareth and the son of a carpenter: ***“<sup>55</sup> Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? <sup>56</sup> And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things? <sup>57</sup> So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” <sup>58</sup> Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”*** Matthew 13:55-58.
5. Jesus adapted to the culture of His time and, although He was the target of xenophobia, He never discriminated against or was a respecter of people. He blessed children, healed the sick, and helped all kinds of people. He even raised some who were dead.
6. Jesus was sociable, open. He attended weddings and burials; He ate with people of all levels, and He did it publicly. For all this He was accused of being ***“a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners”*** Matthew 11:19.
7. Jesus showed compassion. He cared for others, always being attentive to children, the poor, women, foreigners; even the rich. Jesus was courteous, loving, cordial, gentle, meek...but not with the hypocrites!
8. Jesus practiced integrity—what we are when no one sees us. He never lied, but was trustworthy. His disciples said: ***“We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God.”*** John 6:69 NLT. Jesus was, is and will always be ***“...full of grace and truth”*** John 1:14.



9. Jesus had close friends—for example, Peter, James, John, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus—with whom He was fully transparent. On one occasion, speaking to His disciples, He confided to them: **“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch”** Mark 14:34.
10. Jesus loved His own to the end: **“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end”** John 13:1 NKJV. “To the end” can also be translated as “to the utmost”.

#### 4. LEADERS OF EXCELLENCE

There are many who conceptualize themselves as good leaders or workers of the Lord, but the truth is that they deceive themselves. We know that in the Lord's Church there have always been people like this, who seem to be one thing but are something else; tares that look like wheat. Sometimes, a person is not very aware of this deception; but many times they are. In any case, the deeds of the false christian sooner or later bring to light what was hidden beneath the surface. The Lord said it: **“By their fruits you will know them”** Matthew 7:20.

With sadness we have to admit that such people also tend to “sneak” into the leadership of the Church; selfish, competitive, boastful, arrogant, etc. Yes, these people work. They also collaborate; but thinking rather of their own benefit. As the saying goes, they bring “a personal agenda”, an already articulated plan. This type of leader does not take into account or totally rejects the counsel of the great apostle Paul, who said:

**“<sup>3</sup> Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”** Philippians 2:3-8.

Unfortunately, today there is a diminishing number of leaders who are like-minded or have the character and thoughts of Christ. In all areas, the Church included, there is a leadership crisis—a shortage of genuine leaders. More than anything it is because becoming a true leader—a leader with the same thoughts as Jesus—is not easy, as this can only be achieved with humility and a total surrender to the Lord. Being like-minded with Christ, first of all, requires that we desire it, then we need to seek it and learn it, and finally we need to put it into practice. This is the infallible formula for developing a christian leader of excellence. Let us see what makes an excellent leader.

1. He acknowledges that it is God who has called him and assumes responsibility for it. Therefore, his dependence on God is constant and he is always growing as a christian: **“I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved”** Psalms 16:8.
2. He is not controlled by emotions or sentimentality; the Lord's commandments and precepts are his guide: **“<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. <sup>106</sup> I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments”** Psalms 119:105,106.



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3. Lives wisely, understanding the lessons of the past, the realities of the present, and the probable consequences of his decisions: ***“The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.”*** Proverbs 18:15.
4. Their actions and motivations are to help others. When someone is heartbroken, wounded, or suffers emotional pain, the true christian leader works as the apostle Paul did: ***“<sup>28</sup> Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup> Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?”*** 2 Corinthians 11:28-29.
5. Has a pleasant personality. Shows affection, gentleness; recognizes the gifts and talents of others. Tolerates imperfection: ***“See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all”*** 1 Thessalonians 5:15.
6. The aforementioned—tolerate—does not mean that he approves it. People are liberated only by the truth. So the excellent leader is sincere, even in situations where the truth can be uncomfortable: ***“How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house”*** Acts 20:20.
7. They are unassuming, even though they are very competent or well trained: ***“Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.”*** Romans 12:16.
8. He controls his temper. He does not get angry. Exercises self-control: ***“<sup>19</sup> So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; <sup>20</sup> for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God”*** James 1:19,20.
9. Knows how to listen. Listening is not the same as hearing. Hearing does not require any effort because it is a natural process, which consists of capturing sound waves with the ears. On the other hand, listening is a learned process that involves the whole person. Listening really depends on the attitude we adopt towards the person who speaks to us. By listening attentively we reflect the meek and humble character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we manifest our commitment to the needy, paying attention and understanding them.
10. He is committed to others. The excellent leader does not ask like the insolent Cain: ***“Am I my brother’s keeper?”***, nor does he “wash his hands” as the astute Pilate; but he engages with others, believing that people possess an intrinsic and eternal value. The true christian leader desires and promotes the personal, spiritual, and even professional growth of everyone in the Church.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The key or secret to becoming great servants of Jesus or excellent christian leaders is to PRAY A LOT. Prayer is the key as it allows us to do what Jesus did; but even more important, He transforms us so that we become like Him. Of



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course, it is a slow process that must be attained daily in the presence of God, but the results are amazing and have been guaranteed by Christ Himself: ***"...he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do..."*** John 14:12. Hallelujah!



## Lesson 5 - Three Major Leadership Challenges

*What are the top three challenges we face as leaders? How can we overcome them?*

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 – <sup>16</sup> ***“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, <sup>18</sup> while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”***

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout our career as Christian leaders, as servants of God, we face many and varied challenges; but there are three that require our special attention. They are not circumstantial or external matters, but internal. They are part of us, and they are: (1) The fear of failure, (2) The tendency to be discouraged, (3) Weakness in the face of sin. Let us now study how to constructively face these three major challenges, maintaining our peace and commitment, developing a healthy spiritual life and effective leadership in serving the Lord.

### 2. THE FEAR OF FAILURE

We have all failed more than once. But that is not where the real problem lies. The problem is in how we move/progress in that area. A person walks down the street and suddenly stumbles and falls. What is the first thing they do when they get up? They look around to see if anyone saw them fall. When we fail, our tendency is to hide what happened and even deny it. We try to destroy all the evidence, because we do not want to accept the idea that failure is a necessary part of life.

Actually, failure is not an obstacle to success but a step towards it. The only one who does not fail is the one who does nothing! In studying the lives of great men, one constant we discovered is that they experienced failures; and some of them when they were just beginning:

- When the great Polish pianist Ignace Jan Paderewsky decided to study piano, his music teacher told him that his hands were too small to master the keyboard.
- When the great Italian tenor Enrico Caruso submitted his application to learn to sing, the teacher told him that his voice sounded like the wind whistling in the window.
- When the great statesman of Victorian England, Benjamin Disraeli, attempted to speak in Parliament for the first time, the parliamentarians asked him to sit down; and they laughed at him when he said, "Though I sit down now, the time will come when you will hear me".
- Henry Ford forgot to put a reverse gear in the first car he made.
- Thomas Alva Edison spent two million dollars on an invention that proved to be of little value.

These and other life stories teach us that the only time you do not fail is when you do something that gives results; and that few, very few, do it well the first time. Repeated failures are the footprints that mark the path to success.



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Experiencing problems and difficulties will ultimately bring greater joy into our life, when triumph comes. It is impossible to succeed without suffering. Most people rarely value their good health until they get sick. If you are successful and have not suffered, the fact is that someone suffered for you; and if you are suffering without success, maybe someone will succeed because of you. But there is no success without suffering, failures, mistakes and "blunders".

We not only have to accept that without failure there is no success, we also need to give ourselves permission to speak freely about our failures to others. Why do we have such a hard time doing this? Because surviving and preserving our status quo is something that worries us a lot. Yes, we all fight to defend our own reputation. However, spending energy on it greatly limits our potential and complicates our progress.

### 3. SURVIVE OR TAKE RISKS?

Survival is not the most important thing in life, although many refuse to accept it. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught this powerful truth and also demonstrated it. He said that dying, not living, was the key to effectiveness: **“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”** John 15:13. Jesus demonstrated this truth at Calvary, becoming a visible example of His words. Certainly the "survival syndrome" was not part of Jesus' life.

The apostle Paul understood this in his life: **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”** Galatians 2:20

Tertullian, a second-century apologist, referred to the issue of survival during those early years of church history. The profession of some Christians was to make idols. When he spoke to them, they said, "We have to live." Tertullian responded, "Should you live?" What was his point of view? That it is more important to obey God than to worry about surviving.

Perhaps the words of William Arthur Ward will encourage us to stop thinking about surviving and in that way lose our fear of failure: "If you are wise, you will forget yourself into greatness. Forget your rights, but remember your responsibilities. Forget your inconveniences, but remember your blessings. Forget your own accomplishments, but remember your debts to others. Forget your privileges, but remember your obligations..."

Forget about greatness. Take the risk. Climb up and climb onto the branch where the fruit is. Many people are still hugging the tree trunk, wondering why they do not receive the fruit of life. Many potential leaders never succeed because they stay behind and let someone else take the risk. Many potential recipients never receive anything because they do not step out of the crowd and ask for it. As James says, "You do not have because you do not ask". In reality, we do not ask because we are afraid of a "no". We fear rejection and that is why we do not take the risk.

To laugh is to run the risk of looking silly. To cry is to run the risk of appearing sentimental. To approach another person is to run the risk of getting involved. To show our feelings is to run the risk of exposing our true selves. Putting our ideas and dreams in front of people is risking losing them. To love is to take the risk of not being loved. To live is to run the risk of dying. To wait is to run the risk of despair. To try is to run the risk of failure.



But you have to take the risk, because the greatest danger of life is not risking anything. The person who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing, and is nothing. They may be able to avoid suffering and pain, but will not be able to learn, grow, feel, change, love, live. Chained by these certainties, they are a slave; they have lost their freedom.

The fear of failure clings to those who take themselves too seriously. As we grow, we spend a lot of time worrying about what the world thinks of us. When we reach maturity we realize that the world did not even notice us while we worried. Until we accept that the future of the world does not depend on our decisions, we will not forget past mistakes.

Attitude is the determining factor as to whether our failures edify or crush us. Failure becomes devastating and causes us to crash when we maintain an attitude of giving up, of being defeated. To accept failure in the end is to ultimately be a failure. On the other hand, when a person confronts failure and perseveres, that is a sign of a healthy attitude. Winners do not quit!

Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence, not even talent or temperament. Nothing in the world is more common than unsuccessful talented men. The world is full of educated ruins. Only persistence and determination can lead us from failure to triumph.

A fundamental key to strengthen ourselves in times of failure is to look to our Lord Jesus Christ, our primary motivator. So, when it seems like you have failed, say this prayer:

"Lord, are you trying to tell me something? Because failure does not mean that I am a failure; it means that I have not yet succeeded. Failure does not mean that I have achieved nothing; it means that I have learned something. Failure does not mean I have been a fool; it means I had enough faith to try. Failure does not mean that I have been unsuccessful; it means that I dared to try. Failure does not mean I do not have it; it means I have it in a different way. Failure does not mean that I am inferior; it means I am not perfect. Failure does not mean I have wasted my time; it means I have a good reason to start over. Failure does not mean that I must give up; it means I must try harder. Failure does not mean I never will; it means I need more patience. Failure does not mean that You have abandoned me; it means You must have a better plan for me. Amen."

#### **4. THE TENDENCY TO BE DISCOURAGED**

The second major challenge we leaders face is discouragement. Let us look in the Bible at the life of the prophet Elijah. What a great victory this man of God experienced on Mount Carmel! Courage, obedience, faith, and spiritual power were manifested in his life as he stood before the worshippers of Baal. Study 1 Kings 18.

But the victory of Chapter 18 was followed by the discouragement of Chapter 19, and the prophet's attitude radically shifted from trusting God to blaming God for his problems. Fear replaced faith. The power disappeared in the face of self-compassion, and disobedience took over his life. How quickly things change! Does this sound familiar? Without a doubt.

Let us now look at four important things that 1 Kings 19 teaches us about our tendency to get discouraged and what it produces in our lives.



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*First*, discouragement hurts our image (v. 4). Discouragement makes us look less than we are. This always affects our behavior, because we cannot act in a way that is inconsistent with the way we see ourselves. *Second*, discouragement causes us to evade our responsibilities (v. 9). The "Elijahs" of life are formed in the "Mount Carmels", not in the caves. While fear restrains us and only brings us misery, faith makes us rise up and minister. *Third*, discouragement causes us to blame others for our problems (v. 10). Never has a scapegoat helped solve a problem. *Fourth*, discouragement blurs the facts (v. 18). From one to seven thousand. No doubt discouragement led this great prophet to a big mistake. And if that happens to great men, what can we think of ourselves? Discouragement is deceptive...and contagious.

We are all subject to the rip current of discouragement that can drag us into a dangerously deadly area. But there are ways to avoid its destructive force and an important key to this is to know the causes and manifestations of discouragement. Discouragement comes when:

(1) We—mistakenly—feel that the opportunity to succeed is gone. (2) We become selfish. In general, discouraged people think a lot about themselves and very little about others. (3) We give up easily in our first attempt to do something. (4) We lack purpose and planning. (5) Something small can stop us. (6) We remain inactive. We rarely see a discouraged person running and trying to help others. (7) We isolate ourselves. When we are discouraged we tend to distance ourselves. (8) We get a win. Many times discouragement comes after a victory, as in the case of Elijah. New Mount Carmels are needed to keep the spirit high and not lose purpose.

The life of Thomas Edison—inventor of the microphone, phonograph, incandescent light bulb, car battery, motion pictures, and more than a thousand other inventions—was full of purpose. He attributed his success to five factors: (1) A clear understanding of what he wanted to achieve. (2) Fixation of the mind on that purpose, with persistence to seek what we are pursuing and what we can receive from others. (3) Perseverance in trying, no matter how many times he failed. (4) Rejecting the influence of those who have tried the same thing, without success. (5) A healthy obsession with the idea that the solution to the problem is somewhere and will be found.

When a man persuades himself to solve any problem, he may, at first, encounter great difficulties; but if he continues to search, he will surely find some type of solution. The disadvantage or biggest mistake of most people is that they give up before they start. But let us look at the two steps to get rid of discouragement and despair.

**(1) Positive thinking.** In the inspiring biography of Thomas Edison written by his son, we can appreciate that he was a man who refused to be discouraged. Despite being on a tightrope economically due to numerous unsuccessful projects, his contagious optimism influenced everyone around him. One cold night in December 1914, someone yelled "fire!", which was heard all over the building. In a few minutes everything was burning. Firefighters from eight nearby towns came, but the heat was so intense and the water pressure so low that attempts to tame the flames were futile. Everything was destroyed. Not able to find his father, the son became worried. Was he safe? With all his goods destroyed, how would his spirit be? Then he saw his father running towards him. "Where is your Mom?" the inventor shouted. "Look for her, son! Tell her to come and gather all the friends! Never again will you see a fire like this!" In the early morning, with the fire extinguished, Edison gathered his employees and made an incredible announcement: "We will rebuild!" And addressing one of his men, he told him to rent all the machinery he could find in the area. He told another to get a



crane. Suddenly he added, "Oh, by the way, do any of you know where we can get money?" Later, he explained: "Every failure teaches something. We can always take advantage of a disaster. We will clean up the old and build something bigger and better". After a moment, Edison yawned, rolled up his jacket to serve as a pillow, curled up on a table, and immediately fell asleep.

**(2) Positive action.** When you feel discouraged, move. Confront the problem. Nothing frees us from discouragement more quickly than taking positive steps toward solving the problem. A poet said that while walking in his garden he saw a bird's nest on the ground. The storm had shaken the tree and ruined the nest. As he whispered sadly about the destruction of the bird's home, he looked up and saw the bird making a new one on the branches...no need for further comment.

Too often the leader is discouraged and accepts defeat: Abraham failed in an hour of emergency, and in his weakness he let a king think that Sarah, his wife, was his sister. Jacob deceived his brother and took away his birthright. Moses lost, because of his impatience, the right to enter the promised land. And David, the man "after God's own heart," stained his name with adultery and murder. Elijah was out of his mind and even prayed that he might die. But the good and important thing about all these men is that, after those tragedies, they continued forward and obtained great victories.

If you as a leader have suffered defeats and discouragement lately, you need to ask yourself how you will deal with that. You should also remember that no one goes through life without facing defeats from time to time, and when it happens to you, you should not lose heart! Anyone is able to start something. The important thing is to be able to finish it.

## 5. WEAKNESS IN THE FACE OF SIN

The third and greatest challenge we face in life is that which the apostle Paul describes as a conflict of two natures within us. Let us read Romans 7:15-25. There is a nature in all of us that asks us to: "Do good", but there is also another that drags us down. That is why it is good to move on to Romans Chapter 8, where Paul speaks of deliverance (v.1): ***"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."***

Psalms 51 is known as David's prayer asking for forgiveness after committing the sins of adultery and murder. In another Psalm, David records how he felt during the time he tried to cover up his sin: ***"When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long"*** Psalm 32:3. For one year he tried to live a lie, but after his confrontation with the prophet Nathan, he was able to pray again to God and ask for forgiveness (Psalm 51:1,2). By acknowledging and accepting his own guilt, David was forgiven (vv. 3:4).

Now then, receiving forgiveness from God is one thing, and overcoming sin, another. In Verses 5-13 of this Psalm we see that David cries out to the Lord for purifying power to overcome his weakness in the face of sin. In this Scripture we find eight keys to obtaining deliverance from sin—the power to overcome it:

***"<sup>5</sup> Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. <sup>6</sup> Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. <sup>7</sup> Purge me with hyssop,***



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***and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. <sup>8</sup> Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. <sup>9</sup> Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. <sup>13</sup> Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.***

Susanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles, gave an excellent definition of sin: *"Whatever weakens your reasoning, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, takes away your relish for spiritual things, or obscures your sense of God, is a sin."*

### 6. CONCLUSION

Understanding the problem is an excellent first step toward solving it. Our hope is that this lesson helps you gain a clearer view about the important challenges you will have to face as a leader sooner or later. And if you have already encountered any of them in your walk, today we invite you to stop for a moment and carefully consider the way you have been trying to deal with them, as well as how you could improve.

The assignment for this lesson is to find two or three aspects about your attitude that you know you need to change in order to better confront the three challenges that were taught. Also, briefly mention the specific changes you will make in this regard.

*Lesson adapted from the book *The Winning Attitude*, by Dr. John C. Maxwell, Nelson Publishing Group, 1997.*

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## Lesson 6 - Successful Leadership, Part 1

*What is a successful leadership? What does God's Word tell us about it? How can we overcome the obstacles that arise in our leadership?*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The late Bishop Leonardo Sepúlveda, a missionary of our church in Central and South America, used to refer to success and achievements in ministry as follows: "It is easier to swim in the waters of criticism than to swim in the waters of applause. Criticism will lead you to seek more of God, but the applauses can confuse you." This is a great truth that all of us who have been called by God to serve in ministry have to consider.

### 2. DIFFICULT DECISIONS AND OBSTACLES

Talking about ministerial success and how to achieve it leads us to other issues such as failures, fears, goals, efforts, difficult decisions, etc. And what is success? It is not the absence of those things, it is learning to face them; finding a way to overcome obstacles.

I often make use of popular quotes that have served me well in my ministerial life. For example, one that says: "The worst move is the one not made". Another that says, "The person who does nothing makes no mistakes". It is also said that, "It is better to have tried and failed, than to have never tried at all."

On many occasions, when I have had to make difficult decisions, I have made every effort to let the Word of the Lord, and not my emotions, guide my steps. Of course, I have also felt and still feel "knots in my stomach," but it is here that faith in God and His Word plays a very important role in our lives.

All leaders have to make decisions, some simple and others not so much; nevertheless you have to make them. And all those simple or difficult decisions will present obstacles. Learning to overcome those obstacles is the key to success in ministry and in leadership.

Paul says: "***I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.***" Philipians 4:13. However, encouraging yourself to make decisions because you do not have a fear of failure, or because you believe that "anything is possible in Christ" becomes dangerous if it is done without prayer or divine guidance. It takes maturity and sometimes a second opinion. Sometimes, the best decision is not to make a decision.

We must also understand that risks are necessary to achieve the objectives in ministerial life. People are not remembered for the number of times they failed, but for the number of times they succeeded. We cannot ignore the failures, or the times when things did not go the way we wanted.

The man who achieves success has learned to see failures as ways of not doing things; in other words, they have learned from their mistakes. True failure comes when the minister or leader makes the decision not to try anymore, and surrenders to their mistakes. The successful man calls his failures experiences.



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Is success the absence of failures? No, and a thousand times no. Success in leadership is the attitude of not slacking, of not giving up, of carrying on, of not getting comfortable. More than anything it is the spirit of "stretching oneself" to get something more.

En Philippians 3:12-15, Paul says: **<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.**

What a tremendous statement from the Apostle! A man of God who had all the credentials to remain still, or enjoy the things he had already accomplished, and yet he did not settle for his achievements or his victories. He always wanted more.

The verb "grasp" from the Greek *katalabo*, means to take possession of something or to grab something, but with effort. The concept used here by the Holy Spirit is that of someone who is "stretching" to achieve something. It is as if the fingers are already touching it, but needs a little more. It is there, but a little more effort is needed—stretching—to achieve what they want.

In fact, that is the success that comes to us from the holy scriptures. It is being inspired continually and desiring to achieve something more. Not necessarily because we want to "show off" or be better than others, but because there is a dream, a vision that is bigger than us, that comes from God and that always moves us to do more; more for His glory.

### 3. HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?

In his letters to Timothy, the apostle Paul speaks of the qualities that leaders in the Church should demonstrate and then mentions the qualities that Timothy should demonstrate as a leader. If we were to take this Pauline advice as a yardstick, then we would say that success in leadership is achieving and demonstrating all those qualities.

Unfortunately, things are now measured differently. Success is now measured by numbers, quantities and sizes. In this regard, John MacArthur says: "Today it feeds the worst aspects of evangelicalism's celebrity culture, as the supposed quality of a pastor's ministry is measured in book sales, television appearances, and Twitter or Instagram followers. When popularity is the measuring stick for success in ministry, nothing matters more than the size of the crowd a pastor draws."

If the size of the building or the number of people really demonstrates true ministry success, we could say that more than 90% of pastors in all churches have failed. The Barna Institute, in the United States, says this:

"An analysis of churches in the U.S. yielded these figures: A typical Protestant church has an average of 89 adults in attendance on Sundays. In total, 60% of churches have an attendance of less than one hundred adults on Sundays. Less than 2% reach an attendance of a thousand adults. In relation to where adults congregate, 41%



congregate in churches of less than one hundred members, while 12% attend churches of a thousand or more members."

Because of this mentality of numbers and sizes, those who have demonstrated their ability to fill seats are seen as the "gurus" of ministry; with many coming to their leadership conferences to learn how they too can build a ministry "empire".

That is why models such as Willow Creek, Saddleback, Hillsong and other are so influential because today, success in ministry is associated mostly with having many people in the church and good numbers in general. We are not saying that numerical growth does not matter. The opposite is true: it does matter. But looking at numbers alone is an ineffective method of assessing spiritual or ministerial success.

We will illustrate this point with the story of Noah and the ark. Noah became known for the construction of the ark; but he did not just make a ship. Scripture describes him as "a preacher of righteousness." Yet even though he preached the truth and warned of God's judgment for more than a century, he never saw a person come to faith and repentance. So does the lack of converts mean that Noah failed?

We could ask the same question regarding many of the Old Testament prophets. Jeremiah, for example, experienced decades of near-total rejection of Israel. Was his ministry therefore useless? Christ Himself decimated a great number of His followers, driving them away by teaching something too difficult and shocking.

We would never question the value of the ministries of biblical heroes, and much less that of the Lord Jesus Christ, but by today's numerical criteria, they would not be considered successful. Therefore, we can say that numbers are not an accurate measure of success in ministry. It should come as no surprise that God's criteria is very different from what we apply on this issue. And what is the yardstick that God uses for His servants?

- Faithful to the Gospel and to what is established by the Church.
- Comprehensive teaching of biblical values and requirements for Salvation.
- A life in harmony with God's call.

When these elements are present in a pastor, minister or leader, success is definitely guaranteed. Therefore, we must measure someone's ministry, not by the number of people who come to the service or the cell group, but by how Christlike those people are. This is the only yardstick: Have they come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ? And there is only one tool for such a measurement: the Word of God.

In conclusion, the success of a leader is measured by the maturity of his people: ***"<sup>13</sup>till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; <sup>14</sup>that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, <sup>15</sup>but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—."*** Ephesians 4:13-15.

#### 4. SUCCESSFUL PHRASES



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The lecturer José María Vicedo, one of today's most distinguished motivational speakers, highlights in his book "50 Days to a Successful Life" the attitude of a champion in those men and women who have or aspire to have a fruitful leadership. There, he presents ten very interesting phrases, proverbs and quotes related to success.

"Victory is not always winning the battle...but rising every time you fall." –Napoleon Bonaparte. "I don't measure a man's success by how high he climbs but how high he bounces when he hits bottom." –George S. Patton. "Failure is a prerequisite for great success. If you want to succeed faster, double your rate of failure." –Brian Tracy. "There are no shortcuts to success. Start earlier, work harder, finish later." –Brian Tracy. "Success is doing ordinary things extraordinarily well." –Jim Rohn. "I've failed over and over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed." –Michael Jordan. "Great achievement is usually born of great sacrifice, and is never the result of selfishness." –Napoleon Hill. "Success is walking from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm." –Winston Churchill. "Victory has a hundred fathers, but defeat is an orphan." –John Fitzgerald Kennedy. "The most important thing is not reaching the top, but knowing how to stay on top." –Alfred de Musset.

### 5. SUCCESS AND THE BIBLE

In this section we will make a brief biblical analysis of what produces true success in ministry. We will reflect on ten Bible verses that will guide us in this matter.

Deuteronomy 29:9: **"Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do."** Joshua 1:7-8: **"<sup>7</sup> Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. <sup>8</sup> This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have Good success."** 1 Kings 2:3: **"And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn;"** 2 Chronicles 26:4-5: **<sup>4</sup> " And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. <sup>5</sup> He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper."** Psalms 1:1-3: **"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; <sup>2</sup>But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup>He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper."** Proverbs 3:1-4: **<sup>2</sup>My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; <sup>2</sup>For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you. <sup>3</sup>Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the Tablet of your heart, <sup>4</sup>And so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man."** Proverbs 16:3: **"Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established."** Proverbs 22:4: **"By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life."** Proverbs 28:13: **"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy."** Isaiah 33:15-16: **" He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of**





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## Lesson 7 - Successful Leadership, Part 2

*What are the three main virtues we need to have a successful leadership? Why do many people fail even though they have had the same opportunities as others who succeed?*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the first part of this topic we considered some definitions of success in leadership and learned that the best way to measure it is not with cold numbers but by observing how mature the people who follow us are; in other words, how much these people resemble our Lord Jesus Christ. We also read several Bible verses where prosperity and success are strongly associated with obedience to God's word. And we conclude by saying that there are at least three virtues that every leader must have in order to achieve success in their personal and ministerial life. In this lesson we will study these virtues, beginning with humility.

### 2. HUMILITY

We already said that it is better to face the criticism than the applause, because criticism brings us to our knees, while the applause can produce pride and vanity in us. Men have a tendency to be arrogant. Humility is not a natural characteristic of human beings. It is something we find difficult to acquire, demonstrate and practice. In the Scriptures we see that the more proud a man is of his achievements, the less divine acceptance he has. So then in conquering success, we must seriously consider this factor called humility. Rabbi Shlezinger, calls the humility factor "the essential link to maintaining success." This means that the more successful we are, the more humble we must be. What a difference there is between this declaration and the consensus of the world!

Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke a lot about humility and how it should characterize His followers: ***"<sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. <sup>26</sup> Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. <sup>27</sup> All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. <sup>28</sup> Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and My burden is light."*** Matthew 11:25-30.

In this masterful statement of our Lord Jesus, we observe that the most important thing is to have a balance between what we do and what we are. Most likely here lies the most common and serious problem in the life of the leader who succeeds or is beginning to see the fruit of his labor in Christ. Suddenly God begins to use his life. Suddenly miracles of healing and conversions begin to happen. Everything is moving along smoothly. Suddenly, thoughts of self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction also begin to rise. The human ego begins to "puff up" and the minister begins to believe that it is indispensable and that without Him the work cannot be carried out.



Nebuchadnezzar was a monarch who had reached the pinnacle of human success. Everything he wanted was at his fingertips. Nothing remained for him to conquer; he was a well-known king. However, he made a big mistake: he thought he had achieved everything on his own, that he did not need anyone. He even thought he was a god...

The story of Daniel 4 says that Nebuchadnezzar ended up being quite the opposite: a wild animal, grotesque-looking; mentally ill. Nebuchadnezzar forgot to humbly acknowledge Who had promoted him and Who had given him such powers; so, for seven long years he lived in that sad condition...until he came back to his senses and said a phrase that was immortalized:

***"<sup>34</sup> And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: <sup>35</sup> For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" <sup>36</sup> At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. <sup>37</sup> Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down."*** Daniel 4.34-37.

As we see in this passage, there is a strong bond, a close relationship, between success and humility. God cannot bless someone who does not know how to handle achievements and compliments. If you give a toddler a pound of chocolates all at once, and then say: "Eat these chocolates a little at a time; only one per day." What happens? We know that the child will not resist temptation and will eat non-stop until they get sick. In the same way, God cannot give a leader success "all of a sudden", unless he has prepared himself spiritually for it.

Another biblical account worth mentioning is the story of Mordecai; a Jewish man who loved God and his people; a faithful worshipper. His enemy Haman, angry that Mordecai did not bow to him or kneel like the others when he passed, was filled with anger and hatred to the point of plotting to kill him. Haman planned Mordecai's death and went to the king's palace to get his way. But in the midst of that plot, Ahasuerus could not sleep and asked to have the chronicles brought and read to him so he could fall asleep. When they read of Mordecai's brave deed, how he saved the king's life, he asked what reward had been bestowed on that man. They answered, "Nothing."

Just then noises were heard in the outer court and the king wanted to know who it was. They said to him: "Your servant Haman." The king called him and asked: ***"What shall be done for the man whom the king delights to honor?"*** Esther 6:6. Haman thought they were referring to him and told the king how he should be honored, but he was stunned when he heard Ahasuerus say that the honor was not for him but for Mordecai. What's more: the king commanded Haman himself to do to Mordecai everything he had suggested:

***"<sup>10</sup> Then the king said to Haman, "Hurry, take the robe and the horse, as you have suggested, and do so for Mordecai the Jew who sits within the king's gate! Leave nothing undone of all that you have spoken." <sup>11</sup> So Haman took the robe and the horse, arrayed Mordecai and led him on horseback through the city square, and proclaimed before him, "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honor!"*** Vv.10-11.

### 3. OBEDIENCE



Being successful in everything we do as a leader is directly related to our willingness to obey God and His Word. Therein lies the key to success not only in the Church, but in everything we do in our lives.

***“<sup>1</sup> Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. <sup>2</sup> And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God:”*** Deuteronomy 28:1-2.

The Lord wants us to prosper. He wants us to be successful people and for that to take place, obedience to His Word is crucial. What leader has not hesitated or had a moment of doubt about God's Word? Everyone has! We have all had moments where it seems like God is asking us for something that does not make sense, something we should not do...

He told Abraham to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22). He told Samuel to anoint the youngest son of the house of Jesse as king, when everyone ignored the boy (1 Samuel 16). He told Joshua to march around the city of Jericho seven times so that its walls would fall (Joshua 6). He decreased Gideon's army to obtain the victory (Judges 7). He told Peter to go fishing again, after having tried all night (Luke 5). He told his disciples to stay in the place where they were for two more days, after they had learned of the death of their friend Lazarus (John 11). He told Paul to stay on the ship when everyone wanted to jump out of the sinking ship (Acts 27).

This is a characteristic of all the men that God has used in history: they are not super men, but they stand out for their obedience to God. You will have your own experiences, something that you will need to learn "on the journey". In order to do this, you need to know the voice of the Lord very well; and that is only achieved by being intimate with Him.

#### 4. ATTITUDE

In his book "Be Happy Attitudes," which became a classic in the '80s, Dr. Robert Schuller makes a surprising statement about the eight ways happiness or success can be achieved, regardless of the circumstances. Everything is related to the attitude with which we see the problem or the things that happen to us in leadership; and it is not a question of sitting around waiting for something good to happen, but of developing a winning attitude in any circumstance. This is only achieved through faith in God. As we have heard so many times: "It is not your aptitude, but your attitude, that determines your altitude." In other words, it is not your competence, nor your ability that determines how high you can go, it is the way you respond to challenges.

Three principles of success emerge from the story of Moses, when he sent the twelve spies to see the promised land in Numbers 13 and 14. These were applied by two of the twelve spies—Joshua and Caleb—when they faced an opposing crowd.

1. *Your attitude at the beginning will determine whether or not you finish successfully.* Of the twelve spies, ten returned with a very negative report; while Joshua and Caleb gave a totally opposite one: ***“Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”*** Numbers 13:30



2. *Your attitude determines whether you will be a winner or a failure. The ten spies said: “**We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we...The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants...The people whom we saw in it are men of great stature...We were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.**” Numbers 13:31-33*
3. *Your attitude determines whether problems are opportunities or giants. Even though all the people wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb, they maintained a winning attitude saying: “**Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them.**” Numbers 14.9*

In the end, the leader's attitude is one of his most powerful weapons, so do not give up so easily. When you cannot change the situation you are facing, just change your attitude.

### 5. FAILURE VERSUS SUCCESS

God has no grandchildren. He only has sons and daughters. We are all equal before Him because He is no respecter of persons. We all have the same privilege and the same opportunity. Although races and cultures are different, we all come from the same blood and we all have the same chances of achieving success in life and in our respective leaderships. The difference between those who fail or succeed is that the latter have sought and found the way, and set out to walk in it; while the former settled for the condition or situation they were in and did not want to "take risks". That is why they miss out on the great blessings that God prepared for them. Many who fail only hope that "something happens" in their lives. Nothing different is going to happen in your life if you always do the same thing, if you never change anything. You have to trust in the Lord and do the impossible to achieve the possible; see the invisible and make it visible.

### 6. CONCLUSION

The life of a successful leader is very exciting, full of complicated situations, but also full of victories. There is no time to get bored when you have a clear vision of what God wants to do with your life. God never ceases to amaze us. Unexpected things are always happening, sometimes to motivate us and sometimes to challenge us, but always to make us grow. George III, the King of England, made notes in his diary every day. On July 4, 1776, there was only one entry: "Nothing important happened today." That day, on the other side of the Atlantic, the Declaration of Independence of the United States was signed... How many important things happen in our lives that we do not take advantage of or even notice? We hope you have a lot of success, in the name of Jesus!

The assignment for this lesson is to choose one of the three virtues studied in the lesson and write a brief comment about it.



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*Lesson adapted from a lecture given by Dr. John Fortino, President of the Apostolic Assembly of the Faith in Christ Jesus.*



## Lesson 8 - Positive Leaders Among Negative People

*¿Why is it important that we defeat negativism? How can we do this? What steps should we take in our leadership to move from negative to positive thinking?*

2 Corinthians 10:5 **“Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,”**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In a world increasingly filled with bad news, the Gospel—meaning “good news”—challenges us to think positively. This is absolutely necessary, because our thoughts determine and govern our actions. Negative thoughts produce negative actions and positive thoughts, positive actions. We are where we are and we are what we are because of the thoughts that have dominated our minds!

A research firm asked a group of people about the best thing that had happened to them in the past five years. 12% of the people surveyed answered, “Nothing.” Sadly, there are people who, when they see an optimist, think, “They are like that because they have no experience. They will encounter the harsh reality; they will learn.” When you give these people a choice between two evils, they say, “Can I keep both of them?” These people have not read, or do not want to heed, the words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:5.

### 2. A FLAT WORLD

There is a common type of negativism that we will call the “flat world.” A person from the “flat world” lives conditioned by their biased knowledge and the sad experiences of their past. A person accepts things that are not true as a fact and allows that to direct their thinking.

In 1490, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain hired a royal committee to study Christopher Columbus' project of finding a new, shorter route to the legendary Indies. The committee, an impressive panel of experts led by distinguished geographers and scholars from Spain, examined Columbus' plans and presented their conclusions to the king and queen: the project could not be carried out. “Totally impossible,” they wrote. Fortunately Isabel, Ferdinand and, most importantly, Columbus himself, ignored the experts.

Columbus secured the funding for his voyage but then had trouble convincing his crew to sail around the world. Why? Because the people back then believed that the Earth was flat. The world believed that and was not receptive to other possibilities. Finally, the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria set sail, and within a few years discovered that the “flat world” was actually round.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, aviation experiments were said to be a waste of time and money. The “optimist” Thomas Alva Edison tried to persuade Henry Ford to abandon his idea of a car engine. The “experts” told Benjamin Franklin to stop conducting those “silly experiments” with electricity. Madame Curie was forced by other experts to forget the “crazy” idea of a radio.



The assumptions or prejudices we accept hinders creativity and holds back the realization of our true potential. When we are conditioned to known truths and closed to new positive possibilities, the following happens: (1) We see what we expect to see, not what we can see. (2) We hear what we expect to hear, not what we can hear. (3) We think what we expect to think, not what we can think. (4) What we expected to happen happens, not what could have happened. Job acknowledged this: ***"For the thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me."*** Job 3:25. What are you afraid of? Are you waiting for something negative to happen to you?

### 3. NEGATIVE THINKING

One of the saddest stories in the Bible is that of Israel's failure to enter the promised land. According to Numbers Chapters 13 and 14, twelve spies were sent to Canaan to bring back information to Moses. These spies were in the same places at the same time but they came back with different opinions. For Joshua and Caleb, the promised land was all that God said it would be. They said, ***"...It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit"*** Numbers 13:27. But the other ten spies delivered a negative report...

Numbers 13:28-29: <sup>28</sup> ***"Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup> The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the Banks of the Jordan"*** Numbers 14:1-2: <sup>1</sup> ***"So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!'"*** Negative thinking is very harmful!

- (1) *Negative thinking blurs our view.* The ten spies had blurred vision. When we have blurred vision we are tense instead of relaxed. A comment we often hear among students is: "I hope they don't ask me this question on the exam. I'm sure I won't be able to answer it.". The exam begins and as expected, you see the question, followed by the negative result that was expected. An accident? No. Prophecy fulfilled. You were negative facing the question, declared your fear and responded accordingly. The next time you study for an exam say, "The best time to remember this question is when I take my exam."
- (2) *Negative thinking limits God.* In Israel, the men said: ***"...We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."*** Numbers 13:31. Here is an example of how a negative report can limit God; and without God it is always very difficult, if not impossible. Murphy's Law says, "Nothing is as easy as it looks; everything takes longer than you expect; if anything can go wrong it will go wrong, and at the worst possible moment." Let's change that to: "Nothing is as difficult as it looks; everything is more rewarding than you expect; if anything can go well, it will go well, and at the best possible moment." Jesus said: ***"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*** Matthew 11:29-30. And Paul proclaimed: ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*** Philippians 4:13. Why don't you say the same thing?



- (3) *Negative thinking takes everything out of proportion.* **“<sup>32</sup>And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, ‘The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. <sup>33</sup>There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”** Numbers 13:32-33. Here we see how the spies continued to exaggerate. Some people treat the problem of a leaky roof as if it were a hurricane. Everything is a big problem. They do not find a solution to every problem, they find a problem in every solution. Is it okay for us to tell God how big our problem is? Yes. But do not stop there. Let us also tell the problem how great our God is.
- (4) *Negative thinking is contagious.* In Numbers 14, negativism reaches its maximum expression because it has been transmitted to all the people: **“<sup>3</sup>‘Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt? <sup>4</sup>So they said to one another, ‘Let us select a leader and return to Egypt!’”** vv. 3-4. First, Israel wanted to die in the wilderness; then go back into slavery. Think about it. What are we spreading to others? Has someone’s attitude changed because of what we said? How has it changed? Are we a good or a bad influence on our followers?
- (5) *Negative thinking hinders others.* In Numbers 14:6-10 Caleb and Joshua **“<sup>6</sup>...*tore their clothes* [as a sign of desperation] <sup>7</sup>*and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: ‘The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup>If the Lord a land which flows ,then He will bring us into this land and give it to us ,delights in us <sup>9</sup>.with milk and honey Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them. <sup>10</sup>And all the congregation said to stone them with stones...”* he crowd wanted to kill Caleb and Joshua! This is how the people of the "flat world" think and act. In the church, in the cell group, at work, at school, and almost anywhere we will find people like that, with a thought that has not been placed under the sovereignty of Christ. That is why they come with stones in their hands; to hinder what God wants to do. Never join a group of people like them.**

#### 4. A “POLE SHIFT”

In a flat world everyone thinks alike; in a round one we find a negative or positive pole. Can we go from one pole to the other? Can we become positive people? Yes, and the apostle Paul draws us the precise map to achieve this: **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”** Philippians 4.8. From this scripture we get seven steps to go from the negative to the positive pole:



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- (1) Identify and question your thoughts that are from the "flat world."
- (2) Analyze the source of those thoughts.
- (3) Reject any negative affirmations from negative people.
- (4) Look for positive people who can help you.
- (5) Read the Bible, especially the book of Psalms.
- (6) Be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit through continuous prayer.
- (7) Worship and thank God at all times.

***"Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you [the ten pessimistic spies and those who believed them] shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in."*** Numbers 14:30. <sup>36</sup> ***"Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land<sup>37</sup>, those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the Lord<sup>38</sup>. But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land."*** vv. 36-38. Positive thinking people make a difference in every place and circumstance!

### 5. CONCLUSION

A "flat world" mind makes us sleep on it. A "round world" mind keeps us moving around it. Let us sincerely ask ourselves right now: Are we governed by positive thoughts or negative thoughts? What type of leadership are we practicing? A pessimistic or optimistic one? If we still exercise the first one, let us now make a firm decision to practice the second one. Let us allow Jesus to transform our thoughts and bring them into captivity to the obedience of Christ, thus fulfilling God's purpose in our life. As of today, let us put our faith and trust not in ourselves or in the difficult circumstances that surround us, but in Christ. Amen.

The assignment for this lesson is to identify and describe two "flat world" thoughts that you have discovered in yourself. Then explain why you understand these to be erroneous thoughts, and finally, state what you will do to replace them with positive thoughts.

*Lesson adapted from the book The Winning Attitude, by Dr. John C. Maxwell, Nelson Publishing Group, 1997.*

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## Lesson 9 - How to Motivate Our People

*How can we help our people through motivation? How do we motivate people the right way and avoid mistakes that could be counterproductive in that regard?*

Philippians 2:18-20, *"<sup>18</sup> ...you also be glad and rejoice with me. <sup>19</sup> But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. <sup>20</sup> For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state."*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest challenges that every leader faces is keeping their people motivated. Every leader strives to get and give motivation to those who follow him. Motivation and enthusiasm are quite difficult to get a hold of, and can easily be lost. Undoubtedly, overcoming inaction and putting into action those who are under our care are a great challenge because of the law that it is always easier to lead an object in motion, than to give movement to an object at rest.

Leaders should always be more interested in developing and motivating people than in the abilities they may have, because having all the skills in the world will not help someone who lacks motivation. In this lesson we will study the importance of motivating our own people; and we will share eight ways we can do this to help them serve more effectively in God's work.

### 2. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MOTIVATION

Before looking at some concepts that influence a person's motivation, we should clearly define what a motive is. A motive is the cause that drives someone to take a certain action. We can find two kinds of motivation in this concept: external motivation, which comes from the things that surround us; and internal motivation, which comes from within. Evidently, internal motivations are more important than external ones, since they occur within the individual, on a mental and emotional level.

Very often, under external motivations or factors, the individual decides to do something, but only because of the pressure that is put on them and not because they really desire to do it. This is the case of someone who serves in the children's class at their church only "because no one else wants to do it." But if this person had an internal motivation, they would teach children because they feel that is what they really want to do. For this reason, the leader who will be effective in his ministry must learn to develop the internal motivations of his people.

The previous statement does not suggest that all use of external motivation should be discarded. The external motivations are of great value as well, but only when they serve to awaken the internal motivations of the individual. Unfortunately, external motivations are used many times without appealing to the person's internal ones; and in those cases the result is almost always the same: the individual soon stops doing things; or continues to do so for some time, but only out of obligation and reluctantly.



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One of the most commonly used external motivations is to give rewards in exchange for certain actions. We promise the person that if they do a certain task they will receive this or that reward. The problem with this approach is that as soon as the reward disappears, the person abandons or neglects the task. The overwhelming proof that always reveals if an external motivation has been useful is to observe if it helped the individual become a person with initiative; that is, someone who seeks to undertake new activities on their own without expecting a reward. Let us look at eight ways to make better use of motivations in our leadership to help our people serve and minister to the Lord in a more spontaneous and effective way.

### **3. LET US EXPOSE PEOPLE TO THE REALITY**

The best way to motivate a person for a task is to make him understand the need for it. And how is this achieved? Exposing him to the reality of that need. A person can respond better to a need they previously ignored, after exposed to it. It would be the case of a person who has no desire to help the poor, because he does not really believe that it is necessary; he does not believe that the poor are "that poor." But if we give that person the opportunity to be exposed to the reality of poverty, for example visiting a underprivileged neighborhood or living for a few days with a poor family, this person will immediately see that the needs are real and vast, and that much needs to be done. Furthermore: it is even likely that he himself will want to begin doing something for that need.

In the same way, we cannot motivate an individual to change his attitude or behavior if he does not perceive the need to change. There are many people who have an abundance of problems and never do anything about them, almost always because they are not aware that those problems originate in their own lives. In this regard, we as leaders tend to apply a bad philosophy, because instead of working with people to solve their problems, many times we dedicate ourselves to teaching them things that they do not need in that moment. It is like giving someone a city telephone directory and asking them to memorize it "for the day they install a phone at home." If as Christian leaders we do not dedicate time to teach people how to solve their real problems, we will always achieve few or no results.

As we look carefully at the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, we immediately see that exposing His people to reality was one of his work rules. Jesus taught His disciples enough to be effective in a situation and then sent them to put it into practice. While practicing—as they were exposed to reality—they realized that they needed much more preparation. Then they returned to the Lord full of questions and with a desire to learn. Then the Lord continued to prepare them a little more and sent them again to put it into practice—being exposed again to reality—so we can see a perfect balance in Christ's ministry between what His disciples received and what they desired as a result of their constant exposure to reality.

From this we learn that what really helps motivate a person is to know the reality, facts and real circumstances of life. Many people need to "get out of the bubble" in which they live. This is not only good for the individual because it helps him change, but also because it gives him opportunities to develop his sense of responsibility—it stimulates growth.

And that is precisely our most important responsibility as leaders: to make the people we serve develop their abilities to the fullest. Let us be assured that the more we invest in motivating people to serve God, the more they will



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grow. Let us remember this too: every time we give someone a responsibility that requires little effort on their part, we withhold an opportunity for them to grow!

In Luke Chapter 9 we see that the Lord did not merely ask His disciples to seat people in groups (v. 14). He also gave them a much greater responsibility: to feed the multitude themselves (vv. 13,16). The disciples' impotence in that situation motivated them to look for a solution and learn how to minister adequately in the face of that need. When you see people who can give more, always remember to give them a greater responsibility so they continue to grow.

#### **4. LET US PROVIDE ENCOURAGEMENT AND RECOGNITION**

The second method to effectively motivate people is to provide them with encouragement and recognition. Often people become discouraged because they are constantly being told what they are doing wrong, instead of recognizing what they are doing well. Constant criticism and a lack of recognition tend to deflate even the most enthusiastic person. An example of that is when we as leaders get very excited about what we ourselves are doing but feel little or no enthusiasm for what others are doing around us.

Suppose a new believer approaches us to show us a great truth they have just discovered in the Bible. Their joy in sharing with us what they found is such that it would make us think that not even the greatest theologians in history had seen this until now. But in reality we had already discovered that truth twenty or thirty years ago. What do we do, then? Do we tell them we have known that for a long time? Not at all, as that would totally disappoint them! What we need to do is allow their enthusiasm to have an effect on us. We should encourage the person to tell us more about what they have found. Showing interest in what they are learning will motivate them to continue studying the Word in search of more truths. Encouragement and recognition significantly increase people's motivation.

The true test of a leader's efficiency lies not in what he knows or is capable of doing, but in what his followers know and do. That is why Christ promised us that, as His disciples, we would do greater things than He did (John 14:12). Without the proper recognition and encouragement, our people will never be motivated to grow. In order for people to develop confidence in their own abilities, we must provide them with the encouragement and recognition they need. Never forget to recognize and encourage the believers you are teaching.

#### **5. LET US BE A MODEL FOR THEM**

A third way to provide motivation is through a demonstration of how things should be done. The problem with many churches and cell groups is that they have too many leaders who dedicate their time exhorting others to do things, but no one takes the time to explain and demonstrate exactly how those things should be done. Excessive exhortation does not lead to action, but to many people with inferiority complexes and feelings of guilt. The reality is that almost all believers know what they need to do, but few do it because they have not been shown how to do it.

That is why it is very important that in every opportunity we have we concentrate not only on exhorting but also on explaining and demonstrating things. The main reason Christ was so effective in motivating the disciples in His ministry is that He never taught them anything without first demonstrating it in His own life. Jesus exhorted them to



love, because He loved first. He exhorted them to serve because He served them first. He exhorted them to preach because He had already shown them how He preached. And so on.

### **6. LET US RADIATE ENTHUSIASM**

We'll talk more about spreading enthusiasm in another lesson, so now we will only talk about the basics. First of all, we can all motivate others by radiating our personal enthusiasm. One of the most common problems we face as Christian leaders is to maintain our enthusiasm over the years. Many times it seems that our leadership is becoming a boring routine that has lost its momentum. If you feel that way, you are unlikely to motivate the people in your cell group, because your attitude is only telling them that the Christian life is boring.

On one occasion, a pastor was invited to speak in a cell group, but there were only two people. Before starting the meeting, the leader approached the Pastor and said, "This is the problem we have with these people; they do not get excited about anything and are unreliable." His attitude clearly showed that he thought it was a waste of time moving on with so few. After the meeting, the leader asked the pastor what he thought the problem was. "If you want me to be frank, you are the problem, the preacher replied". The proof of someone's true leadership is in the way he runs a meeting. He should have great enthusiasm when he has two people or one hundred!

Enthusiasm is contagious, and if you want to motivate your group you will have to show abundant amounts of enthusiasm in everything you do and say. Radiating enthusiasm will certainly require more work and effort, as we must be willing to speak as well as demonstrate what we say; but we should not be afraid to devote our efforts in motivating in this way, because the results that are achieved with it are really extraordinary.

### **7. LET US REMOVE EMOTIONAL BARRIERS**

It is definitely more difficult to motivate a person who is angry, hurt for a certain reason, or full of resentment. What we mean to a person is far more important than what we can say or do for them. Even more so, what we mean to someone will determine how they listen to us in what we have to say. Between a leader and his followers there must be a climate of total acceptance and trust. Let us always be honest with those around us. Let them see us as we are. Many leaders have fallen apart, been exhausted for always wanting to pretend to know everything. That does not create acceptance, because people feel inhibited and, what is worse, everyone realizes that the leader is not honest with them.

### **8. LET US DEVELOP PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

We should always remember this principle: the closer we are to a person and the closer the ties that unite us, the greater the chances of motivating them. A problem that we often have is that we want to motivate people without knowing them, without showing interest in their personal lives. Therefore, a good habit that we need to cultivate as leaders is to make the most of the informal moments of the meetings, because it is in those moments that we can really get to know people better and strengthen the ties.

Let us cultivate personal relationships with those around us; let us take time to internalize what they live on a daily basis. And when we cannot fellowship with someone due to circumstances such as time or distance, let us look for



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someone else to help us attend to the person who needs friendship. Devoting a small amount of time in a weekly or monthly personal relationship can encourage and motivate a person to continue onward with a given activity.

### 9. LET US DEMONSTRATE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

When studying the life of Jesus, we can see that no factor influenced His level of motivation toward the disciples more than the unconditional love He demonstrated to them. No matter how serious their mistakes and despite everything they were, Jesus continued to love them deeply, "until the end". It is worth noting that the Lord never rebuked the disciples for their mistakes: He only rebuked them for their lack of faith. Love, in itself, produces loyalty, obedience and dedication.

### 10. LET US BELIEVE IN WHAT GOD CAN DO

One of the most important lessons in the Bible regarding the development of people, is that God does not call us for who we are, but for who we can become. Every person is valuable for the cause of Christ and we, as leaders, have a responsibility to constantly communicate that truth. However, and very often, we tend to avoid people who appear "weird" to us and we stick with those who seem "better" to us. But in our experience, those we usually see as "weird" are those who will actually be more faithful to the Lord. Why? Among other reasons, they can more easily understand their weaknesses and the need to overcome them, which ultimately increases their potential in the Lord. This is why the Word says that when we are weak we are strong.

### 11. CONCLUSION

After studying these eight methods of motivating people, the best thing we can do is pray. May this be our prayer today:

"Lord, as the motivator par excellence that You are, we ask that You draw us near through Your love; and make us highly contagious individuals of that love. Always remind us that Your specialty is to work the impossible in the lives of men; that you take hopeless individuals, castoffs, and turn them into men and women of value to serve in your blessed work. Help us to live in such a way that we can encourage and motivate others to serve and love You with dedicated and committed lives; for the glory of Your Name. Amen."

The assignment for this lesson is to choose two of the eight methods of motivating people we have studied, and write a brief comment about them, according to your personal experience with the subject.

*This lesson has been adapted from a lecture given by Dr. Howard Hendricks (1924-2013) at Campus Crusade for Christ. Dr. Hendricks was a pastor, professor, and writer of several Christian books in the United States of America.*

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## Lesson 10 -How to Develop an Effective Cellular Leadership

¿What are the keys for an effective cellular leadership? What areas in the life of a leader require more attention to have an effective leadership in front of the group? ¿What is the fuel or force that moves the cellular leadership?

Acts 6:3, **"Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;"**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the early church there was a need to look for more helpers to delegate the tasks that the work of God demanded. In the case of Acts Chapter 6, men who were willing to perform the task of serving the tables were sought; but to qualify they had to meet certain requirements. Therefore, seven men were chosen; and were immediately given to the task of taking care of the most urgent need in the growing Church community. Following the principles uncovered in Acts 6:3, here we will discuss several areas that the leader must carefully address to effectively serve the cell group he leads.

### 2. YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

The leader should be developing an intimacy with Christ daily. This will allow you to receive the spiritual direction necessary to guide the cell group well, and at the same time the group will follow your example. Paul was an example to the Corinthians: **"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."** 1 Corinthians 11:1. As a leader, you should invest time in seeking the presence of God as King David did, who was crying out to be with God: **"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God."** Psalm 42:1. As leaders we must seek our spiritual nourishment in God with that same hunger, to have something to minister to our group.

### 3. YOUR INTEGRITY AND TESTIMONY

Leaders need to pay attention to the integrity of their heart, as the proverbialist says: **Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.** Proverbs 4:23. It is important to meditate on what our heart dictates to us because our effectiveness, our future...our life depends on it! That is why our Lord Jesus Christ talked about the importance of taking care of what is in the heart: **"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things."** Matthew 12:35.

As leaders, we should be reliable and honest. When trust is lost, it is difficult to regain it and the leadership ends. For this reason, the apostle Paul continuously advised the young leader Timothy to uphold his character: **"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity."** 1 Timothy 4:12. Age is not so important in the church. What really matters is that our life be whole and pure before God and men. For this reason, as a leader, you should stay on the right path, both in your personal life and in your leadership. A good testimony in front of others is of incalculable value for an effective cellular ministry.

### 4. YOUR GIFTS AND IDENTITY



Many leaders strive to move forward and grow in their leadership; however, they end up frustrated. Why? Because they are often ministering in the wrong ministry, gift or position. It is important to work within the gift that God has given us! The apostle Paul specified the order of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Church:

***"<sup>4</sup>There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup>There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup>And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. <sup>7</sup>But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all."*** 1 Corinthians 12:28.

Es esencial que el líder identifique los dones con los que puede operar –así como los dones con los que no puede– y que también encamine a su gente en tal sentido. Si el líder desconoce los dones con los que puede o no ministrar, correrá el serio riesgo de que su célula no consiga crecer, ni espiritual ni numéricamente. Debemos buscar la dirección de Dios en este importante asunto, para que Él nos enseñe cuáles son nuestros dones y funciones específicas dentro del cuerpo de Cristo; así como los dones y funciones específicas de los miembros de nuestro grupo:

***"Y a unos puso Dios en la iglesia, primeramente apóstoles, luego profetas, lo tercero maestros, luego los que hacen milagros, después los que sanan, los que ayudan, los que administran, los que tienen don de lenguas."*** 1ª Corintios 12.28.

## 5. YOUR ABILITIES

Every leader needs to develop his abilities, because without them it is very difficult to guide the group. The apostle Paul told Timothy to develop his teaching abilities so that he would be a competent communicator of God's truths: ***"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*** 2 Timothy 2:15. If a leader does not develop his abilities, he inevitably stagnates and stagnates the group; it also harms the growth of his local church.

If you want to become a competent leader, it is important that you attend the weekly trainings offered by your church, as well as special trainings that the sector or district organizes; because through them you will gradually polish your skills and over time you will be able to demonstrate or reflect your personal development through the growth of your group.

## 6. YOUR CALLING

The leader must persist and continue to persist in his calling, even if sometimes he "does not feel" like continuing. Such was the case with the prophet Jeremiah, who said, ***"Then I said, 'I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.' But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not."*** Jeremiah 20:9. The same fire that was in Jeremiah should also be in every cell group leader. There is a mission to fulfill even if fatigue and discouragement come. We can not turn back! Like the prophet, we should not stop proclaiming the word of God. The group will follow our example in this as well. If we as leaders give in, our group will be discouraged; but if we continue with enthusiasm, persisting in our calling—the divine call—our group will imitate us and continue to progress as well.

## 7. YOUR COMMITMENT WITH GOD



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The leader must remain firm in the commitment he has made to lead his cell group, since it is God who has called him for this work of feeding the people who attend his weekly cell group meeting. Christ told His disciples to stand firm in what they had begun, for if they looked back, they would no longer be worthy of Him. He also told Peter to "feed My lambs" (John 21:15-19); a spiritual task that includes evangelism, discipleship, and the training or preparation of new leaders to serve in the cell groups.

As a leader, you have been placed by God to attract and prepare your followers; and you must live aware of this important responsibility. We know that it is easier to bring brethren to the meeting than guests; but discipling and leading brethren is more difficult, because as people grow and develop, discipling them takes more time and becomes more challenging. There are no shortcuts. We should not seek our comfort, but be faithful to the commitment we made. Paul tells Timothy to strengthen himself in what God entrusted to him: **"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."** 2 Timothy 2:1. Let us firmly uphold our commitment to God.

### 8. SOUND DOCTRINE

Another matter of great importance for the cell group is the teaching of apostolic doctrine. The leader must make sure that his cell group is constantly nourished with sound doctrine: **"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."** 1 Timothy 4:16. As a leader, you are responsible for ensuring that strange doctrines do not infiltrate your group. There are doctrines that seem scriptural but in reality they are not. The risk of deviating from the true doctrine of Christ is real, and growing more and more in these times. That is why Paul was so careful when training Timothy, because he would continue discipling others: **"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."** 2 Timothy 2:2

### 9. YOUR PRIORITIES

Having a list of organized priorities is vital to our leadership. It requires practical wisdom. In the first place, every leader should set boundaries on the time he dedicates to his daily activities. We should always allow time for personal devotion as well as our family life. We must definitely set aside time to be with the Lord, both individually and as a family.

Another very important factor in our development as leaders is learning to guard our private life, separating it from public life. Social networks represent a great challenge in this sense, but as leaders we must keep clear the line of separation between what should be shared and what should not be shared. People need us to be an example in this as well.

Christ not only had a public life. He also had a private life. He took time to be alone, in silence and prayer; and from time to time He took His disciples with Him, to separate them from the crowds. Organizing our priorities will definitely make our leadership shine and move forward towards the goal, both at the public and private levels; both in our cell group and in our personal and family life. "The secret is what we do in secret."

### 10. THE FUEL OF LEADERSHIP



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Just as human technology has managed to develop different types of engines that utilize fuels of virtually unlimited availability—for example, hydrogen, oxygen, or electricity—our God has created "a nuclear engine" for the leader's soul whose fuel is a resource always available to those of us who serve in His work: love. Love is, or should be, our primary motivation, the fuel of our leadership.

A teacher of the law who heard Jesus answer the difficult questions that the Pharisees and Sadducees asked him, in turn decided to ask Him what the most important commandment was of the more than 600 that are in the Scriptures. Could Jesus bring all that the Law and the Prophets contain under one roof? Yes. Jesus explained to that teacher that love for God and for people—not one thing or the other, but both together—are the attitude and lifestyle that please God, above any merit or ability we have:

***"<sup>30</sup>And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength... <sup>31</sup>You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."*** Mark 12:30-31. God's key commandment for us is to love. These two fundamental precepts of the Lord establish that love should fuel our life. For example, if we try to exercise leadership under another motivation—ambition, social pressure, guilt, etc.—we will certainly fail.

### 11. THE CALL OF JESUS

Jesus calls us to love Him in a way that encompasses all the dimensions of our being: heart, soul, mind, and strength. Nothing is excluded! All facets of who we are, are required to love the One who is love itself. All areas of our life should participate in loving God, not just a part of it—which certainly includes our service or work in the Lord. Serving is the inevitable path or result of our delight in God. Serving with motivation and enthusiasm is a natural result of our love for Him.

Sincere love for people, lost souls and our brothers and sisters is the underlying motivation as experienced by Jeremiah. We will always see people all around us without Christ, who are on the path to death and condemnation for their sin; people who are hungry, wounded, dying. We cannot pass by and continue to live only for our own convenience. We need a compassionate heart that desires to help them. What will motivate us to give of our time, energy, and abilities to serve others, even if that often involves sacrifices, problems, and unforeseen outcomes? Answer: **the love of God.**

The loss of our effectiveness is generally due to a lack of motivation, and almost all the problems related to motivation that we as leaders suffer are caused by a lack of love. Although it is difficult for us to admit it, that is the case. If lately, in your leadership, you felt like you were running out of fuel, you must ask yourself if your love for God and others has declined, or is running out. Do not be discouraged by it; instead, get to work in that area. Look for keys that allow you to regain an appreciation and compassion for others; and do it not only for their sake but also for your own sake. Here is a key: seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit, since ***"...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."*** Romans 5:5.

### 12. CONCLUSION





## Lesson 11 - The Leader's Spirituality and the Group Environment

*What comprises the spirituality of the leader? How does it influence the environment of the cell group?*

2 Timothy 1:8,9: ***"...share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, <sup>9</sup> who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,"***

### 1. INTRODUCTION

What is spirituality? It is not easy to define but you can recognize when it is and is not present. In christian leadership, you can say that spirituality is the power to change the surrounding atmosphere; the influence that makes Christ real to others. In this lesson we will study how Christ exemplified that influential spirituality and how we can influence the environment of our cell group in the same way.

### 2. ISRAEL'S SPIRITUAL CONDITION IN THE TIME OF CHRIST

E In Jesus' time, the people who had been called by God to be the pillar of truth had become Satan's representative. Even the priests serving in the temple had completely lost their spiritual sight. They no longer understood the significance of the service they performed. You can say that their prayers and ministry were a theatrical performance and nothing more. Vices, sin, and hatred were the standard way of life for Israel's religious leaders; and their students were the same: frantic seekers of knowledge who never spent any quiet time with God, nor heard His voice speaking to their hearts. The blind leading the blind!

But then Jesus came. Our Lord, before beginning His public ministry, was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for the purpose of fasting and also to be tempted by the devil. In Jesus' first temptation, we find a very important lesson for all of us; one that should be engraved in our hearts: we must put our appetites or passions under God's dominion before we even think of serving Him.

The apostle John expressed it this way: ***"<sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever"*** 1 John 2:16,17. How do we resist carnal passions? How did our Lord Jesus Christ accomplish this? First, Jesus overcame these things through an intimate daily fellowship with God—mainly through constant prayer which fed His mind and spirit. When we have an intimate relationship with God, our character is strengthened and developed, and our senses are elevated to spiritual things.

Second, Jesus overcame by systematically applying God's Word to His life experience. As we know, the Word is absolutely powerful and effective, and that power is also available to us; but only if we know God's Word and obey it completely. This is how we can have victory over our flesh, the world, and the prince who governs it. The apostle James



sums it up this way: ***“7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...”*** James 4:7,8

### 3. THE URGENT NEED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Today we face a crisis similar to what the Lord faced in His time. The world rejects the preaching of the Word. Sin abounds more and more. The people's conscience is almost no longer able to awaken to God's call. Even in this day and age, many Christians live immersed in the rituals of religious activities that feed their emotions but never the spirit. More than ever we need leaders who not only have a mind awakened to the knowledge or skills to lead a group but, more than anything, a real spiritual life.

The preaching of the Gospel does not consist in giving eloquent speeches or offering spectacular shows, but in bringing people to a genuine encounter with God. The Gospel is the power of God, and the main purpose of the message we convey is to transform hearts. And how do you obtain that? With a teaching that is saturated with spiritual authority: ***“28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes”*** Matthew 7:28,29. ***“Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, “What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out”*** Luke 4:36.

Clearly, the message of Salvation we preach does not belong to us. The Lord is its owner and therefore the center of it. He should also be the center of our service and our meetings. But for that to happen we need to first have intimate fellowship with Him, and have His Word and Spirit dwelling in us, filling our lives. Only then can the Lord give us the words; what people need to convert to Him and be saved. Only then can Jesus anoint our life and preaching making His word penetrate ***“piercing even to the division of soul and spirit”*** Hebrews 4:12. Such an anointing on us is spiritual authority. It is God Himself speaking through our lives! ***“19 But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; 20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you”*** Matthew 10:19,20. Should we work on acquiring knowledge and preparation? Of course. But most of all we must spend time with God in worship and intimacy. The spirituality of the leader depends on this.

### 4. AN ATMOSPHERE FULL OF ENTHUSIASM

***“39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I ever did.” 40 So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. 41 And many more believed because of His own word. 42 Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world”*** John 4:39-42.

After her encounter with Jesus, the Samaritan woman immediately became a powerful influence on the people in her city. Her life newly transformed by Christ became an inspiration to many others; even those who had previously rejected her within her social circle. This defines the spiritual leader. A spiritual leader is a person transformed by the power of the blood and name of Jesus who, like the Samaritan woman, is able to stir up great enthusiasm for



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Christ to those around him. Just like the woman in Samaria, the leader must generate an atmosphere of contagious enthusiasm for Christ and participation in the cell group.

This, of course, will require that the power of the Holy Spirit be present and moves in the life of the leader as well as in his cell group meeting because that is what feeds the group's enthusiasm, creating a desire in people to be part of the group and the Body of Christ. The leader is the one who must be at the forefront of that desire, passion and enthusiasm. Here are twelve tips for developing an atmosphere of enthusiasm in the group.

1. As the group grows, credit must always be given to God; and growth should be celebrated as an achievement of teamwork, making everyone feel that they contributed in some way to that success. As the development of the group is obtained
2. Not every effort will be successful, but the leader must always take the lead, in good times or bad, to keep the group focused on what is ahead. You only look back to learn from mistakes, and never to blame others. Instead, the leader will have to accept their responsibility if something did not go well. Everyone will thank you.
3. The leader must be open to learn new and more effective ways to minister to the people in his group, to avoid the monotony that does so much damage.
4. The leader must learn to admit his weaknesses or areas of deficiency, and try to compensate for them with the resources at his disposal. These resources include the people around you, especially the faithful people in the group. Engaging others to participate raises their self-esteem and makes them feel like they are part of the group.
5. The Bible says that in the multitude of counselors there is victory and safety (Proverbs 11:14; 24:6). Therefore, the leader must be open to listen to everyone who wants to express themselves when it comes to contributing to the success of the group. By listening to others, the leader gives them a sense of value, of belonging, and allows them to exercise their creativity. This will help the group to grow in different aspects.
6. As we already said, in order to motivate others with the love and goodness of the Lord Jesus, it is necessary for the leader to have a genuine relationship with the Lord Jesus. People can distinguish those who have truly been transformed from those who have not; those who have their cups overflowing from those who do not.
7. There is no "magical," specific, or correct way to evangelize. The Word of Salvation must be transmitted through a person, and there is no need to be something other than oneself for this to happen. A person's personality must be transparent when expressing the love and goodness of the Lord. This will cause people to seek Jesus with sincere interest.
8. The Samaritan woman did not use sophisticated communication methods. She only spoke of herself, of what Christ had done in her, making the whole community know about the Lord. Her



effectiveness was the result of people hearing her testimony directly from her, with all the emotion and joy she experienced.

9. In the small group meeting, we should not be afraid to verbalize, in addition to the lesson, the powerful fact of how God's Word has made a personal impact on us. The more we testify about what God has done in our lives, the more others will be motivated.
10. The leader should not be aggressive in pressuring the guest to accept the plan of Salvation. Each person has their own timeline and should have the opportunity to decide for themselves. This will create a greater commitment of the person when they finally take the steps of obedience.
11. It is very important to create a sense of teamwork that involves the entire group. The Salvation of our communities requires everyone's personality, because each one in their own sphere of influence is able to reach those who are willing to receive what we have to share with them.
12. The leader must seek the well-being of others before his own. By putting others first, a sense of trust is created that success is not sought for someone's glory or personal gain, but for the good of all who make up the cell group.

### 5. CONCLUSION

The world is drawn to where there is enthusiasm and passion for what is being done. As leaders, we must demonstrate enthusiasm in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Having the opportunity to enjoy a personal relationship with the King of kings and Lord of lords is not only a great honor, but something for which we should rejoice and feel motivated at all times. That the King of Glory lives and remains in our heart should lift up shouts of joy from the deepest parts of our soul, shaking up those around us, just as it shook the Samaritan woman's neighbors.

The joy unspeakable and full of glory that comes from having Jesus Christ in our heart is something that should be shared with everyone, beginning with the leader of the cell group and continuing with all the members who support it. Just as those in the city of Samaria opened their ears and hearts to the emotion and enthusiasm of the woman whose life had been transformed by Christ, our communities and circle of friends and family must open their lives today to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Each of us is a vessel chosen by God to convey this powerful gospel. We were chosen to be part of a winning generation, which spreads the joy to many people of the victory obtained by Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary for us; an eternal victory!

The assignment for this lesson is to write a brief reflection on the importance of the leader's spirituality.

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## Lesson 12 - Worshipping God in the Cell Group

*What role does worshipping God play in a cell group meeting? What beneficial results does it bring? How important is the personal life of the leader in this important matter?*

John 4:22-24: “<sup>22</sup> **You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.** <sup>23</sup> **But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.** <sup>24</sup> **God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Those of us who long for God's presence to move in our cell group meeting as we worship the Lord with all our heart; those of us who hope that, as a result, people will be transformed into His image, know that this will never happen by chance or as a product of improvisation. No, in order for worship and transformation to occur in the cell group, it is necessary that the leader always be prepared.

### 2. WORSHIP, THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE CELL GROUP

The relationship between cell groups and worshipping God is very significant. Yet—and it is sad to say—there are still people in the Church that do not understand its importance. Many churches still fear or distrust the cell group model; and for some brethren the idea of cell groups is even harmful and intimidating, because they associate it with rebellious people who seek to cause divisions. But nothing could be further from the truth...

It is prudent that we refresh the biblical concept of the Church. The word "church" comes from the Greek word *Ekklesia* which means "to call out". Therefore the Church consists of those who are called by God, who answer the call. Following this line of thought, the Church does not correspond to the place where people gather, nor is it limited by it. The Church consists of people coming together as a community. Because of this, the Church can function very well in the field, the city, houses, a room, and even on a digital platform.

And the cell group? It is part of that greater body and shares the same advantages or capacities, one of which is to worship God. This matter is of the utmost importance and must be well understood because, far from what many believe, worshipping is not simply singing in a large group or entering an emotional state when congregating on Sunday. To worship consists of prostrating oneself before God in an act of humble recognition.

That means that when we sing to Him in the cell group, we can worship Him; when we pray by calling on His name, we can worship Him; when we hear His voice in a biblical message, we can worship Him; and also when we obey His will! Therefore, the cell group makes a lot of sense and is relevant when they come together to pray, praise, and study the Word because all of this is an integral part of worshipping God.

Cell groups also have the potential to achieve something that the mother church—so to speak—cannot fully achieve: the implementation of its members' gifts. We also worship God when we activate the different gifts in the cell



group, since the group of believers in that manner fosters the optimal function of the body of Christ and its unity in the bonds of peace and love.

Acts of love is another characteristic of excellence of small groups, when mutual support, understanding, laughing with those that laugh and crying with those that cry are encouraged: “**Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another.**” NIV). It is what the apostle Paul recommends in Romans 12:15-16, and without a doubt it is something that pleases the Lord very much.

Another important thing that small groups can do extraordinarily is being mutually honest in their accountability. A small group encourages familiarity and trust, and this in turn creates an ideal environment for holding one another accountable, as we are taught in Ephesians 5:21.

So then the cell group worships God in: (1) the beauty of praise, (2) the harmony of unity, (3) humility serving one another, and (4) the use of spiritual gifts. Therefore, worshipping God is the purpose that encompasses all the functions of the cell group. For this reason, we as leaders must be totally committed to the cell group because God is worshipped in the cell group, His presence is manifested, and His purpose is fulfilled.

### 3. GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE MEETING

As we have been saying, it is essential that we have and maintain a spirit of worship in the small group meeting. Of course, this should not begin with the members and guests of the group, but with the leaders. The main function of the cell group leader is to lead the people of the cell group in worship during the meeting but, most of all, to a full life of worship; to a lifestyle characterized by worship.

The biblical term "worship" comes from the Greek words *proskuneo*, *sebonai*, *latreuo* and *eusebeo*, which mean to kiss the hand of, esteem, show reverence, to hold someone or something in high respect.; fall on your knees and touch the floor with your forehead as an act of deep reverence and respect, with a strong feeling of reverent fear (Matthew 15:9); serve, perform religious service, pay homage (Philippians 3:3), and act godly toward someone (Acts 17:23).

All this from the etymological. Now biblically, worship can be thought of as obedience and service to God; an action in which we address God in an expressive way, not moved by what we are going to receive from Him but by what we want to give Him. There can be no genuine outward worship if there is no inward worship first. Outward worship is an expression of the intimate relationship we have with God and is connected to the fear of God. Simply put, the fear of God is always keeping in mind that every thought, action, or word is seen and heard by God, and one day we will have to answer to Him for all of it.

Every cell group meeting is actually a service to God. The word "service" means to give. Therefore, the reason for attending a small group meeting should not be to receive but to give; in other words, worship God in the many ways we know how, offering our love and devotion to Him. Christ said: “**Give, and it will be given to you**”. If we sow worship in our meetings, we will reap blessing. That is evident.

Without God's presence in our meetings, we are only actors and imitators. In order for worship to fulfill its purpose in the small group meeting, the Spirit of God must be an integral part of worship. In terms of worshipping God



at the cell group gathering—putting it very simply—praise is the pathway to worship and worship is the pathway to God's presence. And in the presence of God we are transformed.

Believers are transformed because of the presence of God moving in the midst of their worship. This is why we say that worship is more than singing. Worship is a divine encounter. For example, when Moses met God, even his face shined! ***"And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him."*** Exodus 34:35.

That is why it is so important that those of us who lead cell groups do much more than that, and minister to people as well. In order to minister authentically, it is necessary to first have a growing intimacy with God; seek Him daily in prayer so that His powerful anointing and presence may manifest itself in our lives. When that happens, hearts are changed. Here are some examples: (a) God speaks and the believer forgives the one who offended him. (b) Sins and bad habits are confronted, confessed and forsaken. (c) Gifts and healings are manifested. What other examples of change could we find?

True worship brings change! This fact can also be found in the Old Testament. Let us read 2 Chronicles 5:13-14, which recounts the dedication of Solomon's temple: ***"<sup>13</sup> indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice...the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud. <sup>14</sup>...for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God."***

Our task or purpose as leaders, assistants, or support members of local cell groups is not to take aim at people's ears or intellect to provoke their applause and admiration, but to minister to God and for Him to minister to the hearts of all participants—including ourselves—when He pours out His presence. If after worshipping in the meeting nothing changed in us, worship simply did not take place.

Worship is more than a musical activity or prayer of thanks; it comes from the heart. When we praise the Lord from the heart, the Holy Spirit stirs our whole being and we become more aware of His presence. Let us now ask ourselves: Are we aware of the important role God's Spirit plays when we worship in the cell group? Is there any sin in our heart that must be confronted, confessed, and forsaken, so that the Holy Spirit can freely move as we minister and lead? Are we seeking and pursuing intimacy with God, which causes His presence to move supernaturally, transforming the lives of those who participate in our meetings?

#### 4. WORSHIP IN THE PERSONAL LIFE OF A LÍDER

Let us read John 4:22-24 again: ***"<sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. <sup>24</sup> God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."***

Through this Scripture we can see that the Lord is looking for worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in truth. What does this mean? Basically, that we must worship Him in an integral, holy, sincere, honest, real way. This challenge takes on different forms for leaders, implying that their worship of God must manifest itself in the different facets of their personal life.



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1. **Worship in the Sanctuary.** First, we look at the true worshipper in the church. Each leader should try to model true worship, not with their lips but with their heart, when they are in the sanctuary. There is a saying that goes: "like father, like son". If we, as leaders, show enthusiasm and happiness in our worship and praise only when it is our turn to participate, our disciples will do the same. We want to raise an army, not only of religious people but of true worshippers. Genuine worship is the foundation for genuine praise. We need to teach our own, not so much with words but by example, that even if only two or three are present, just as when there are hundreds or thousands, our focus is always on offering God worship and praise with excellence. If we can give God genuine worship in the church, we can do it more easily in the cell group. It is not difficult to achieve this, especially if there are others around us who are like-minded or of the same belief regarding this.
2. **Worship in the home.** It is very important for cell group leaders to grab hold of worship outside the church and practice it with their own family. A true worshipper is one who knows how to build a family altar inside his home. A family that worships God at home will maintain an intimate relationship with everyone in the home. The true worshiper is one who knows how to treat their spouse in a way that honors God, loving them as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25). Likewise, the true worshipper understands that his children are not his property but an inheritance from God; on loan from God and treats them accordingly. All family interaction should be conducted as an act of worship to God. This is the biggest challenge, because there is no one who knows us better than our family. Those who truly worship God in the home ensure that true worship will continue in future generations.
3. **Worship in the workplace.** Worship in the workplace does not have to include praying, singing, or reading the Bible. The way one works, loyally and honestly, will render worship to God by being a good testimony and good example to others; especially if they are unconverted. The Bible exhorts us that whatever we do, we do it with all of our heart, as for the Lord. Cell group leaders and assistants should be the best workers or employees, because they do everything with reverence and respect, not only for the company or organization, but for God. Many guests who come to the cell groups are friends from work. Why? Because an example is being given at work of what it is to worship God at all times.
4. **Worship in the community.** Worship in the community is not just about having services in the park or evangelizing on the streets. It is also about honoring God wherever we are. The way we treat others is determined by how we worship God. We worship God when we live peaceably with everyone, as the Scriptures say. Our conversations, actions, reactions and how we treat people matters a lot before God and people. God expects us to be an example to all, and the more we can show the character of Christ to others through our lives, the more we worship Him.





## Lesson 13 - The Cellular Group and Prayer

*What should the cell group leader's prayer life look like? How should the cell group pray?*

Acts 4:31: ***“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”***

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Today it seems like the presence of the Lord no longer descends among us as it did in the meetings of the early church; at least not with the frequency or intensity that the Bible shows us. Why is that? Why does God not manifest His power as He used to? Could He have changed? Or has His church changed? Without a doubt we have changed, and we are the ones who must make the necessary adjustments so that He descends again in our daily lives. We will study why it is important to have the Holy Spirit visit our cell group meetings and what we should do for that to occur.

### 2. THE PRESENCE OF GOD

There are many Scriptures that tell us about the presence of God descending upon His people. For example: Exodus 3:8: ***“So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians...”*** Numbers 11:17: ***“Then I will come down and talk with you there...”*** 2 Chronicles 7:1,2: ***“<sup>2</sup> When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house”*** Isaiah 64:1,2: ***“<sup>1</sup> Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence— <sup>2</sup> As fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil—to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!”*** Matthew 18:20: ***“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”*** Acts 4:31: ***For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”***

According to these texts from the Word and other related ones, seven very important things happen when the presence of the Lord is in our midst: (1) God moves within us. (2) The "immovable" difficulties are removed. (3) Dead areas are cleaned. (4) Our zeal for the Lord is restored. (5) Our vision is clearer. (6) The "impossible" becomes a reality. (7) We have the victory. Hallelujah! When the presence of the Lord is among us, there is deliverance; the voice of God is there; there is divine fire. When Christ descends, there is living worship, the wind of His Spirit, the rain of His Word, the revelation of His truth, abundant blessing, mighty works, and spiritual fulfillment. And isn't this what we all want?

### 3. WE NEED TO BE REAL

Matthew 6:5,6: ***“<sup>5</sup> ...the hypocrites...love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>6</sup> But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”***



Christ's words are not difficult to understand; they take on a very clear meaning for us as leaders. In order for God's presence to be real in our public meetings, it must first be real in our private life. The secret is in what we do in secret. If Christ is not really in our heart—if His presence has not been kindled and stirred up in us—how can He manifest Himself in the cell group meeting we lead?

1 Corinthians 16:14: ***"Let all that you do be done with love."*** Ephesians 3:17-19: ***"<sup>17</sup>that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup>may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— <sup>19</sup>to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."***

The first life that must be rooted and grounded in the presence of the Lord is the life of the leader, so that when they speak, teach, and minister to others, they will do so in the Spirit and never in the flesh. This will make the difference between a dead group and one full of spiritual life. When there is life, there is growth and multiplication. If you lead a cell group and want the joy of God in the meeting, you need to have felt it first. If you want there to be communion among the cell group members, you need to have experienced it first. If you want the peace of Christ to reign, it must have reigned in you first. In order for your people to be healthy, you must be healthy first. To summarize, in order to bring others to that very important place that is the presence of the Lord, we need to have been there first.

#### 4. PRAYER IN THE CELL GROUP

Acts 1:14: ***"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."***

The importance of prayer in the cell group, based on the example of the church in the Acts of the Apostles, is something we can never exaggerate. What motivated the brethren of the early church to persevere in prayer more than anything? Answer: **Spiritual unity** (Acts 2:1). Thanks to this, the life of our brethren from the early Church became characterized by four key elements:

- a. Faith in the Word of God.
- b. A firm determination to fulfill their commitments—in this case, everyone meeting on a pre-established day, time, and place.
- c. Sacrifice or denial of personal comfort and indifference to attend those meetings.
- d. Perseverance in what they did.

Faith, determination, sacrifice and perseverance. As a fruit produces seeds and its seeds produce more fruit, here we can say that spiritual unity produced the four elements mentioned, and that these elements produced more and more spiritual unity. With their prayer life, they managed to create and stay within a virtuous circle; in a cycle of spiritual and numerical growth. This wheel of components, with unity as the central axis, continues to turn today; it is valid today in the life of the Church, and whenever it moves it results in God's response, manifested in His presence and abundant



blessing. Today, this is more than enough reason for us to earnestly strive to persevere with one accord in cell group prayer.

Prayer in the cell group is very important. First, because it allows us to strengthen our relationship with God: **“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”** James 4:8. Secondly, prayer is very important because it means we are heeding to the kind invitation that God make to us: **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;”** Philippians 4:6.

Prayer is also very important because the Holy Spirit uses this approach to guide us to all truth, through the Word of God.: **“and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus..”** Philippians 4:7. In addition, prayer guarantees the fulfillment of the promises the Lord made to us. He said it; and if we pray, He will do it.: **“<sup>18</sup> The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.. <sup>19</sup> He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them”** Psalms 145:18,19.

For these and many more reasons, prayer should fill a significant part of our activities, in general, and also play a significant role in our cell group meetings.

### 5. PRAYER IN THE MEETING

There should be prayer at the beginning of the meeting, during the meeting, and also at the end of the meeting. Prayer should surround the central axis of the meeting, which is the Word of God. Prayer is to the lesson what the wrapping paper is to the gift. Teaching God's Word is the gift that we give to our brethren and guests every time we meet. And prayer is the box or wrapping paper of that gift, finely adorned with ribbons of praise, gratitude, and worship to the Lord.

Our meetings are designed to last approximately 60 or 70 minutes, of which about 20 or 25 should be reserved for prayer. Are we praying, at a minimum, this much in our meetings? And another very important thing: Is the time devoted to prayer quality time? Since these minutes are much less than the hour that, at a minimum, Jesus expects us to pray daily (Matthew 26:40), we must ensure that prayer in the meeting is Christ-centered, inspired, fervent, well-directed, and put into context. In that sense, we can never allow the waste of time in conversations outside the topic of the meeting, or very detailed explanations from people who tend to take over the time of others; and in this case, God's time!

Each of the three or four prayers we say at the cell group meeting has specific purposes, which must be respected. Therefore, the opening prayer is to call on the name of the Lord, thanking Him for what He has done and will continue to do. We also consecrate the meeting to Him, entrusting the participants to Him, and asking for His blessing on everyone and everything.



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In the second prayer—which is usually longer—we present all the needs. Here we should take the time to face evil spirits that cause resistance to the Gospel, confusion, stumbling, and all kinds of difficulties. Spiritual warfare is very important during this time.

Then comes the prayer to establish the lesson that has been given in the hearts of the hearers. We should pray that the newly planted seed of the Word bears the fruit of repentance and obedience. We should ask for the spiritual transformation of all participants. Finally, we pray for the friends we want to bring to Christ. In other words, the people we are going to invite to the cell group meeting.

Prior to the meeting, the leader must agree with the other group members regarding what role each one will take in the meeting; especially with regard to prayer. A weekly rotation of those who pray is necessary and healthy, as this will result in personal growth as well as that of the group. The goal is that everyone learns to pray. The disciples did not ask Jesus to "teach us to preach," but to **"teach us to pray"**. They not only learned it, they also practiced it consistently.: **"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"** Acts 2:42.

### 6. CONCLUSION

When the presence of God is manifested in the cell group meetings, supernatural things happen. When His presence descends in our meetings, there is unity; a holy anointing to preach, ministering of the Holy Spirit upon each person, signs and wonders; people believe and obey the Gospel, receiving Salvation. Hallelujah! Let us not doubt the promises that the Lord has made to us, but let us ask Him every day to descend with His wonderful presence in our lives, in our meetings, for the glory of His name.: **"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"** the Lord tells us (Matthew 18:20). Amen.

The assignment for this lesson is to write a short comment on one of the following topics: (1) The prayer life of the cell group leader. (2) The importance of prayer in the cell group meeting. (3) Intercession for the lost.

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## Lesson 14 - How to Build the Cell Group

*What challenges do we face with the growth and multiplication of a cell group? What strategy does the enemy use to intimidate and hinder us? How can we have victory over the enemy and effectively build our group?*

Nehemiah 4:1-3: “**1 But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. 2 And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, ‘What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?’ 3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, ‘Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.’**”

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Nehemiah was an excellent servant of the Lord who, while in exile, knew the horrible state in which the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants found themselves: they were “**in great distress and reproach**” and “**the wall of Jerusalem is also broken down**” (Nehemiah 1:3). Realizing the sad situation of his own people, Nehemiah tells us how he felt: “**I sat down and wept**”v. 4. But Nehemiah would not stay that way for long...

### 2. REBUILDING THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

Nehemiah was a Jewish man who served King Artaxerxes of Persia, in the city of Shushan. One day, his brother arrived from Judah with the bad news that the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem were vulnerable because the walls and gates of the city, which the Babylonians had destroyed, had not been repaired. This saddened Nehemiah, who made the decision to work to remedy that situation. Nehemiah fasted and prayed to God so that King Artaxerxes would allow him to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city.

After a few days, the king realized that Nehemiah was sad and asked him why he was sad. Nehemiah responded that he was sad because Jerusalem, his city, was in ruins. The king offered to help him, and Nehemiah, after praying again to God, asked for permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls. Artaxerxes not only granted him royal permission, but also provided him with everything Nehemiah would need: protection for the long journey, safe passage that allowed him to travel freely to the province of Judah, and even wood for the reconstruction of Jerusalem's walls and gates.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem and observed the poor condition of the walls, he brought together the Jewish priests and rulers, and after testifying how God's hand had led him there, he encouraged them to work with him to rebuild the walls. The people accepted enthusiastically and immediately went to work, but some enemies began to ridicule them saying that even a fox could collapse the wall they were building.

As Nehemiah and the families continued working without paying attention to their words, the enemies decided to attack the city. When they became aware of this, the people were afraid, but Nehemiah encouraged them by telling them that God was with them, and then he placed guards to protect them from the attacks, thus deterring the enemy.



This is how the wall and gates of Jerusalem were repaired in just 52 days! To celebrate, Nehemiah brought the Levites to Jerusalem and organized them into two groups, to praise God. Ezra lead one group and Nehemiah the other. They went up the stairs of the Fountain Gate, each group marching in a different direction, walking along the top of the wall around the city, playing trumpets, cymbals and harps, in praise of God. Finally they gathered in the temple, where they offered sacrifices to Jehovah and celebrated with a great feast.

Now we will study how this fascinating story applies to the local cell group leadership ministry. We will extract important spiritual principles from these biblical pages that will undoubtedly be very useful when leading and multiplying the cell groups of our church. And we will start by saying...

### 3. IF YOU ARE BUILDING WALLS, YOU MUST PREPARE YOURSELF

If you are serving the Lord by leading a small group, or you plan to do it soon, the first thing you should prepare for is the anger of those who wish to see you defeated: ***“But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious...”*** Nehemiah 4:1.

The enemy will not only be angry with you. He will also do everything possible and the impossible to stop you. He will attack you with words and thoughts, trying to discourage you.: ***And he spoke before his brethren and the “...?What are these feeble Jews doing” ,and said ,army of Samaria v. 2.*** That's right. The enemy will tell you or make you think ugly things such as: "I am not good at this", "I will surely fail", "I will never grow", etc.

The enemy will also try to ridicule your work: ***“if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall”*** v. 3. Ridicule is a weapon the devil uses often to discourage and weaken those who work for God. The enemy attacks to destroy the Pastor's, leader's, and church member's self-esteem. He always tries to belittle what God can do, tempting us to replace our faith in God with his logic.

Another tactic of the evil one is exaggeration: ***“Will they complete it in a day?”*** v. 2. He attacks us in this way when He realizes that we are determined to do great things for the Lord. The enemy wants to destroy us, to render us useless; and he uses different situations and people—many times people close to us—so our feelings are hurt and we become ineffective leaders.

If you want to be a true wall-building leader, one of the most important things you should learn is to live by faith in God and not by feelings, emotions, or senses. The Bible says that we should walk by faith and not by sight. It also says that faith is the evidence of things we cannot see.

The more progress you make in rebuilding the walls, in your leadership goals, in God's purpose for you, the more the devil will attack you. As servants of the Lord, we have to recognize the devil's attempts to try to prevent us from building the walls God commanded us to build. We must be strong as well as wise so that we do not lose our ability to work with enthusiasm. Let us read the Word again:

***“<sup>6</sup> So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. <sup>7</sup> Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry”*** Vv. 6,7.



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v. 6,7.

The more God uses you, the more those who oppose the work of the Lord will get angry. They will criticize you by attacking what you do, to try to tear down what you have built. The enemy will be angry with you and yours, and will speak badly of you, with ridicule and contempt. Why? Because every wall that you manage to secure will be one less place for him to enter. It will bring you closer to the total victory that God has promised you.

If we want to avoid being hurt by the enemy's attacks while we work in the cellular model of the Strategy of Jesus, if we want to move forward with the purposes God has for us, we need determination. We have no doubt that a church fully involved in home cell groups is a veritable army that will conquer neighborhoods, towns, cities, and even the entire nation, for the glory of the Lord.

Let us persevere in rebuilding the Church's cellular model, despite all the opposition of the evil one. That will surely determine our victory in Christ. Remember: **"for the people had a mind to work"** v. 6.

#### 4. LET US REMOVE THE RUBBISH

Nehemiah 4:10 - **"Then Judah said, 'The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.'"** Without God's presence, people's lives are only a pile of rubble. The rubble in the human being is the result of building a life without God:

**"<sup>26</sup> 'But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: <sup>27</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall'"** Matthew 7:26,27. The foundation of unbelievers is like sand; that is why when problems come into their lives they totally fall apart—because they have no foundation.

Before we can build the walls, we must clean up all the rubble left behind by the destruction. It cannot be built on rubble. We are referring to the rubble of our sins. Before building something new, it is required that the old be totally cleared out. Before construction continues, the matter of sin has to be resolved; and it has to be resolved with God because only God has the solution for sin.

The Bible says that if the Lord does not build the house, we work in vain to build it (Psalm 127:1). This means that we must win souls with the strength that comes from God and not our own. Failure in this case would be certain and resounding. But if we use the powerful tools of prayer and fasting to help people remove the rubble in their lives, we can then build firm and secure walls in them.

#### 5. THE WEAPON OF PRAYER

The gaps open to the devil can only be completely closed with the power of God operating in people's lives, and the most powerful weapon at our disposal for this is prayer. Prayer is so powerful that it moves Heaven in our favor. The prayer of faith moves the hand of God to perform powerful miracles and wonderful transformations. No matter how great the devil's attack is on our leadership, we can always use the weapon of prayer against him: **"Hear, O our God, for**



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***we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity!***  
Nehemiah 4:4.

We have to pray to attack the enemy, causing his assault—ridicule, contempt, adversity—to turn against him. VV. 8,9: “***8 and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion. 9 Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.***” This is what watching and praying means; what the Lord taught and commanded us: to be alert and always keep watch over the edifying work we are doing for Him.

If we believe, we will certainly receive what we ask of the Lord in prayer: “***Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them***” Mark 11:24. “***6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. 7 N For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;***” James 1:6,7.

Doubting God's answer is very dangerous because it can lead us on the path of wanting to negotiate with our enemies, or even try to justify ourselves before them. Let us never do that. Let us never discuss with or give explanations to the enemy. Let us talk with the Lord, which is much better. Let us pray to Him in every situation, because our victory comes from Him.

VV. 10b,11: “***10 ...we are not able to build the wall. 11 And our adversaries said, 'They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease.'***”

Why did the builders become weak? Because they listened to the enemy. They began to believe them. The hosts of evil try to weaken you, attempting to make you believe that you cannot do anything. But be resolved, get up, be persistent, get rid of the feelings and thoughts that the devil has been sending you about your leadership. The enemy cannot actually stop you; he can only make you believe he can. It is up to you to believe or reject him. The devil knows he cannot stop you unless you believe him.

V.12: “***So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, 'From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us.'***” The enemy is the inventor of paranoia. God did not do it. To stop you, the devil will try to make you believe that you will be attacked from all sides, that everyone is orchestrating things against you. Satan seeks to terrorize you with fear and make you a victim of circumstances so he can defeat you. But never—ever—allow a victim mentality within your leadership. Ask others to intercede for you in prayer and never allow yourself to be frightened by the devil's empty threats.

## 6. CONCLUSION

When Nehemiah set out to rebuild the city walls, he realized that the enemy was unwilling to give in to make it happen. Building a church through the Strategy of Jesus is not easy. The enemy attacks us in many ways, from the outside and the inside. He uses deplorable actions, murmuring, ridicule, etc. because he wants to stop what the Lord is doing. But let us not be intimidated. Let us always move forward, as good servants of the Lord. The victory will be completely ours, because of our faith in Him, just as it was for Nehemiah and his people.





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## Lesson 15 - Relational Discipleship and Expanding the Kingdom

*How can we regain the early church's effectiveness in fulfilling the Great Commission?*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Moments before ascending to Heaven, Jesus emphasized the path that His disciples should travel from that moment on: “**...Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**” John 20:21. The simple strategy contained in these words describes Christ's admirable vision for securing the expansion of the Kingdom to the ends of the Earth through relational discipleship.

### 2. A SIMPLE STRATEGY

The strategy of Jesus does not require great knowledge, nor excellent training. It does not rest upon the intelligence or skills of leaders. In fact, from that point of view, the Twelve, without knowing it, already possessed everything necessary to form new disciples and impact their lives just as Christ had impacted their lives. The path that the disciples should follow to fulfill Jesus' great commission was none other than to simply reproduce the model of work they had observed in Christ's ministry. In two thousand years of history, the Church has not found nor will it find a better way to make disciples.

The word Discipleship constitutes the sum of our vocation, the essence of our mission, and every activity inside and outside the scope of the church should echo it. The core of Jesus' call to His church is simply to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). Despite the simplicity of this strategy, the cultural pressures of the current age have been imposing their own assumptions or flawed judgments on the Church, leading us to travel greater, but much less effective, paths.

Of all the deeply rooted assumptions in the Church in these times, below we will mention the three most common and counterproductive.

### 3. “THE INFORMATION MAKES THE DIFFERENCE”

If we approach anyone on the street and ask them why there is so much poverty and violence, the vast majority would say it is a lack of education. The answer is not surprising, because it is one of the most entrenched convictions in today's society and government: if we offer people greater educational opportunities, they will stop being what they are. A half-truth. Today, education revolves mostly around the process of reporting, but the truth is that having information about a certain topic is not synonymous with change. We only need to look at a doctor with a cigarette in hand to know that information does not necessarily change a person's life. He has all the data about the consequences of smoking, but that in itself does not lead him to quit the habit. Despite this, the path that the Church most often travels when it wants to mobilize people is to organize a seminary! We firmly believe that if we provide more information about prayer,



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evangelism, or missions, people will automatically be more committed to these challenges. That is not the case, because information does not make the difference.

#### **4. "THE URGENCY JUSTIFIES THE PROCESS"**

When we look at the work that still needs to be done, it is difficult not to give in to the sense of urgency. For example, of the hundreds of thousands of pastors currently serving around the world, the vast majority never received training. Faced with such an urgent need for training, it would be natural for us to organize large conferences that reach as many of these leaders in need of training as possible. From this mindset comes the initiative of a well-known Christian author to train one million leaders in five years.

In the same way, the most logical way to confront the billions who do not know Christ seems to be to organize massive evangelism campaigns. However, the results of these extraordinary efforts rarely justifies the investment. Studies reveal that less than 3% of total church conversions result from evangelistic campaigns, and less than 2% of those conversions are sustained over time. So, assembling the multitudes in one place to hear a sermon on a certain topic, no matter how good the preaching, does not equate to getting people to live the truth of the Gospel

#### **5. "THE SIZE OF THE CROWD DEFINES SUCCESS"**

A third conviction entrenched in our modern perspective is this: "The bigger the event becomes, the greater the sign of God's favor over the leader's life." Therefore it is believed that someone capable of filling a stadium with 50,000 people has a greater anointing and a more effective ministry than the one who barely ministers to thirty or fifty believers.

It is logical to be dazzled by the crowds that the stars of Christianity today manage to summon; but the people's response to these events does not generally create a desire to be transformed, but in the desire to be entertained. If the goal of our events is to entertain, then definitely 50,000 is much more successful than fifty. However, we are not in the business of entertaining, but in forming disciples who walk faithfully with Christ.

In the Kingdom, great works always begin with humility. The Messiah was born in a tiny, forgotten stable. The lush mustard tree was, at first, a tiny seed. A thriving congregation began as a small study group in a home. We should not have a problem with enormous quantities; the problems arise when we seek to dodge humble beginnings and go directly to the enormous.

#### **6. RELATIONSHIPS THAT TRANSFORM**

Jesus drew many crowds throughout His three years of public ministry. So many people wanted to approach Him that, many times, they trampled over each other (Luke 12:1). On occasions such as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1) or the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 4:36), Jesus chose to minister to a multitude; so we can safely say that He recognized the value of ministry to large numbers of people. However, the Gospels clearly indicate that Christ reserved His greatest efforts and time for a small group of people, among whom were the Twelve.



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It was the Twelve who accompanied Jesus most of the time and fervently participated within His ministry. It was to them that Jesus chose to reveal certain truths that He did not want to reveal to the multitudes. He had intense dialogues with them about the principles that govern the Kingdom of God. At the end of His ministry, He called them "friends" for having become partners in the projects He supported (John 15:15). The reason for such a high and intense investment is simple: we cannot be instruments of profound transformation in the lives of people we do not know.

Close, intimate relationships are God's chosen path for life to flow from person to person. We find the most natural example of this dynamic in the impact a parent's life has on their children. Children demonstrate the same vocabulary and the same ways of expressing themselves as their parents. They were not acquired in a classroom, nor are they the result of a deliberate process on the part of the parents. In fact, many times parents are the most surprised that their children have learned so many of their characteristics. The mere fact of living together has facilitated this transfer, which occurs naturally and almost involuntarily.

This observation brings us back to the instructions the disciples received at the end of Jesus' ministry: **"Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."** John 20:21. Christ expected them to invest time and serve Him with a willingness to be deeply involved with a few people. In the process of walking together, the life they had received from the Lord would be transferred almost without warning to these new followers of Jesus. The method is foolproof and mainly depends on this single condition: that two people are willing to walk together.

However, the race to produce a high volume of short-term results has led us to abandon this millennial but ongoing practice. We believe that, with a weekly class, we will be able to train forty to fifty leaders a year. But the long-term results never support this methodology simply because the process of forming disciples requires the dedication of the artisan. In order for the Discipleship process to achieve the expected impact in our congregations, it is vital that we ultimately distance ourselves from the stereotype of the passive spectator, typical of the world of show business. Instead, we are obligated to create opportunities for dialogue, the free exchange of ideas, to strengthen the bonds that allow us to cultivate relationships that transform. Let us see how

## 7. TRANSFORMATIVE DISCIPLESHIP

The time we have to teach a discipleship school class is often too little. However, we have a lot of information to share. We as teachers are always in a rush in order to leave nothing aside, which leads us to build educational moments consisting, mostly, in a monologue on our part. Because the sermon enjoys a privileged position in our church culture, we tend to bring the expanded method to all areas where we meet with others; even when we study in a small group.

Therefore, with few exceptions, our discipleship students limit their participation to taking notes or listening to the presentation. However, research shows that a student's level of retention with this teaching method is one of the most inefficient ways of conveying information to others. Students sitting passively in a classroom retain 80% of a presentation during the first twelve minutes of class, but only 20% the rest of the time. The expanded method encourages mental idleness even in the best students.

The wise teacher, therefore, looks for a way to involve their students in the learning process. Creating opportunities for them to think about and respond to the information they receive will be beneficial since they will only



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retain those truths obtained because they mentally participated in the learning experience. There are many factors that need to be considered in order to foster a dialogue with students.

1. **Change the environment.** Some practices in traditional education foster idleness in students. For example, sitting them in rows, looking forward, makes them feel like they are in an auditorium. Insisting that they attend all classes also produces resentment because they feel pressured, which slows down their participation. Insisting that the only goal of the class is to provide memorized information in a final exam also encourages idleness, because they find no point in having a dialogue with the teacher. It is also harmful to encourage a dialogue only between the teacher and the student, and not among the students themselves. All these habits, and many others, tend to create barriers in students that inhibit their full participation in the learning process. For this reason, a wise teacher will use everything in his power to stimulate his students to participate in a stimulating dialogue.
2. **Watch your attitude.** La actitud que asumimos ante nuestros estudiantes también determina la apertura que ellos sientan al diálogo. Evita mencionar tus títulos o recalcar la amplitud de experiencia que has adquirido en el tema. Más bien preséntate ante tus estudiantes como uno que, si bien conoce del tema, se une también al proceso de aprendizaje que ellos emprenden. Evita, también, respuestas que intimiden a tus estudiantes. Cuando humillamos, ridiculizamos o utilizamos sarcasmo ellos sienten que es muy arriesgado abrirse en la clase. También inhibimos el diálogo cuando hacemos declaraciones categóricas que no admiten discusión; ya que, por razones obvias, ellos no encontrarán sentido alguno en aportar comentarios sobre un tema cerrado. En todo, debemos asegurarnos de comunicar a nuestros estudiantes una actitud de respeto y valorización.
3. **Include time for a dialogue.** Including students in the educational process that takes place within the classroom will not be achieved without our help. Our tendency is to talk too much. It is very easy for us to abuse our position as leaders or teachers, completely monopolizing the time that has been allocated to the group for the lesson. Good teachers deliberately look for ways to encourage their students to dialogue on the topic under discussion. The following activities will facilitate this process:
  - a. *Divide the presentation into segments.* If the time allotted to make your presentation in class is fifty minutes and you know that your students will need to process the information they are receiving every twelve minutes, then you should incorporate at least four moments of reflection and dialogue into your presentation. This is something that should be planned and implemented, being sensitive to the time limits, so that the class does not become too intense and profound.
  - b. *Start the class with a dialogue.* A good way to motivate students is to start each class with a dialogue. This can be achieved by asking a question that makes them think, in advance, about



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- the topic, or asking for a summary of the main points that were discussed in the previous class. You can also start with a question that remained unanswered in the last presentation.
- c. *Ask intelligent questions.* The art or ability to prepare good questions is key to fostering a dialogue. Develop the habit of asking questions that invite a dialogue without being intimidating or humiliating. You can introduce these kinds of questions during your class presentation.
  - d. *Invite others to respond.* When a student asks a question, instead of answering it yourself invite the class to offer an answer. This is a very convenient way to promote a dialogue between students and encourage them to understand that the teacher is not the only person they can turn to.
  - e. *Give quizzes.* A quiz takes just a minute or two. Students respond in writing to a specific question, summarize a presentation, identify the main point, or share how the lesson made an impact on them. It is important to give brief answers because the objective is to see if the teacher managed to connect with the students. The answers can be shared in a group or in front of the whole class.
  - f. *Divide into groups.* There is no need to disrupt the class for this. You can give students three minutes to share the answer to a question, an observation, or a statement with a peer.
  - g. *Connect with life.* We must periodically talk about how the topic relates to the student's life outside the classroom. Use real-life questions or examples to encourage them to reflect on how they might put into practice the principles shared in the group.
  - h. *Leave room at the end.* Do not end the class without allowing time for students to talk about what they heard. If they do not have observations or questions, you can spark a concern or question so they can take information with them for reflection until the next class. The idea is that they do not leave without a relevant conclusion to the information they have received.
4. **Expect to see the transformation.** Involving students in the learning process is nothing more than a commitment to create activities and an area in which to motivate them to think about the subject matter, and to react to the information that is being presented to them in the discipleship classes. By encouraging this environment, they will not be limited to just listening, but will develop the skills to intelligently process the concepts we share with them. The result is that they will know how to incorporate the truths they have received into their lives; initially, on the mental plane, and later in the other areas of their life. When those truths are embedded in their hearts, it will produce a transformation in them that we long to see at the School of Discipleship.

## 8. CONCLUSION



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**“...As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”** John 20:21. Did the strategy of Jesus work? The fact that the Church has expanded to the ends of the Earth, after being entrusted with this task two thousand years ago, offers us the most eloquent testimony of the effectiveness of Christ's method. Surely the Twelve were alarmed when He told them that He expected them to make disciples of all nations. “We are so few and there is so much to do!”—they must have thought. However, success would not have been achieved by looking at all that remained to be done, but by humbly starting to invest in people. With all the sophistication we have developed today, we have yet to find a better path than this, because in terms of expanding the Kingdom, developing deep relationships with a few people will always be much more effective than developing superficial relationships with a multitude of people.

The assignment for this lesson is to share with the group and/or the teacher how the life of a discipleship school student was transformed. You do not need to provide a name.

*Lesson adapted from the article "Camino Seguro", written by Cristian Salgado and published in August 2011 by Desarrollo Cristiano; and from the article "Tienen Que Participar!" published by Apuntes Pastorales Magazine in the 4th Quarter of 2008..*

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## Lesson 16 - Working as a Team to Expand the Kingdom

*What is teamwork and why is it important for Church growth? How can we successfully implement work groups in the local church?*

Ecclesiastes 4:9,10 CSB: ***"<sup>9</sup>Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. <sup>10</sup>For if either falls, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without another to lift him up."***

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Teamwork is important to achieve something great. John Maxwell says teamwork makes the dream work. The truth is, the better the church team, the greater its potential for growth. All growing churches are great at forming teams. Let us take this into account!

### 2. MOISÉS Y SU MODELO AUTOCRÁTICO

Traditional churches coined the paradigm that only the Pastor can take care of the people and deal with their affairs, and no other member of the church should "meddle" in that area because it is exclusively a pastoral domain. But what does the Bible say about this? The story of Jethro's advice to Moses is enlightening.

Jethro was a priest of Midian, who probably learned the principle of delegating authority while serving in his religious order. Moses, his son-in-law, needed instruction in this matter. During the past forty years, Moses lived as a shepherd but now he was at the head of a very large group of people—Israel.

To lead at this new level, Moses would need to learn new management skills. Leading more than a million people—in contrast with tending to a few hundred sheep—required a paradigm shift in his leadership. Through Jethro, God would teach Moses the importance of delegating authority.

When the Hebrews left Egypt led by Moses, the number of people and the work Moses had to carry out was so great that God decided to send Jethro to teach him the principles of delegating responsibilities; in other words, the teamwork model:

***"<sup>14</sup>So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, 'What is this thing that you are doing for the people?...' <sup>18</sup>Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself."*** Exodus 18:14,18.

Through Jethro, God revealed to Moses that the task of caring for the people could not be his exclusively. Other men well-trained in matters of the Law should be involved as well, so that the people would not grow weak waiting for one man to attend to them.

Caring for a growing congregation cannot be the work of one man. That is why God provided leaders to help Moses. Delegating to these leaders should be proportional to the number of people who needed attention in each area or jurisdiction. Therefore, Jethro said to Moses:



***“<sup>22</sup> And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. <sup>23</sup> If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace. <sup>26</sup> So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves.” Exodus 18:22,23,26.***

The obvious principle that the Word teaches us here is that the pastoral work has to be shared. Therefore God has now provided a Body with different members, which is His church. God's work is very difficult and intense, and no man can do it alone. That is why our Lord Jesus Christ has given diverse gifts to his Church, so that the whole body may function, with each member in their place so that together we can carry out the important mission of going ***...into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.***” Mark 16:15.

The trend in our society, the culture that prevails today, is that of individualism. But if we want the church to grow, we need to adjust our way of thinking about the work of the Lord. Good results will not come from individual efforts but from collective efforts.

When Jethro questioned Moses' leadership model, Moses tried to excuse himself by saying: ***“...Because the people come to me to inquire of God”*** Exodus 18:15. Every leadership philosophy that does not accept the delegation of authority or involve other members of the body of Christ in the church functions, but focuses all authority on one person, will certainly come to a standstill.

In order for the church to grow, authority must be delegated in proportion to the size of the group or congregation. Jethro could see that Moses was distorting the character of his divine calling as Israel's visible leader by exercising a model of autocratic leadership. Moses was failing in his role because in reality only the theocratic model—the model provided by God—works in christian leadership.

### 3. JESUS CHRIST AND THE THEOCRATIC MODEL

The word theocracy comes from the Greek words Theo (God) and cracy (government). Theocracy can then be defined as the government of God. Therefore a theocratic group is one where authority comes from God; a group that functions under the divine order. In the Church, this type of government is not implemented by pastoral preferences, but on the basis of the ministerial gifts that God grants.

The Lord is the one who gives the ministries for the Pastor to administer, establishing leaders according to the function that God has given to each one.: ***“<sup>4</sup> There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are diversities of activities...”*** 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. Without a doubt, Jethro understood the concept of diversity well and that is why he emphasized to Moses the enormous limitations of the autocratic leadership method with which he had been ruling Israel: ***“<sup>17</sup> “...The thing that you do is not good. <sup>18</sup>Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out...”*** Exodus 18:17,18.



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It is hard for leaders to hear words like that! But apparently not for Moses because he agreed to put Jethro's important lesson into action. The Lord's Apostles also understood that the work of God's kingdom was not for a few to carry out. Let us read Acts 6:1-4:

***"<sup>1</sup> Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup> Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; <sup>4</sup> but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.'"***

This well-known story conveys to us the principle that one man, or a small group of leaders, can never meet all the needs of a growing local body of believers. That is why it is so important to decentralize the local church government, because only then can the Kingdom of God be expanded according to His will.

For many years, most of our local churches have maintained a traditional ecclesiastical model, with the presence of auxiliaries organized by age, gender and marital status—the men, women, young people and juniors departments—as well as a local ministerial body made up of ministers and deacons who collaborate with the Pastor.

For a long time we have operated based on these local groups or ministries that, of course, have been of great help to the Church, but have presented the problem that they work almost exclusively within the church. In other words, these groups did not carry out evangelism functions very often; they put very little focus on the mission of preaching "***... the gospel to every creature***" Mark 16:15.

We are not saying that the programs of the auxiliaries have not been good for our church, but their great weakness has been based on their activities having little or no connection with the Great Commission. The Great Commission needs to be activated in order for the local church to grow and expand; restructure itself with evangelism and discipleship as the main focus or task because that is precisely why the Lord commissioned and sent us.

Authority must be delegated where the Spirit of the Lord has already delegated it when He bestowed ministerial gifts on the members of His body. This is the only way that the body of Christ can rise to its full potential. This is the only way for members of the congregation to care for each other and for the souls that are lost. Only by delegating authority to members of the church can the law of Christ—the christian priesthood—be fully attained.

#### **4. TWO BY TWO**

Luke 10:1 – ***"After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go."***

Victories and achievements definitely take on another meaning when we live them as a team. The Lord Jesus was not attached to the school of thought that a worker should only be entrusted with responsibilities when he is fully formed, when he has matured enough to carry the weight of his calling. No, but as He continued investing in the training of His disciples, the Lord was giving them assignments to carry out. Jesus provided them with clear instructions so that they could carry out His ministerial project.



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Surely the disciples perceived that Christ's loving care for their lives was reflected in every instruction given by Him, but above all it was reflected in an important detail: the Lord sent them two by two. What a good strategy! There was much wisdom in that decision, and what a good precedent it establishes in today's context. Working together in teams of two people—as we do with our cell groups by establishing leaders and assistants—yields great benefits:

- a. First of all, having a partner makes the challenges look much easier. We can consult our partner, share our doubts and fears with them, and feed on the courage that comes naturally from being partners. Although at times the other person may not have the answers we are looking for, just being able to count on their friendship and companionship will become an active part of God's provision for our needs.
- b. Second, by working together, we have a person at our side who helps us evaluate our own performance, which in turn allows us to improve it. Our partner can express their point of view of what we are doing and can help us correct our mistakes. They can also recognize our successes, which helps us to become wiser and more effective each day in carrying out the tasks that were entrusted to us.
- c. Third, walking two by two enriches our perspective. Instead of relying entirely on our own criteria and view of things, we can listen to the other person and consider their point of view. Surely the other person will see aspects of our work that we have not seen, and that will help us to find more balance in what we do.
- d. Fourth, two can perform the tasks better than one. Our gifts and talents are complemented in such a way that, working together, we can achieve better results. Surely the person who accompanies us will contribute those qualities and characteristics that are in essence theirs, in a wonderful demonstration of the incredible diversity with which God has made us.
- e. Fifth, our partner will be a comfort and support to us when things do not go as we thought. We will surely experience opposition, discouragement and frustration during the journey but by being together, we can share with someone else the anguish of failure as well as bring our frustration to God.
- f. Finally, having a partner will bring joy to our life because we can share the victories with them. When we experience great joy, there is nothing better than celebrating it with someone else. Successes and accomplishments definitely take on another meaning when lived and enjoyed as a team.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Ray Kroc said: "None of Us is as Good as All of Us." And Solomon wrote: *"**Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts.**"*<sup>10</sup> ***For if either falls, his companion can lift him up;...***" Ecclesiastes 4:9,10 CSB. In order to go two by two and work together in the expansion of the Kingdom, we need to have the absolute conviction that the other person is a gift from God for our life.

Let us consider each partner in the Lord's work as a great blessing, because they really are! Write a brief comment about this last sentence.



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