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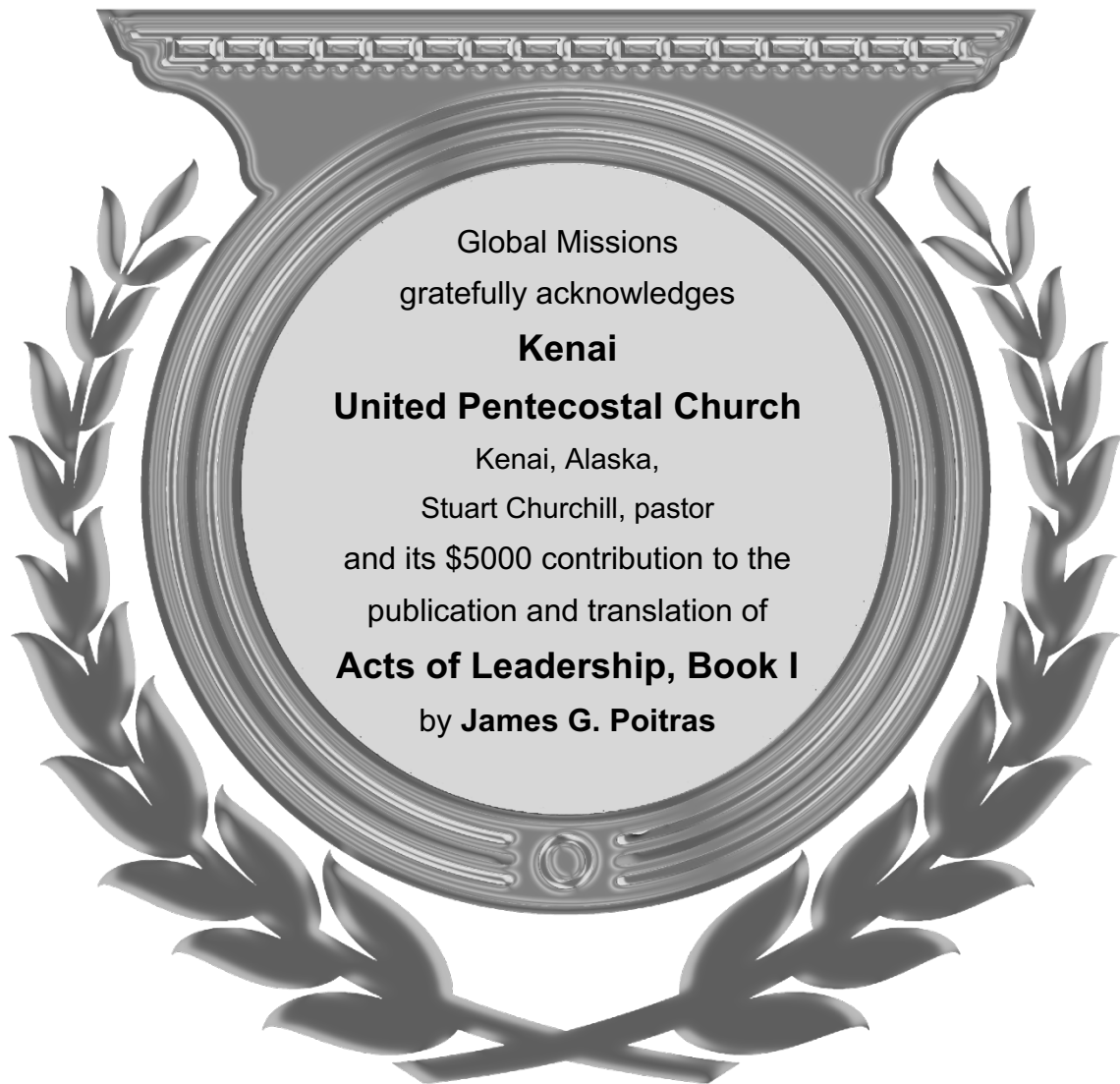
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LESSON 1

Finishing the Right Race

Key Verse

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace” (Acts 20:24, NIV).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- See the spiritual significance of “running the right race”
- Explain the importance of sharing, caring, cooperation, teamwork, and compassion
- Summarize the set of rules Paul gave Timothy in II Timothy 2:22–24
- Define a spiritual “weight” and give examples of same
- Recognize the two major areas where ministers are tempted to fall
- Know the ways one can keep from falling into sin
- Identify “spiritual weights.”

Introduction

In *Doing Church as a Team*, Wayne Cordeiro tells of an Olympic marathon that will be remembered for its tragic ending. Two hours and four minutes after the race began, the first runner was sighted. He was way ahead of everyone else as he passed through a tunnel leading to the stadium. The crowd erupted as he

came into their view. The runner was exhausted, stumbled, got up, and seemingly lost his sense of direction. He did not know which way to go. The crowd began yelling directions to the runner. Dazed, the man ran one way, and then the other. He finally fell and lay there as the crowd shouted, "Get up! Get up!" He struggled to stand and slowly ran to the finish line. Everyone was shocked when the judges announced that the fastest runner was disqualified. There were two finish lines: one for the sprints and one for the marathon. The "winner" ran to the wrong finish line and collapsed. The runner had finished, but in the wrong lane.

"So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way" (Genesis 45:24).

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9).

Peter's final words were, "I am warning you ahead of time, dear friends, so that you can watch out and not be carried away by the errors of these wicked people. I don't want you to lose your own secure footing" (II Peter 3:17, NLT).

Help Others in the Race

Many have heard of the remarkable Special Olympics story where one runner stumbled and another participant stopped, went back, and helped him up. They crossed the finish line together. (He did this despite shouting from the crowd, "Go forward.") The helper was in the lead, about to cross the finish line, when he turned around to help the fallen competitor. A West Virginia University commentary gives this conclusion: "Winners, in my estimation, are those who give their all to a task without losing sight of the deeper meaning of sharing and cooperation." This story teaches us the importance of sharing, caring, cooperation, teamwork, and compassion.

A similar display of courage transpired in 1992. Derek Redmond from Great Britain had an opportunity to fulfill his dream of winning the gold. He knelt

to begin the 400-meter race. His eyes were fixed on the finish line. Ready, set, go! Derek accelerated past other runners, and fell to the ground with a torn hamstring. His dream was shattered; his work wasted. Derek tried to get up and stagger toward the finish line. Derek's dad, wearing a Nike baseball cap, jumped from the stands and pushed a security guard aside. He rushed to his son, lifted him, and told him, "Son, you do not have to do this."

His son replied, "Yes, I do!"

"Then we are going to finish this together."

They struggled arm-in-arm across the finish line.

We have an audience of faith heroes watching us run the race. The runner in Hebrews 12 can glance back at examples of faith — those that ran the race before us. He can look upward to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Be inspired, fellow countrymen, pilgrims on the earth are watching.

"Hold tightly to the word of life, so that when Christ returns, I will be proud that I did not lose the race and that my work was not useless" (Philippians 2:16, NLT).

Keep the Rules of the Race

In the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, Korea, Ben Johnson and Carl Lewis were considered the two fastest men on earth. The race was set, the gun went off, and the runners sped down the 100-meter course. Ben Johnson set a new world record. Shortly after the finals, word came from the officials that Ben Johnson had tested positive for steroid use, and was disqualified. He had run unlawfully.

"Follow the Lord's rules for doing his work, just as an athlete either follows the rules or is disqualified and wins no prize" (II Timothy 2:5, NLT).

A course is marked off with flags. Runners cannot cut corners and shorten the race. We must run the race that is set before us. Paul provided a set of rules in II Timothy.

"Run from anything that gives you the evil thoughts that young men often have, but stay close to anything that makes you want to do right. Have faith and love, and enjoy the companionship of those

who love the Lord and have pure hearts. Again I say, don't get involved in foolish arguments, which only upset people and make them angry" (II Timothy 2:22-24, TLB).

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them" (II Timothy 3:1-5, NIV).

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Timothy 4:3-4).

An article from the Highland Church of Christ poses these thought-provoking questions:

1. Have you known anyone who broke the rules and did not finish the race?
2. How many of your mates (perhaps in your Bible school class) started the race with you? Where are they today?
3. Have you broken the rules and stumbled badly in the spiritual race?
4. What is making the Christian life difficult for you?

Remember, leader, what one African proverb says: "When the big tree falls down, small trees have a problem."

Paul warned Timothy not to become entangled with the affairs of this life. We cannot be consumed with the things of the world. Watch for the weights and the sins that will slow you down, cause you to falter, and bring you to a standstill.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Weights may not be sin, but they are anything that becomes a hindrance. Throw off anything that would keep you from having the advantage.

This list could include:

1. Laziness (Proverbs 6:10-11)
2. Love of money (I Timothy 6:10)
3. Desire for pleasure and the things of the world (I John 2:15-17).
4. Root of bitterness (Hebrews 12:15-16)

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (I John 2:15-17).

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright” (Hebrews 12:15-16).

Sin cripples us in the race. Pastors fall in two major areas: financial management and sexual sins. What are your private thoughts—the ones you would not dare tell anyone. Everyone has an area of temptation.

Steps to keep you from falling:

1. Make a covenant with your eyes (Psalm 101:2-3).
2. Flee fornication and adultery (Proverbs 5:15-18; 6:24-32; 7:24-27)
3. Have a code of conduct pre-established.
4. Read and meditate on God’s Word (Joshua 1:8).
5. Have a life of prayer and fasting (Psalm 51; a fresh relationship with the Lord (Jeremiah 2:13)
6. Keep your eyes on Jesus (and not on others). He is standing at the finish line (Matthew 25:23).
7. Be accountable to someone.
8. Stay on the altar of sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2).
9. Keep a right spirit (Luke 14:11; Psalm 51:10-12)

We need to take care of our attitude after we no longer occupy a position in the church. If removed from office, how well will you do at running the race?

Study Questions

1. What spiritual significance can be derived from the story concerning the runner that finished the wrong race?

2. What were the apostle Peter's words in II Peter 3:17?

3. Why did Paul marvel (or become astonished) in Galatians 1:6-9?

4. What does Philippians 2:16 say?

5. What is the benefit of the audience of faith heroes in Hebrews 12?

6. Summarize the set of rules Paul gave to Timothy in II Timothy 2:22-24.

7. Provide four examples of weights that could hinder a person in the Christian race.
- A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
8. What are two major areas where pastors are tempted to fall?
- A. _____
 - B. _____
9. List five things one can do to keep from falling into sin.
- A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____
 - E. _____

Personal Study Notes

LESSON 2

Finish Strong!

Key Verse

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace” (Acts 20:24, NIV).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Understand Paul’s analogy of the Christian life to a race
- Apply the motto of the Olympics to Christian living
- Grasp the importance of finishing the race
- Realize the importance of communicating truth to the next generation
- Comprehend that keeping the faith is a daily decision
- Recognize the relationship of belief, actions, and destiny.

Introduction

Paul related the Christian life and ministry to a boxer, soldier, runner, workman (laborer), and farmer. This lesson will look at the Christian as a runner.

Let’s start by putting on our thinking hats. Imagine you have completed life on this earth.

1. What would be your last words to your family and loved ones?
2. What would be the last message you would preach in the church?
3. What would be the words you would have on your gravestone?
4. What would be the Scripture you would want to be remembered for?

Paul stated:

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (II Timothy 4:6-8).

Finish the Race

The Olympic Games feature the world’s best athletes—men and women dedicated to excellence. One of the events, the marathon, is a test of perseverance and speed. The man who first ran the race was a soldier, Philippides. He ran two hundred kilometers in two days to get military help. He returned in time to join the fighting. Someone was needed to run to Athens to warn them that the Persian army was going to attack the city. Philippides ran twenty-six hilly miles, fully armed, from Marathon to Athens, to deliver the news. He was exhausted and managed only to say, “Nike!” before he collapsed and died. “Nike” stands for “Victory is ours!” As Christians we are assured victory. The Lord will see us through!

The slogan of the Olympic Games is “Citius, altius, fortius.” It is a Latin phrase that means “Swifter, higher, stronger.” It also represents what our Christian calling embodies. These games began in Greece nearly three thousand years ago. In ancient times, special people were charged with protecting the Olympic flame and making sure it never extinguished. Torches were lit at Marathon and would be passed, like a baton, from one relay runner to another. The flame represents “the light of spirit, knowledge, and life.” By passing the flame from one person to another, the torch relay signifies the handing down of the fire from generation to generation. As Christians, we must pass the torch of truth to a new generation.

The year—1968; the occasion—Olympics; the place—Mexico City; the event—the twenty-six-mile marathon. The favorite was a runner from Ethiopia. A sustained fracture forced him to drop out of the race. Another Ethiopian, Mamo

Wolde, went on to win the gold medal. An hour later, as remaining spectators were leaving, they heard sirens. All eyes turned to see a lonely runner, wearing Tanzania colors, make his final lap around the track. The crowd exploded into applause. The newspaper reported, “Today, we have seen a young African runner who symbolized the finest in the human spirit, a performance that gives meaning to the word courage.”

The runner was asked, “Why did you continue to run when you were alone, wounded, and knew that someone else had won the race? Why didn’t you quit?” John Stephen Akhwari responded, “My country did not send me ten thousand miles to start the race. They sent me ten thousand miles to finish it.”

That is the way it is with us. God did not send us to begin the race (only) but to finish the race. It is important to do our best for God.

We often remember how a person finishes the race and not how he starts. Moses was not permitted to lead God’s people into the Promised Land. He had been disobedient. He struck the rock when he was told to speak to it. He messed up!

Falling down does not mean you are out of the race. Get up again! “For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, But the wicked stumble in time of calamity” (Proverbs 24:16, NASB).

We cannot quit. Consider these verses of Scripture:

“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” (Proverbs 24:10).

“No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven” (Philippians 3:13–14, NLT).

The course has hills—obstacles. Obstacles are something we see when we take our eyes off our goal. Paul overcame many obstacles.

Christianity is a test of endurance. Scripture tells us to “endure hardness” (II Timothy 2:3); “endure afflictions” (II Timothy 4:5); “endure grief” (I Peter 2:19); and to “endure unto the end” (Matthew 24:13).

We may get tired on the race course, but we need to keep running the race. We shall win the prize if we faint not (Galatians 6:9).

You think you’ve got problems. Take a glance at Paul’s troubles.

“They say they serve Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in jail more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. Five different times the Jews gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. I have traveled many weary miles. I have faced danger from flooded rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the stormy seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be Christians but are not. I have lived with weariness and pain and sleepless nights. Often I have been hungry and thirsty and have gone without food. Often I have shivered with cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of how the churches are getting along” (II Corinthians 11:23–28, NLT).

“We have been beaten, been put in jail, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food. We have proved ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, our sincere love, and the power of the Holy Spirit. We have faithfully preached the truth. God’s power has been working in us. We have righteousness as our weapon, both to attack and to defend ourselves. We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. We are well known, but we are treated as unknown. We live close to death, but here we are, still alive. We have been beaten within an inch of our lives. Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything” (II Corinthians 6:5–10, NLT).

That does not sound much like the prosperity message that we often hear.

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10).

In *Finishing Strong*, Steve Farrar quotes the research finding that only about one of ten who start the Christian ministry race will cross the finish line. Paul stated, “Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:7-9).

Farrar asks us what measures we are taking to ensure we will be one of the ten. He encourages us to practice Psalm 101:2-3:

“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.”

“Keep a close watch on yourself and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right, and God will save you and those who hear you” (I Timothy 4:16, NLT).

Keeping the faith is a daily decision. It requires discipline. Paul said, “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (I Corinthians 9:26-27). Preserving truth is a daily choice too.

“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23).

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

I want to remain conservative enough to stay with the old truths and liberal enough to use new methods. Someone has advised that we should never remove a fence unless we check to see why it was there in the first place.

“Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set”
(Proverbs 22:28).

Erosion is not obvious. It happens over time. We need to conserve the truth. This word means we should safeguard or preserve something.

“Stay on the path. Take no shortcuts. It causes erosion.”
(Sign on Mountain Trail)

It is always sad to hear of this declaration: “For truth is fallen in the street” (Isaiah 59:14). We must do all possible to prevent truth erosion.

We cannot put confidence in tradition, for the Bible warns, “Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye” (Mark 7:13). It has been said, “What is popular is not always right; what is right is not always popular.”

Carlton L. Coon Sr., in his Bible study series *Take Root*, states, “What men are taught determines what they believe. What they believe determines what they do. What they do determines their destiny.”

Ed Cole once said, “A person’s beliefs hold the greatest potential for good or harm in life.” What we believe about our salvation matters much when we consider our future destiny. We need to adjust to the truth of God’s Word. If someone [God’s word] says something wrong, and then a thousand people say it is correct, it is still wrong.

Study Questions

1. How did Paul picture or relate the Christian life and ministry?

2. What is the slogan or motto for the Olympics? What does it mean?

3. What could the Olympic torch and flame symbolize for Christians?

4. From a scriptural standpoint, comment on the importance of finishing the race.

5. What was Paul's desire as expressed in Philippians 3:10?

6. According to Steve Farrar, out of ten that begin the Christian race, how many will finish?

7. What are you doing to ensure that you finish the race?

8. Quote Proverbs 23:23.

LESSON 3

For Such a Time as This

Key Verse

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Accept the importance of God’s timing in their lives
- Endeavor to be the right person for the occasion
- Seek to be at the right place at the right time
- Strive to speak the right words at the right time
- Yield their plans and timetable to God’s, becoming in sync with Him.

Introduction

This lesson is on the importance of “timing” in our lives, ministries, and leadership. It is not a lesson on time management (the proper use of time). It is based on a lesson taught by G. Randy Adams at a Leadership Development Retreat in West Africa.

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

“A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace” (Ecclesiastes 3:2–8).

The preacher in Ecclesiastes was so correct. There is a time to give birth and a time to die. We can do very little about the timing in these situations. In some of the situations mentioned in these verses of Scripture, we have little control (if any). The timing is in the hands of the Lord.

Much of our lives and ministries depends on God’s timing. The wise man said, “In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps” (Proverbs 16:9, NIV).

Leaders must not only know *what* to do, *where* to do it, and *how* it should be done, but they must know *when*. They can know what, where, and how, but if they do not act in a timely manner, all of their knowledge will be in vain.

Being the Right Person for the Occasion

When Israel needed a giant-killer, God gave them David. When they needed a deliverer, God sent Moses. He sends exactly what is needed for the time period involved. Can you imagine if God had sent a Jeremiah on the Day of Pentecost? Picture him weeping, “The Day of Pentecost is really here. This is how you can be saved: repent, be baptized in Jesus’ name, and receive the Holy Ghost.” God did not need a Jeremiah that day. He had prepared Peter with the keys to unlock the door to the Kingdom. Peter was the “man of the hour.” God often prepares His men in obscurity, unknown to many, and brings them on the scene at the correct time.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and

whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”
(Matthew 16:18–19).

God always has a definite man to accomplish a definite task at a definite time. Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the USA, received a letter of encouragement in 1790 that said, “Great necessities call forth great leaders.”

Being at the Right Place at the Right Time

One day Jesus taught His disciples a valuable lesson about timing. This lesson is found in Luke 5. Jesus entered into Simon’s boat and asked him to launch out a little from the shore. Jesus continued speaking to the people who had followed Him to the lake. When finished, He told Simon, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught” (Luke 5:4).

Simon answered, “We have fished all night and have not caught anything. But if that’s what You want, I’ll do it.” Simon did what Jesus told him, and the nets were not only full but began to break. They called for their friends in the other boat, and both boats were so full of fish that they began to sink.

Simon was a seasoned fisherman. But Jesus knew the secret of being in the right place at the right time. Proper timing ensures the most effective results. Jesus came to the earth in the fullness of time and was very conscious of timing. Paul stated, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Galatians 4:4).

Simon had fished all night in the wrong place at the wrong time.

One day Jesus said to His disciples, “My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. . . . Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come” (John 7:6, 8).

At the marriage in Cana, “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come” (John 2:4).

“And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples” (Matthew 26:18).

“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12:27).

Jesus understood timing. It is vital that we are aware of the Lord's timing.

We find another excellent example of timing and obedience in Acts. Philip was enjoying a tremendous move of God among the multitudes in Samaria. He was open to the voice of the Lord and His will. An angel directed him to a desert road. This must have sounded strange to him. The change in direction was so illogical. Many would have questioned, "Whom will I meet in the desert? I'm enjoying a tremendous move of God right here. I'm not finished with this revival yet." Philip did not protest but simply obeyed.

We never really know what we will encounter when we submit to the Lord and allow Him to lead us. It is a walk of faith. For Philip, the timing was perfect. An Ethiopian officer was on his way home from Jerusalem. The Lord wanted His servant to be at the right place at the right time so he could meet him.

He also prepared the heart of the Ethiopian to receive truth. What would have happened if Philip had arrived late or early? He would have missed the man, and the opportunity to present truth to him. Because he was obedient to the Lord's timing, he was able to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch and baptize him. This man took the truth back to Ethiopia and the queen's palace. He was a man with great authority and was in charge of the treasury. In modern times he would be the Minister of Finance. As a result of Philip's obedience to the correct timing, the gospel was preached in the great African continent.

Saying the Right Thing at the Right Time

Peter had the right words at the right time on the Day of Pentecost. As a result, three thousand people were baptized in Jesus' name, and the church was born. Philip also had the right words to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch. Time after time in the Scriptures, we find men of God who said the right thing at the right time. It is an art to be cultivated in our lives.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver"
(Proverbs 25:11).

"How forcible are right words!" (Job 6:25).

How Can We Cultivate an Understanding of Timing?

“And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (I Chronicles 12:32).

We can gain an understanding of the times by following these points:

- Be submissive (Romans 12:1-2).
- Obey what the Lord tells you to do, when He tells you to do it.
- Have a strong prayer life. Watch and pray. God talks to those who talk to Him. Spend time listening to the still small voice.
- Read and study the Word of God on a regular basis.
- Know Jesus in such an intimate way that you can declare His testimony (I Corinthians 2:1-2).

Mordecai asked Queen Esther, “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

Study Questions

1. What does Proverbs 16:9 say?

2. What was written to Thomas Jefferson about great necessities?

3. What lesson did Jesus teach His disciples concerning the right time (Luke 5)?

4. Provide a Scripture reference proving that Jesus understood the importance of timing.

5. What important quality did the children of Issachar possess?

6. How can we gain an understanding of the times?

7. Quote Proverbs 25:11.

LESSON 4

Checking for Cracks in the Foundation

Key Verse

“And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Define and model *integrity*
- Give biblical examples of people with integrity
- Realize what happens each time a person breaks a moral principle
- Compare integrity to a new building under construction
- Understand the blessings children reap when their parents walk in integrity
- Know biblical principles on how to maintain a pure heart.

Introduction

John Maxwell relates an interesting story in his book *Developing the Leader Within You*. In ancient China the people wanted protection from their enemies. They built a great wall. The wall was so high they believed no one would be able to climb over it. It was so thick no one could cut through it or break it down.

During the first one hundred years after the wall was built, China was invaded three times. The enemy did not break down the wall or climb over it. What happened? Each time they bribed the gatekeeper and then marched through the gates. "The Chinese were so busy relying on walls of stone they forgot to teach integrity to their children."

A newspaper cartoon depicts a young boy named Kofi in a fruit tree stealing oranges. A passerby yells, "Kofi, you better come down, or I will report you to your father."

The boy responds, "Go ahead. He's in the next tree."

What did Kofi's father lack? He lacked integrity and/or good character.

"The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him" (Proverbs 20:7).

How do children reap the blessings of their parents' integrity?

1. Children learn from their parents' example. Like father, like son. One proverb says, "The fruit never falls very far from the tree." (See Ezekiel 16:44.)
2. When parents plant good seeds, the children reap them. (See Psalm 37:25.)
3. Though children may stray, they will have clear guidelines and a conscience that will haunt and judge them as they travel through life. Hopefully, this will encourage them to return to the right paths.
4. The children enjoy the blessings the parents receive.
5. The evil that people do lives after them. (See Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9.) The opposite is true also. The good that people do lives after them.
6. When parents live above reproach, their children can hold their heads high because of a godly heritage. When reproach comes to the family, all are affected and children bow their heads in shame.
7. If parents live in hypocrisy, the salvation of the children can be negatively affected. They will not have a desire to be like their parents.
8. The things that are practiced in moderation today will be done in excess tomorrow. Parents who lift up a standard to lighten the way show their children how to walk straight.

Paul lived a life of integrity, blameless before God and man. He walked and worked among men with a clear conscience.

Men and women of integrity possess a strong, upright, and blameless character. It has been said, “The measure of a man’s real character is what he would do if he would never be found out.” The habits and the framework of our lives should always be decent and blameless. Someone is watching us.

“Character is what you become in the dark.”—D. L. Moody

In *Becoming a Person of Influence*, John Maxwell quotes Philip Brooks: “Character is made in the small moments of our lives.” Maxwell goes on to say, “Anytime you break a moral principle, you create a small crack in the foundation of your integrity. And when times get tough, it becomes harder to act with integrity, not easier. Character isn’t created in a crisis; it only comes to light.” When crisis and problems come, they reveal what we have become. We either become stronger or weaker in such times. Trials can become opportunities that build us up or temptations that pull us down.

Because the scorpion was a poor swimmer, he asked the turtle to carry him across a river. “Are you mad?” said the turtle. “You will sting me while I’m swimming, and I’ll drown.”

“My dear turtle,” laughed the scorpion, “if I were to sting you, you would drown, and I would also drown with you. Now that wouldn’t make sense, would it?”

The scorpion climbed aboard and halfway across the river gave the turtle a mighty sting. As they both sank to the bottom, the confused turtle asked, “Do you mind if I ask you something? You said there would be no sense in you stinging me. Why did you do it?”

“It has nothing to do with whether it makes sense or not,” the drowning scorpion sadly replied. “It’s just my character.” (*Quotable Quotations*; Lloyd Cory)

An accurate phrase depicting *integrity* is “purity of heart.” It is an essential quality for those in leadership.

- “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).
- “The integrity of the upright shall guide them” (Proverbs 11:3).
- “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Proverbs 4:23, NIV).

Guard your heart so you will not muddy the waters of your life. No one likes to drink from a dirty, contaminated, bug-ridden pond. It is easy to say, “Guard your heart” but harder to accomplish. It is a daily struggle to maintain a pure heart.

Maintaining a Pure Heart

1. Love God and His people (Mark 12:30–31).
2. Discipline yourself to please God (I Timothy 4:7–8).
3. Follow peace and holiness (Hebrews 12:14; I Peter 1:15–16).
4. Focus on God (Colossians 3:2).
5. Heed God’s Word (Psalm 119:9).
6. Hate evil (Psalm 97:10; Proverbs 8:13).
7. Think about the right things (Philippians 4:8).
8. Stay accountable to an accountability partner—your spouse, and/or leadership.
9. Preserve the Word of God in your heart (Psalm 119:10–11).
10. Remain in touch with God through prayer, fasting, personal Bible study, and attending church services.
11. Do not allow a root of bitterness to enter your life (Hebrews 12:15).
12. Beware of the little foxes that spoil the vine (Song of Solomon 2:15). Do not allow little things to come into your life that could grow into gigantic problems tomorrow.
13. Be careful of what you allow to enter through the five senses: see, hear, touch, taste, and smell (Psalm 101:3).
14. Exercise self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). Deny self; take up the cross (Luke 9:23).
15. Die daily to the flesh (I Corinthians 15:31). Crucify the flesh (Galatians 5:24–25). Walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25).
16. Avoid the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and pride of life (I John 2:16; James 1:13–14). Stay away from places of temptation.
17. Do not get involved in gossip or backbiting. It pulls down integrity (Proverbs 18:8; 21:23; I Corinthians 15:33; Titus 2:8).
18. Flee fornication (I Corinthians 6:18; II Timothy 2:22).
19. Resist the devil (James 4:7).
20. Know yourself and your areas of susceptibility. Everyone is tempted in some area.
21. Set a standard (code of conduct) for yourself, in accordance with God’s Word (Jeremiah 51:27). This should be predetermined so when temptations come, you have already made the decision of what to do.

22. Remind yourself of your position in God. You are His child and a man or woman of God. Joseph wanted to preserve his relationship with God and his master (Genesis 39:9). Therefore, he would not commit adultery with Potiphar's wife.
23. God always provides a way of escape. Look for it (I Corinthians 10:13).

"He who loves purity of heart and has grace on his lips,
the king will be his friend" (Proverbs 22:11, NKJV).

Integrity is like a new building under construction. It is built one block at a time. The proper decisions we make cement together the blocks of our character. Each time we fail in our integrity or fall to a temptation, the building is weakened. It eventually becomes unsafe and unusable.

The world's largest bell has never been rung. It weighs 219 tons and is eighteen feet high. During its construction, a single drop of water got into the mold. When the bell was cast, it cracked because of one drop of water. What is the consequence? The bell has never been heard.

God is building us into vessels of honor to be used for His glory. Make sure there are no cracks in your foundation.

Study Questions

1. How did the enemy invade China?

2. What do we learn from this?

3. Why did the scorpion sting the turtle even when it meant that both would drown?

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4. What happens each time you break a moral principle?

5. Compare integrity to a new building under construction.

6. What did D. L. Moody say about integrity?

7. What did Philip Brooks say about character?

8. When the foundation of integrity has cracks in it, what happens in crisis?

9. Why should Christians guard their hearts?

10. What is an accurate phrase that depicts the meaning of *integrity*?

11. What are three ways children reap the blessings of their parents' integrity?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
12. List ten ways a Christian can maintain a pure heart.
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
D. _____
E. _____
F. _____
G. _____
H. _____
I. _____
J. _____
13. Why has the largest bell in the world never been rung?

14. What is an essential quality for all those who serve in leadership?

Personal Study Notes

LESSON 5

Watch Out! Your Motivation Is Showing!

Key Verses

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:1–4).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Define *motive* and *motivation*
- Understand the difference between Barnabas’s attitude and Ananias and Sapphira’s attitudes
- Explain “being Kingdom-minded”
- Compare David’s desires and Saul’s motivations
- Defend John the Baptist’s statement, “He must increase but I must decrease,” in John 3:30

Introduction

This lesson deals with motives. Webster defines *motive* as “the sense of need, desire, fear, etc. that prompts an individual to act.”

No church is perfect. The early church was no different. In the beginning of this lesson we will look at the first recorded sin in the church’s history. It began when the believers donated much of their belongings to what we now call the church and in time lived their lives together out of a common fund. Owners of land, houses, and properties sold them and placed the proceeds at the apostles’ feet. The selling of possessions was strictly voluntary. Profits were distributed to those with needs. The results were that everyone’s needs were met.

A Little Lie Surely Won’t Matter

Ananias and Sapphira pretended to give all the proceeds from the sale of their property. No one had said they had to give everything so they kept back some of the profits for themselves. Their sin was deception. Not only did they lie to God’s people, they lied to God. They were hypocrites.

Today the story is slightly different. Hypocrites do not necessarily withhold properties; they hold back part of themselves. Yet they say they have surrendered all. God truly knows since He looks on the heart.

“Man sees your actions, but God your motives.”—Thomas A. Kempis

Ananias and Sapphira’s trickery did not fool the man of God. How did he know? Was it revealed on their faces? Did the Holy Spirit reveal it? Someone could have warned them, “Watch out, your motivation is showing.” It was too late. Peter saw their deceit and hypocrisy. It was totally unnecessary. They were not forced to give the proceeds. Failure to do so was not a sin. But they lied to the Holy Ghost. They expected to hear complimentary words from the man of God. They were hoping to gain glory and recognition. Their root sins seemed to be a love for money and a desire for the praises of others. Instead, they both received a hasty punishment for their short-lived attempt to deceive the Holy Ghost.

Their attitude was different from that manifested by Barnabas, the son of encouragement. He sold a plot of land and freely brought the proceeds to the apostles’ feet. What was the difference? It was a difference in motivation. Barnabas

was Kingdom-minded. He wanted to see the kingdom of God strengthened, extended, and expanded. Ananias and Sapphira were other-minded. Are your motives Kingdom-minded or other-minded?

Kingdom-minded or Other-minded?

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Philippians 3:15).

The Man Who Refused the Election

“Now the men of Israel said to Gideon, “Be our king! You and your sons and all your descendants shall be our rulers, for you have saved us from Midian. But Gideon replied, “I will not be your king, nor shall my son; the Lord is your King!” (Judges 8:22-23, TLB).

Gideon was timely called to a position of leadership. He never sought glory for himself. He was Kingdom-minded. He took a small army of three hundred men and defeated the enemy. As a result, the people wanted him to be their king. He would not take honor that belonged to the Lord, and declared Him as king.

We should not be tempted away from what God has directed us to do for temporary fame and glory. Many are motivated by a quest for power. The three great temptations to man are money, sex, and power. It has been said, “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Lucifer was brought down because of a quest for power. It is wrong to seek power, personal glory, and/or prestige. Desire for positions of power and political maneuvering to get them has disqualified many from a spiritual ministry. Make a commitment now that you will never be motivated by personal ambitions for power and position. It is easy to spot someone desiring power. His or her motivation shows!

“God has placed some men above kings as He has given them a mission to fulfill rather than a position to occupy.”—Alexandre Dumas

He Is Greater than I Am

John the Baptist was a bold prophet called to prepare the way for the promised Messiah. After living a solitary life, he enjoyed a large following. Once Jesus came on the scene and started His public ministry, many of John's disciples left him and followed Jesus. John could have been jealous. Clearly this represented a decrease in his power and influence. But he preferred the Kingdom. Surprisingly, John the Baptist was overjoyed and confessed, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

"John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me" (John 1:15).

Whose Kingdom Are You Building?

King Saul's motivation disclosed his desire to bring honor to himself.

"Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal" (I Samuel 15:12, NIV).

Even when the man of God revealed Saul's disobedience, Saul still wanted to protect his honor before the people. He was more concerned about maintaining his reputation than being right with God.

"Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God" (I Samuel 15:30).

In Christian service we must be careful not to try to bring honor to ourselves and build our own monuments (kingdoms). We are building the Lord's kingdom. Saul was other-minded. David, a man after God's own heart, was Kingdom-minded.

"Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God" (I Chronicles 22:6-7).

God is a jealous God and is not willing to share His glory with others. Isaiah recorded, "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:8).

O. A. Battista said that people are often motivated by at least two reasons — “the one they tell you about and the secret one.” This may be the rule, but Christians and effective leaders should be the exception to the rule. We should not have secret agendas.

The Man Who Had Everything, Almost

Naaman, the commander of Syria’s army, had prosperity. He had both wealth and power. He is described as a mighty man and honorable. He had everything a man could ask for, but he was a leper. Money, prestige, position, and knowing people in high places could not buy him healing. Naaman’s wife’s small, godly maid had the answer. She told him to go to the prophet for healing.

Naaman thought he could wield power and influence to persuade the man of God. He sent a letter to the king. The king shouted, “Am I God that I can heal leprosy?”

Next, Naaman and some of his men went to see the man of God. He thought Elisha would be impressed by his presence. He just knew Elisha would rush out to receive him, invite him into his house, call on his God, strike his hand over the leprosy, and heal him. However, Elisha was not like many today. We give the rich sinner the best seat in the place and spoil him with our attention. Elisha just sent a message: “Go and dip seven times in the muddy Jordan River.” Naaman was furious.

His servants tried to calm him down. “If he had told you to do some great thing, wouldn’t you have done it?” They persuaded Naaman to obey.

As the prophet had promised, Naaman was cleansed of leprosy. He offered Elisha money. Surely he would accept it. Elisha refused and said, “How can I take money for something that God did?” Naaman promised to serve the true God.

Gehazi, My Heart Went with You!

“But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands

that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him" (II Kings 5:20).

Gehazi had a different motivation. He ran after Naaman and lied to him. He was given two talents of silver, two changes of clothes, and two servants to carry these things to his house. He hid them in the house and appeared before his leader.

Elisha asked, "Gehazi, where have you been?"

Gehazi casually answered, "Nowhere!" Watch out, Gehazi, your motivation is showing.

"And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments. . . ? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow" (II Kings 5:26-27).

The Man Who Escaped without a Coat on His Back

Joseph was a young man with a big dream from God. His jealous brothers sold him into slavery, and he eventually found himself in Potiphar's household. The Lord was with Joseph and directed his footsteps. He became a prosperous man and the overseer of Potiphar's house.

Everything was left in Joseph's hand, except one thing: Potiphar's wife. She had her eye on handsome Joseph and pleaded, "Sleep with me!" But Joseph was in the house to do business and sleeping with his master's wife was not part of his motivation. She tormented him daily. He kept his flesh under control and replied, "There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). Joseph remained strong in a situation where many would have failed. He kept his motives and actions pure before God and humanity.

Wrong motives eat away at people's integrity and eventually destroy their testimony and ministry. It does not happen overnight. No one falls suddenly.

Luis Palau, in *A Man After God's Heart*, relates a story of the Teton Dam in the USA. When this dam collapsed, everyone was stunned. Without warning, the

huge structure suddenly gave away, sending millions of liters of water into the river basin. From all outward appearances, it seemed like it was a sudden disaster. A closer look revealed a hidden fault beneath the water line that slowly weakened the entire structure. It was just a little weak spot, but it was detected too late.

“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (I Corinthians 5:6).

Check Your Motives

It is important to ask often, “Why am I doing this? Are my motives pure? Am I doing this for the right reasons?”

It’s Time to Think

What are some good motives in ministry? What are some bad motives in ministry? Do you have bad motives for the actions you take as you minister?

David prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23–24).

“The actions of men are the best interpreters of their thoughts.”
—John Locke

Tom Johnson, quoted in Richard Edler’s *If I Knew Then What I Know Now*, said, “Do what is right. If you aren’t sure, ask yourself this question, ‘How will my actions, taken in private, look if published on the front page of the newspaper . . . ?’ You never need to lie or cheat to succeed in life.”

Study Questions

1. What did Thomas A. Kempis say (in the quote in this lesson)?

2. What was the difference in attitude between Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira?

3. What happens to those who desire power?

4. What are the three greatest temptations to man?

A.

B.

C.

5. What did Alexandre Dumas say (as recorded in this lesson)?

6. What did John the Baptist say when his disciples left him and followed Jesus?

7. What concern did King Saul express when caught in sin and disobedience by the man of God?

8. What did Saul want to build?

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9. In contrast, what did David want to build?
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-
10. How was the way the prophet treated Naaman different from the way most treat rich sinners?
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-
-
11. What happened to Gehazi for being money hungry?
-
-
-
12. What do wrong motives eat away?
-
-
-
13. What is *motive*?
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-
-
14. Why did Joseph not commit adultery with Potiphar's wife?
-
-
-
15. According to John Locke, what is the best interpreter of our thoughts?
-
-

LESSON 6

You Can Make It

Key Verses

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 20:24).

“Endure afflictions” (II Timothy 4:5).

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (II Timothy 4:7).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Compare the Christian life to the story in Mark 4
- Know the principles taught in Mark 4
- Liken Winston Churchill’s advice (of never giving up) to the Christian life
- Contrast the attitude of the ten spies to that of Joshua and Caleb
- Relate the story of the little engine that could to Christian life

Introduction

Life as a Christian can be compared with the story in Mark 4. We hear Jesus say, “Let us pass over unto the other side” (Mark 4:35). We often think that the

Christian walk is going to be the easy road, free from problems and trials. When we get in the middle of the journey across, we realize there is a “great storm.” (See Mark 4:37.) The winds and the waves begin to beat against our boat. We wonder, like the disciples, “Where is Jesus now? Is He asleep?” When we find Him in prayer, we exclaim, “Master, don’t you care that we are about to perish? Our boat is going down!” Jesus stands up in the midst of our problems and says, “Peace be still!” Once again we are left thinking, “What kind of God is this? Even the winds and the waves of our problems obey Him.”

From the story in Mark 4 we realize a number of things:

- Jesus wants us to go over to the other side. (Read John 14:1-4)
- He controls the storm.
- We won’t drown.
- Our boat will not sink.
- He is in the boat with us.

“They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven” (Psalm 107:23–30).

Jesus never promised us a trouble-free life. He did say, “These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). We will have problems and trials but the difference is that Jesus is there and He will help us to overcome them.

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19).

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psalm 30:5).

The Bible encourages us to “endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (II Timothy 2:3). In fact “he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22). Do you remember the advice that Winston Churchill gave? “Don’t ever, ever, ever give up!”

“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

The writer of Hebrews looked at the Christian life as running a race (Hebrews 12:1-2). He talked of finishing his course (Acts 20:22-24; II Timothy 4:7) and compared it to fighting a fight.

When John wrote to the seven churches in Revelation, he repeatedly said, “He that overcometh” or “to him that overcometh.” (See Revelation 2-3.) He stated in I John 2:13-14, “Ye have overcome the wicked one.”

In Acts 27 we find another story about boats. After they had set out, a strong wind and storm arose. The people on the boat started casting the cargo overboard. The crew on the boat were so fearful that they all were fasting. Paul saw an angel who told him, “Fear not!” (Acts 27:24). Paul promised the others that the boat would be lost but not the crew if they stayed in the boat. “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 27:31).

You will pass over to the other side (Heaven) if you stay in the ship (the church).

Watty Piper wrote an interesting children’s book titled *The Little Engine that Could*. This book has been a children’s favorite for more than fifty years. Adults can also learn a valuable lesson from this book.

In the story, a little train wanted to take toys to the children on the other side of the mountain. The train needed a big engine to pull the load up and over the peak. He asked several engines in the train yard to help. Some were new, bright, and shiny. Some had scars from previous climbs. Some only carried people and not any freight, not even toys. All the engines refused to help the little train.

In desperation, the train looked around the rail yard and saw a small engine parked on a side rail. He looked alone and tired. The little train presented his need to the small engine who perked up at the challenge. He replied that he had never pulled a load across the mountain, but he was willing to try.

The train connected with the engine and began the climb. The little engine struggled as it pulled the train up the steep grade. The journey got more difficult as it neared the summit. The chugging got slower and slower. However, the little engine continued fighting for every foot of rail. It kept repeating to itself, over and over, "I think I can. I think I can. I . . . think . . . I . . . can. I . . . think . . . I . . . can."

Although the engine wasn't nearly as powerful as the big ones and couldn't go nearly as fast, the little engine finally reached the summit and began its downward run. As he picked up speed, the little engine kept repeating, "I thought I could. I thought I could. I thought I could." When it pulled into the station on the other side of the mountain and saw the children waiting for the toys, it said, "I thought I could. And I did!"

Those who think "I can!" and those who think
"I can't!" are usually both right.

The other engines in the above story had the same disease as ten of the spies in Numbers 13 who said "We cannot!" But two other spies had a different attitude and said, "We can! Let us do it at once!"

The Israelites looked at Goliath and said, "We cannot!" David said, "I cannot, but God can!" (See I Samuel 17.)

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"
(Philippians 4:13).

"The race is not to the swift, nor the battle
to the strong" (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

In one of his books, Max Lucado relates how he was told that in the filming of *Ben Hur*, the main character had a problem learning how to drive a chariot. This man was expected to drive the chariot in a race. He practiced and practiced but still was concerned. He explained his doubts to his director: "I think I can drive the chariot, but I'm not sure that I can win the race." The director responded, "You just stay in the race and I will make sure that you win."

That is much like it is with Jesus. He expects us to stay in the race, and he will make sure that we win and reach the other side. In Jesus we are all *winners*!

God said, "Go on!" Victory is ahead. You can make it!

Study Questions

1. How can the Christian life be compared to the story in Mark 4?

2. What can we learn from this story?

3. In Psalm 107 what did those in the ship do to be delivered out of their troubles?

4. What does II Timothy 2:3 tell us to do?

5. How did Paul look at the Christian life?

6. When John wrote to the seven churches in Revelation, what did he repeatedly say?

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7. In Acts 27, the crew would be saved only if what happened?
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8. What lesson do we learn from the story of the little engine that said, “I think I can”?
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-
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9. As far as accomplishments are concerned, who is usually correct—those that say “I cannot!” or those that say “I can”?
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-
-
10. What did the director tell the main character of *Ben Hur*?
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-
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Lesson 7

Leadership Praying

Key Verse

“Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour” (Acts 3:1).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Define *leadership*
- Realize the importance of prayer in leadership
- Know the leadership priorities
- Value the biblical examples of leaders who prayed for those under them

Introduction

Leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less. As Christian leaders we are in the business of influencing people toward God. We influence people to come to salvation and live righteously in obedience to the Word of God. These things cannot be done by force. We can best accomplish this through persuasion and by setting an example. Paul said, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (II Corinthians 5:11).

Paul also revealed that our battle is not with people (under our leadership). It is a spiritual battle. We should not have difficulty with people, but with their

inappropriate actions. Our problem is with Satan's influence in their lives. As leaders we should be careful never to attack a person, but deal with the behavior.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

One way to increase our influence with those we are leading is to be involved in "leadership praying." We often think in terms of members (followers) praying for the pastor (or leader), but little is said about the pastor (or leader) praying for the members (followers).

Prayer plays an important role in evangelism. One man has said, "Talk with God about men before you talk to men about God."

A limited prayer and fasting base in the local church limits the power in the church. As prayer goes, so the church goes.

The Book of Acts begins with leaders gathered in an upper room in an extended prayer meeting. The Holy Spirit was poured out. Souls were won through the anointed preaching of the Word of God. The church was established. Prayer remained a priority in the early church among leaders and members alike. Leadership always led the way in prayer.

Leadership Priorities

The early church leaders reemphasized their priorities in Acts 6. Prayer was placed first among ministerial priorities. Men of God stated their main concerns in the ministry:

- Give ourselves continually to prayer.
- Give ourselves to the ministry of the Word.

It's Time to Think

What kind of prayers do you think these leaders continually prayed? Were they selfish prayers asking for personal petitions?

God Is Looking for a Praying Man (or Woman)

“And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor” (Isaiah 59:16).

God looked at Israel and grieved that there was no one to intercede for them. He still looks for intercessors that are willing to “stand in the gap” for a lost world. (See Ezekiel 22:30.)

Leaders Who Prayed

Abraham Interceded

“Then the LORD said, ‘The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.’ The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham approached him and said: ‘Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing – to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ . . . When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home” (Genesis 18:20–25, 33, NIV).

Nehemiah, a Leader Who Prayed

“When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Then I

said: ‘O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s house, have committed against you’” (Nehemiah 1:4–7, NIV).

Nehemiah fasted for several days, but prayed for several months. As a result, God gave him a vision of how he could minister to the people.

Paul Prayed for His People

“I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers” (Philemon 4).

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers” (I Thessalonians 1:2).

“Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (Ephesians 1:16).

Jesus Prayed for His Followers

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:31–32).

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

When Leaders Pray

The Book of Exodus alone records more than fifty prayer conversations between God and Moses. Moses’ famous prayer is recorded in Exodus 32:31–34.

“And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them” (Exodus 32:31–34).

God had decided to kill His people and start again with Moses. The leader interceded for the people, and God changed His mind. Prayerful leaders have influence with God.

In *Manna from Moses*, Stuart Lassetter says,

Powerful forces are unleashed when a leader travails in prayer before God. The leader has access to God and, like any other child of God, can come boldly into the throne room of God’s presence. When a leader will be burdened for the needs of the people, God will listen to his unselfish, intercessory prayer. Tremendous benefits and blessings to the people can be directly attributed to a leader’s prayer.

How Do You Measure Up?

Vesta Mangun, in her lesson “Leadership in Prayer—Indispensable Example,” tells us that you can:

- Measure your love for your people by your prayer life.
- Measure your concern for your people by your prayer life.
- Measure your vision for your people by your prayer life.
- Measure your leadership of your people by your prayer life.

Study Questions

1. What will happen when there is a limited prayer base in the church?

2. What are the leadership priorities found in Acts 6?

3. Give three examples of biblical leaders who prayed.

A.

B.

C.

4. Quote a verse of Scripture that shows Paul prayed for His people.

5. How many prayer conversations between Moses and God are found in Exodus?

LESSON 8

Leadership Praying (Part II)

Key Verses

“Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way” (I Samuel 12:23).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- List four steps to organize their prayer life to increase their level of influence
- Recognize the importance of partners, place, and time in regard to Acts 3:1.
- Express concern for those they are leading through prayer
- Grasp the meaning of H. E. Scism’s statement about the prayer room as quoted in this lesson.
- Understand that prayerlessness in leadership is a sin.

Introduction

This lesson is a continuation of Lesson 7, Leadership Praying. Lesson 7 focused on leadership priorities and leaders who prayed. This lesson focuses on increasing our level of influence and the sin of prayerlessness.

How Can We Increase Our Level of Influence?

John Maxwell informs us in *The 21 Most Powerful Minutes in a Leader's Day* that leadership impact rises as influence increases. Most leaders are anxious to increase their leadership impact. They realize that when there is little influence, little is accomplished. On the other hand, with much influence, much is accomplished. How can we increase our level of influence? How can we make maximum impact and assure that much is accomplished? One important way is through leadership involvement in prayer and fasting. (This is not to suggest that a leader does not need to develop leadership skills.) Following are some ways to more efficiently organize your prayer life and amplify your level of influence.

- To remember the various needs of your people compile a “prayer list.” This list will become your “prayer planner.” It will help you be organized in your prayer life.
- Find a personal prayer partner. If married, your spouse should be your prayer partner. You can also have another person (of the same gender) that you pray with on a regular basis. It is always good to be around people who motivate you to have a deeper walk with the Lord. Such people are growth partners. They will help you grow.
- Have a regular prayer time. Give God the best time of your day. If you are more alert in the morning, pray in the morning.
- Have a quiet prayer place. This needs to be a place where you can communicate with Heaven without earthly disturbances.

“Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour” (Acts 3:1).

Notice three things about this verse of Scripture.

Prayer Partners	Peter and John
Prayer Place	Temple
Prayer Time	Hour of prayer, ninth hour

- You may want to have a prayer team, a group of prayer warriors.
- Research and pray for unreached areas. This could be countries, cities, towns, and communities that are yet to be reached. Be involved in prayer evangelism. Prayer should precede evangelism.
- Jesus often asked, “What do you need?” Find out what prayer needs your people have. Take note of the needs and pray for each

one until something happens. Focus in on the specific prayer requests. When you pray specifically, God answers specifically.

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Prayer is a great way to express that you care.

- When you see someone you have prayed for, say, “I prayed for you (today).” When possible, mention the need that you prayed for. It is also encouraging when you send an occasional note to someone you have been praying for. Let them know that you care and that you have talked to the Father on their behalf. Let your members (followers) know that you understand and care about their needs.
- Have a prayer agenda. When you get together for national, regional, or local board meetings, make sure prayer is a major part of the agenda. When you pray, you show that you are dependent upon God. To discuss and decide things concerning the kingdom without prayer shows that you are depending on your abilities. Make prayer a priority!

“The powerhouse for the church is not the boardroom,
but the prayer room.”—(Rev. H. E. Scism)

- Have a regular prayer meeting with your leadership team.
- When a member verbally mentions a prayer need, take advantage of the present and pray for that need immediately. You are a minister. Take advantage of each opportunity to minister.

Warren Wiersbe states in *On Being a Servant of God* that ministry takes place when “divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God.” Ministry takes place when needs are met by God through you and your prayers.

The leader that lasts is the leader that fasts.
The leader that stays is the leader that prays.

Leaders also should be committed to fasting. Fasting is a regular, normal activity of leaders. Each of the three extended fasts (of forty days) recorded in the Bible were completed by leaders (Jesus and twice by Moses.) Paul indicated that he was involved in “fastings often” (II Corinthians 11:27).

Leadership Prayerlessness Is Sin

The prophet Samuel considered it to be a sin not to pray for the people that he was leading. He said, “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way” (I Samuel 12:23).

In *Transitioning (Leading Your Church Through Change)*, Dan Southerland stated, “The problem with not spending time in prayer is simply this: those who talk with God . . . hear God best. The number one hindrance to answered prayer for . . . leaders today is prayerlessness. We just don’t pray.”

In his excellent book *Historical Drift*, Arnold L. Cook writes concerning a church he visited, “After the service, I commended the senior pastor’s wife on their accomplishment. She responded quietly, ‘My husband leads from his knees.’”

Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath and native air. We all promote it verbally. Every new initiative is launched with the reminder: “We must bathe this ministry in prayer.” But our talk too often fails to match our walk.

Prayer is the very essence of Christianity. It was the only thing Christ’s disciples ever asked Him to teach them (Luke 11:1–4). Prayer is to be the heart of the church. Jesus declared: “My house will be called the house of prayer” (Matthew 21:13)."

Cook suggests that the following test will show how effective we are at leading from our knees:

- Personal Life: How important would your children consider prayer to be based on what they see in your private and family prayer life?
- Marriage: Would your spouse describe your leadership as “leading from your knees”?
- Professional Life: Is your prayer life commensurate with your sphere of ministry responsibility?
- Leadership: How would your staff rate the importance of prayer in ministry based on what they see in your leadership?

From the Mouth of Babes

“Every morning we have seen (and still see) our parents on their faces pleading with God on the people’s behalf, interceding and crying out to God to become better leaders. We have been blessed with such parents who love the Lord with all their heart and set such an example.” (Melinda Poitras, age 12.)

“The devil is in constant conspiracy against a preacher who really prays, for it has been said that what a minister is in his prayer closet is what he is, no more, no less.”—(Vance Havner)

Study Questions

1. According to this lesson, how can we increase our influence level?

2. Name two things you can do to improve your prayer life.

A.

B.

3. What three things (about prayer) can we learn from Acts 3:1?

A.

B.

C.

4. Why is it important to pray specifically?

5. What is the real powerhouse of the church?

6. Give a reference or quote that shows Paul fasted often.

7. Quote I Samuel 12:23.

8. What four questions should be asked to determine effectiveness at leading from the knees?

A.

B.

C.

D.

LESSON 9

The Secret to Success

Key Verse

“For David . . . served his own generation by the will of God” (Acts 13:36).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Define *success*
- Contrast the biblical view of success with the world’s view
- Understand that ministry is serving
- Know the principles for success
- Realize the reason they were born.

Introduction

Would you like to be important? Would you like to be a leader in God’s kingdom? There is a secret to success in the kingdom of God. Surprisingly, it does not involve people serving you and meeting your needs. It does not involve you being treated like a “big man” and everyone else like “little people.” In worldly leadership, the big question is “Who is number one?” The emphasis is on position, titles, power, and the offices held. In the world, leadership involves a quest for power. For this reason Satan was brought down. He wanted power. (See Isaiah 14:12–15.)

It should not be that way in the church where leadership involves picking up a towel and washing the feet of others. Leadership in God's kingdom involves serving others, instead of being served. Jesus said, "And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:44). He also stated, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27).

When looking for the leader, do not look for the one with all the titles but look for the one with the servant's heart. When you find him, you find God's leader.

The Leader's Prayer

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

Lord,

I am Your servant.

Place me wherever I can be of most service to You, with the talents and abilities You have given me.

I am Your living sacrifice. You alone are the boss. You are in control!

Let me see clearly (vision), hear and sense Your will, and walk uprightly in the footsteps You have for me.

I want to be in constant touch with You (prayer). Help me to keep my priorities correct: love You, love my spouse and family, and love and have a burden for my world.

Yours truly,

Kofi

As we remain on the altar of sacrifice, committed to the Lord, He will put us in the place we can best be used for His glory.

"But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus — the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God" (Acts 20:24, NLT).

"The people who make the difference are not the ones with the

credentials, but the ones with the concern.”—(Max Lucado)

Jesus Christ is the greatest leader of all times. He was successful because He fulfilled His purpose in life. He knew the reason why He was born, and He accomplished the will of God. He stated His life’s purpose in Matthew 16:18, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

For us to be successful, we must know the purpose for which we were born. God has given each of us a unique role in His kingdom, and we must find it. Everyone in God’s kingdom is saved to do something for Him. God has a place for everyone to work in His church.

Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10:38). He did not come to be served, but He came to serve. When we serve others, we are actually serving the Lord. He said, “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40). He also said, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

We can minister to the Lord in many ways, but each way involves serving people. Paul stated, “And ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” (II Corinthians 4:5).

A popular saying in Christian circles asks, “What would Jesus do?” (WWJD). We do not serve others for our sake, but for Jesus’ sake. We try to do what Jesus would do, and do it the way He would do it, while giving all the credit to Him. We serve Jesus by serving people. A leader achieves true success by serving others.

The thinking of the world is to get ahead, be served by others, and climb to the top as quickly as possible—even if it means walking over others to get there. It has rightly been said, “Be careful whom you kick on the way up. You may need that person on the way back down.”

The outstanding leaders in the Bible began their ministries as servants. Moses was tending Jethro’s flock when God called him to bring the Israelites out of bondage. David, a shepherd boy, was called from the field when Samuel visited Jesse’s house to anoint the new king of Israel. Joshua began his ministry as a servant and assistant to Moses. Elisha served Elijah long before he received a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. Timothy was a servant and a son to the apostle

Paul, taking care of many of his needs. Philip, the evangelist, began his ministry waiting on tables. (See Acts 6.)

Principles of Success

Here are several noteworthy principles of success.

1. God calls busy people.
Barnabas and Saul were serving others when God called them to be missionaries. They received this call through prayer, fasting, and faithful service to God and others: “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2).
2. To be used of God, one must first be a servant.
3. To be successful, one must first be faithful.
4. Servant leaders produce servant leaders.

In the book *Primary Purpose*, author Ted Haggard has an excellent chapter on “Becoming a Servant.” Leadership is usually viewed from the standpoint of a group of people serving a smaller group of people called “leaders.” People involve themselves in a “power struggle” to get to the top. Haggard presents two different leadership triangles.

The first is the “World’s View of Leadership” and shows the leader at the top of the triangle and the people under the leader’s control at the bottom.

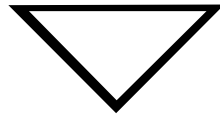
World’s View of Leadership



He then presents the “Biblical View of Leadership” with the top of the triangle pointing downward. The people to be served by the leader are at the top and the leader is at the bottom.

Biblical View of Leadership

People



Leader

To be great in the kingdom of God, you must serve others. He shows that the whole basis of what we do is so we can serve others.

Parable of the Talents

A man traveling to a far country called his servants and delivered his goods to them. He gave one five talents, another two talents, and the last one talent, according to their different abilities. When the man returned, he called his servants. He asked what they had done with their talents. The one with five talents had traded and gained five other talents. The one with two talents gained two. However, the man with the one talent hid his in the ground. Perhaps he brought the coin wrapped in a cloth and said, "Master, I didn't gain anything. I didn't lose anything either." The master was pleased with the first two men, but angry at the third. To the first two he gave the Bible's definition of success. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things" (Matthew 25:21).

The man who had not invested his talent lost it. Here is an important principle about God-given talents. When we fail to use them, we tend to lose them. God's gifts and callings are without repentance. But we can allow them to become dormant and inactive in our lives. We should live to hear, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Look at God's mathematics.

1. The man with one talent lost it: $1 + 0 = 0$
2. The man with two talents gained two more: $2 + 2 = 4$
3. The man with the five talents gained how many more? $5 + 5 = 11$

How did this happen? The master took the talent that the man had failed to use and gave it to the successful man.

God has given each of us talents, abilities, and a ministry. When we faithfully use these blessings from God, then God gives us more. Not only that, but He puts us in a place where they can be of the most benefit and blessing to others. Be faithful with what God has given to you, and He will give you more. That is the secret to success.

A valuable leader does not require a position to achieve personal success. (He will accomplish it with or without a position.) However, an organization may need him in a position to help achieve organizational success.

Study Questions

1. In worldly leadership, where is the emphasis placed?

2. Leadership in God's kingdom involves what?

3. What should we look for in a leader?

4. Why was Jesus a successful leader?

5. How did many of the outstanding leaders in the Bible begin their ministry?

6. What principles can we learn from this?

7. Draw two triangles representing the “World’s View of Leadership” and the “Biblical View of Leadership.” (Use the space provided.)

World’s View of Leadership

Biblical View of Leadership

8. What is the biblical definition of *success*?

9. The man with five talents gained how many?

LESSON 10

Wanted: Men and Women of Integrity

Key Verse

“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Define *integrity*
- Cite biblical examples of integrity
- Know the qualifications of a deacon
- Know the qualifications of a bishop
- List five areas of temptation

Introduction

Oxford English Dictionary defines *integrity* as “the state of being honest, upright, sincere.” The Hebrew root word denotes, “whole, sound, unimpaired.” It would be great to have leaders with integrity.

In *A Life of Integrity*, Howard Hendricks relates a story of a man who left his workplace each day with a mountain of sand in his wheelbarrow. The security guards went through the sand, convinced they would find stolen property. They

could not find anything. Every day the same thing happened. Finally, they realized he was stealing wheelbarrows. The man in this story lacked integrity and honesty.

It is increasingly difficult to find men and women of integrity. However, the Bible abounds with examples.

Biblical Examples

- **Joseph** was a man of integrity. He had the opportunity to spend the afternoon with Potiphar's wife. She found him quite desirable.

"His master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:7-9).

- **Job** was another man of integrity. "And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause" (Job 2:3).

Job's wife recommended that he forget his integrity. "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die" (Job 2:9).

Job experienced many trials, but still declared, "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me" (Job 27:5).

- The psalmist **David** believed he should be a man of integrity. "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee" (Psalm 25:21).
- **Paul** was a man of integrity. He said that he had "lived in all good conscience before God" (Acts 23:1). He was rewarded for his integrity with a slap in the mouth (Acts 23:2).

Integrity—A Must for Leaders

Because of the rapid growth of the Jerusalem church and the administrative tasks that grew with it, the apostles chose seven men to wait on tables. One of the qualifications was that they would have to be men of “honest report.” Later Paul told Timothy, “And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless” (I Timothy 3:10).

Later in the New Testament, Paul listed qualifications for deacons. They had to be proven blameless—men of integrity. Integrity does not happen overnight. It takes time. Pastors, elders, and bishops also had to be men of integrity (blameless.) Integrity is a qualification for anyone in leadership.

“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach” (I Timothy 3:2).

“If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre” (Titus 1:6-7).

“When good people are promoted, everything is great, but when the bad are in charge, watch out!” (Proverbs 28:12, *The Message*)

Temptations in Christian Service

Temptations in Christian service usually take place in the following areas.

Finance

Leaders must be careful in matters of finance. Proper accountability of funds and complete honesty are needed. This causes others to trust the leader. Leaders need to be faithful in their financial obligations in the community and the church. They must be careful to fulfill the vows and pledges that they make. They must not rob God but faithfully pay tithes. Judas’s integrity was bought for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15). In Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira lost their integrity and their lives over money.

Poverty brings many temptations, but leaders must strive to be men of integrity.

Relationships with the Opposite Gender

This area of temptation causes many leaders to fall into sin and destroys their ministry. Paul advised, “Flee fornication!” (I Corinthians 6:18). Run from it!

When this temptation comes, we need to be like Joseph. He responded, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). Every day Potiphar’s wife continued to tempt Joseph. Joseph finally “left his garment in her hand, and fled” (Genesis 39:12).

“But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away” (Proverbs 6:32–33).

“Abstain from all appearance of evil” (I Thessalonians 5:22).

Be careful whom you touch or even look at. Do not be alone with a person of the opposite gender (unless it is your spouse).

Power

Leaders have not been called to be big men, lords over God’s heritage.

“Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (I Peter 5:3).

“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11).

Truth—Honesty

At times leaders may also be tempted to protect themselves by not telling the truth. It is important for them to be men of their word. They should always do what they say they will do. They should always speak the truth and never lie.

“All liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Revelation 21:8).

Adversity, Trials, and Problems

Problems can cause leaders to look for comfortable ways to escape. But they should stand their ground without compromise. For example, on April 17, 1521, Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms in Germany, facing excommunication and death from the Roman Catholic Church. Refusing again to recant, Luther concluded his testimony with the defiant statement: "Here I stand. God help me. I can do no other."

Daniel is a classic example of integrity. He continued to pray three times a day, even when it meant being thrown into a lions' den.

The three Hebrew children refused to compromise and worship an idol. They realized that as a result, they could be thrown into the fiery furnace.

Study Questions

1. Define *integrity*.

2. In Acts 23:2 what reward did Paul receive for his integrity?

3. Why did Joseph refuse to lie with Potiphar's wife?

4. Job experienced many trials but still declared what?

5. Show (using the Scripture) that integrity is a qualification for deacons and other church leaders.

6. What are some of the areas of temptation in Christian service?

7. How can leaders maintain integrity with finances?

8. How can leaders deal with the temptations concerning the opposite gender?

LESSON 11

Putting First Things First

Key Verses

“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men” (I Timothy 2:1).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Understand the necessity to prioritize tasks
- Realize that non-essentials can captivate one’s time
- Know what priorities the apostles made in their lives
- Recognize the importance of prayer in spiritual leadership
- Know how to measure our love, concern, vision, and leadership of those we are leading.

Introduction

The apostle Paul once said, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient” (I Corinthians 10:23). This means we could do many things, but we should do a few things.

In *Developing the Leader Within You*, John Maxwell quoted a speaker who said, “There are two things that are most difficult to get people to do; to think and to do things in the order of importance.”

Have you ever wondered why animal trainers in the circus carry a stool when they go into a cage of lions? The trainer will hold the stool and push its legs toward the lion. This is because the lion will try to focus on all four of the legs at the same time. This overwhelms the lion, and it becomes weak and tame because its attention becomes divided. The devil tries the same tactics on us when he tries to divert our attention from our priorities in the Christian life and ministry.

Maxwell relates the tragic story of an airplane that crashed. As the plane was approaching the airport for landing, the light that indicates the proper working of the landing gear failed to come on. The plane flew in a large circle while the cockpit crew checked to see whether the gear was actually deployed or if the bulb was defective. As the flight engineer tried to remove the bulb, it wouldn't move so the rest of the crew tried to help him. As they struggled with the bulb, no one noticed that the plane was losing altitude, and the plane crashed. While the crew of trained pilots played with a lightbulb, the plane with its passengers crashed into the ground.

So many times we spend quality time doing the things that are not important at all. In Acts 6 the apostles became occupied with the “daily ministration” of feeding the widows. One day they realized that they would have to make some priorities, putting first things first. It was simply not right for them to busy themselves with waiting on tables and neglect their real ministerial priorities.

Ministerial Priorities

They stated their priorities in the ministry as:

1. Give ourselves continually to prayer.
2. Give ourselves to the ministry of the Word.

Because they put first things first, “the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

A necessary part of spiritual leadership is praying for the people you are leading. It is a sin to fail to pray for those to whom you are spiritually responsible.

You must be an example to your people. You cannot lead them to where you have not been yourself.

One day Jesus visited Mary and Martha in their home. Martha received him into the home, and moved busily about serving Jesus. Mary, on the other hand, simply sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His word. Martha complained, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," Jesus answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:40-42, NIV)

Our service to Jesus is essential and good, but we must always remember that our first and most important priority is to devote ourselves to prayer, loving the Lord, and the ministry of His Word. Watchman Nee said it is possible to be "serving the House of God but have forgotten the Lord Himself."

Oswald Chambers claimed, "The greatest competitor of devotion to Jesus is service to Him." Paul always remained devoted to Jesus Christ and "determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:2). Paul was committed to Jesus, not just to a cause.

A story is told in I Kings 20 of a man who was given the responsibility of taking care of a prisoner. When given this prisoner, he was warned, "Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life." The prisoner escaped and the servant confessed, "And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone" (I Kings 20: 39-40). We should not become so busy that we forget or neglect our priorities. Remember, if you are too busy to pray, you are too busy.

In her lesson "Leadership in Prayer—Indispensable Example," prayer warrior Vesta Mangun tells us that you can:

1. Measure your love for your people by your prayer life.
2. Measure your concern for your people by your prayer life.
3. Measure your vision for your people by your prayer life.
4. Measure your leadership of your people by your prayer life.

"The powerhouse for the church is not the boardroom,
but the prayer room." — H. E. Scism

It is so easy to get busy doing things for God that we fail to take time with God. This causes us to lose sight of God's view of things and weakens our relationship with the Lord. It results in us wandering aimlessly without direction.

In Acts 2:40 we are told to save ourselves from this untoward generation. The word *untoward* means that we are not going toward anything. We lack direction, purpose, vision, meaning, and priorities. We are going fast, going busily, and going often, but going nowhere.

A person, however, who makes time to pray will find a God who takes time to answer. We must make the time through having correct priorities. T. F. Tenney admonishes us, "Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing!"

Preaching, teaching, talking to men for God is a great thing.
Talking, interceding, prevailing with God for men is greater still.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the two most difficult things to get people to do?
A. _____
B. _____

2. What are the priorities of ministry according to Acts 6?

3. What is a necessary part of spiritual leadership?

4. How can we measure our love, concern, vision, and leadership of our people?

5. What happens when we make time to pray?

6. What is greater than preaching, teaching, talking to men about God?

7. What does *untoward* mean?

8. What did Jesus mean when He said to Martha, “One thing is needful”?

9. In Acts 6 what was the result of the apostles getting priorities straight?

10. Why does an animal trainer carry a stool into the cage of a wild animal?

<p>We have lots of time to talk to others— how much time do we have to talk to God?</p>

LESSON 12

Goals for Souls

Key Verse

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Define *goal*
- Grasp the importance of setting goals
- Differentiate between personal goals and work goals
- Discern the difference between dreams and goals
- Recognize the options when setting goals for employees under your charge
- Realize the importance of keeping one’s eye on the finish line or completion of the goal

Introduction

The Book of Acts begins with Jesus’ vision and final words for His disciples. The disciples went about accomplishing His vision one soul at a time (by taking

the gospel to others one step at a time). The Book of Acts is a record of their progress in completing Jesus' giant vision.

"I may walk over the highest mountain one step at a time."
—John Wanamaker

In the popular book *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice came to a crossroads leading in two directions. She asked, "Which way should I go from here?"

The response was, "That depends on where you want to go."

Alice said, "I don't care where!"

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," came the answer. "If you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there."

Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, but in the direction we are moving."

It has been said, "If you aim at nothing, you'll hit it every time." Evangelism is no exception. Without a goal, we will not advance the cause of Christ. The points found in this lesson are applicable to individuals in any walk of life. For the Christian and the church, everything we do should have its basis and end in world evangelism.

"Before taking steps, the wise man knows the object
and end of his journey."—W. E. B. Du Bois

What Is a Goal?

Jack Canfield, in *The Power of Focus*, defines a goal as the "ongoing pursuit of a worthy objective until accomplished."

Ongoing	Continuing; it takes time.
Pursuit	A chase may be involved.
Objective	Intention(al).
Worthy	Something valuable or admirable.

In *Success Is a Choice*, Rick Pitino explained, “Dreams are where we want to end up. Goals are how we get there. Dreams are our vision of where we are after the struggle, the prize at the end of the journey. Goals are the individual steps we take to ultimately deserve the prize.”

Charles Givens, in *Superself*, said, “Goals are the stepping-stones toward the realization of your dreams.” He believes “running your life without goals is about as effective as attempting to drive your car from the passenger’s seat.” He also said, “Success is the progressive, timely achievement of your stated goals.”

Goals get you where you want to go. The two main types of goals are:

- Work
- Personal

Elbert Hubbard said, “Many people fail in life not for lack of ability but simply because they have never organized their energies around a goal.” He also said, “People who never do any more than they get paid for, never get paid for any more than they do.”

Goal setting is seriously lacking in the church. “There is at best a vague understanding of the church’s goals and at worst an uncaring attitude about whether the church has goals or not” (*Real Evangelism*).

Bruce Howell, a former missionary to El Salvador and now the general director of Global Missions UPCI, said, “The only year the El Salvador church did not grow was the year they did not set goals.”

Studies show that the most powerful predictor of success is the passion to pursue well-defined goals. Goals give us purpose and direction and assist us in defining where we will place our energies. Other words for goals include aims, objectives, targets, milestones, tasks, assignments, desires, plans.

Think and Grow Rich author Napoleon Hill claimed that all successful people have one thing in common: they “set a specific goal and [devise] a plan for achieving that goal.”

Without goals it is difficult for a person to ever rise above the mud of mediocrity.

“Only when you aspire to excellence in your life can you
--

be free from mediocrity.”—Peter L. Hirsch

Long-term success is a direct result of what is achieved each day. Goals help with the daily routine, keep us organized, and create discipline in our lives. Rick Pitino claims that setting goals is one of the major building blocks to personal success. He encourages, “Start out with short-term goals that are easily attainable to get into the habit of improvement; then you make the goals more demanding as you begin to have success.”

In *Living with Passion*, Peter L. Hirsch relates a conversation with Napoleon Hill. “If you want success in any endeavor, there is one and only one quality you will require—definiteness of purpose; you must have the knowledge of what you want and a burning desire to possess it Our world has a habit of making way for anyone whose words and actions show that he knows exactly where he is going.”

Accomplishing goals is the outcome of hard work. It has been said, “Working hard is not always fun. That is why it is called work.”

Jim Rohn claims life involves two major pains:

1. Pain of discipline.
2. Pain of regret.

Doing the work and being involved in the pain of discipline is much more preferable to the pain of regret.

James Berry said, “The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write one story but instead he writes another. And his saddest hour is when he compares the volume as it is with the one he vowed to write.”

It does not have to be like that. Let us do our best. Like Paul, we can finish the race. We can hear Jesus say, “Well done!”

Goal Setting in the Workplace

When involved in setting goals with employees or people under your leadership, three options prevail:

1. Set the goals for the person.
2. Set the goals with the person.

3. Let the person set the goals.

It is important that the team, leader, and employees agree on work goals. Hold regular meetings to check on the progress of the goals.

Jesus and Goal-setting

Jesus had a plan and purpose for His life. At the age of twelve, He said, “I must be about my Father’s business” (Luke 2:49). Throughout His earthly ministry, He continued to explain His purpose, vision, and goals.

- “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).
- “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).
- “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

Because Jesus knew His purpose, vision, mission, and goals, He was able to say on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

Paul understood his vision and goals, and he was able to say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (II Timothy 4:7).

Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

Florence Chadwick tried to swim the English Channel. She asked to be taken out of the water a few hundred meters from land. When asked, “Why couldn’t you make it?” she said, “I would have made it but fog moved in and kept me from seeing the shoreline. If I could have seen the shore, I could have made it.” If we keep our eyes on our goals and vision, we can make it to the finish line.

“I don’t mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be. No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race

and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven” (Philippians 3:12-14, NLT).

Study Questions

1. What happens when we aim at nothing?

2. According to Jack Canfield, what is a goal?

3. What is the difference between goals and dreams (according to Rick Pitino and Charles Givens)?

4. According to Charles Givens, what is success?

5. What advice does Rick Pitino give concerning setting goals as the building blocks to personal success?

6. According to Peter L. Hirsch, what does our world have a habit of doing?

7. According to Jim Rohn, what are the two major pains in life?
A. _____
B. _____
8. What did James Berry say concerning the life of every man?

9. What are the three options when setting goals with employees or those under your supervision?
A. _____
B. _____
C. _____
10. When Jesus was twelve years old, what did He say about the plan and purpose for His life?

Personal Study Notes

LESSON 13

Guidelines for Setting Goals

Key Verse

“For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep” (Acts 13:36, NIV).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Comprehend the purpose of setting goals
- Recognize hindrances to setting goals
- Know tips for setting goals
- Understand the SMART and CROW acronyms
- Ask appropriate questions in setting goals

Introduction

Setting and achieving goals help us fulfill our purpose. Deep within each of us is a desire to make a difference. In the “Pastor’s Coach” (December 2000, received by e-mail) Dan Reiland mentions five things that never change. (Note that he mentions our desire to make a significant impact.)

1. The desire to know and be known; love and be loved.
2. The drive and desire to connect with our Creator.

3. The need for spiritual leadership.
4. The passion and desire to make a significant impact in our lifetime.
5. The longing for peace, contentment, and joy in the midst of stress and confusion.

Mother Teresa in *The Love of Christ* says, “What we are doing is but a drop in the ocean. This may be only a drop, but the ocean would be less if it weren’t there.” Through goal-setting we are achieving more drops in the ocean.

Why People Do Not Set Goals

Few people take the time or make the effort required to set goals.

1. They do not know how to set goals.
2. They are wandering through life aimlessly without a plan or vision.
3. They have tried setting goals and have failed.
4. They are too lazy to set goals. Goal-setting eventually means work.
5. They have an “I do not care” attitude. Whatever will come will come.
6. They feel it is not scriptural or spiritual to plan ahead or set goals.
7. They lack self-discipline.
8. They are content in their comfort zone. The pothole allows them to control life; they know exactly what to expect.
9. They feel they are too busy to take time to set goals.
10. They do not know what they want in life.
11. They are not willing to confront their weaknesses; so they do not set goals for personal change.

Tips on Goals

Wynn Davis, in *The Best of Success*, wrote, “The purpose of goals is to focus our attention. The mind will not reach toward achievement until it has clear objectives It is then that the switch is turned on, the current begins to flow, and the power to accomplish becomes a reality.”

1. Goals should be meaningful. Ask, “What is important to me?”
2. Goals should be specific.
3. Goals should be measurable.
4. Goals should be realistic.
5. Goals should be believable and attainable.

6. Goals should be well defined.
7. Goals should have a purpose (a good reason).
8. Goals should be flexible. (Be open to better opportunities coming your way.)
9. Include family and relaxation time in your goals.
10. Arrange your goals according to your priorities.
11. Goals should be challenging. They should excite you.
12. Goals show you where to put your time and energy.
13. Evaluate your progress along the way. Goals need to be fine-tuned like the engine of a car. Goals may need adjustments.
14. Performance should be compared against goals to guarantee progress is being made.
15. Establish the time frame necessary to accomplish goals.
16. Make a list of the goals and divide them into short-, mid-, and long-term goals.
17. Break each goal down into sub-goals.
18. Set a target date for the completion of each goal or sub-goal.
19. Celebrate when a goal is achieved. Replace it with a new goal.
20. Give yourself a reward for completing the goal.
21. Concentrate on results (getting the goal completed). Goals help you to be more effective and productive.
22. Everyone working on the goal should understand it. The clearer the goal, the easier it will be to accomplish. The goal must be communicated.
23. Goals should be demanding (something that will make you work in order to achieve it). Goals should stretch you.
24. Set goals that help overcome your weaknesses.
25. Put goals in writing and learn how to verbalize them. Read your goals often. Some suggest that you read them every day. This helps you maintain focus.
26. Keep a copy of your goals where you can see it every day (even several times per day).
27. Share your goals with like-minded people.
28. Associate with goal-setters. Their lifestyle is contagious.
29. Get others to help you accomplish your goals (and be willing to help them).
30. Goals should have deadlines (due dates). It has been said, "Goals are dreams with deadlines." Set a time schedule for each goal.
31. Goals provide a measure of happiness. Research has shown that those who set goals are happier than those who do not.

32. Utilize reverse goal-setting techniques. Look at where you want to end up in your vision and determine the steps it takes by working backward from where you want to be.
33. You can have any number of goals. However, you should not work on all your goals at once. If you do a little of everything, you will end up with a whole lot of nothing. Focus on your priority goals. One proverb says, "If you chase two rabbits, you will catch none." When you divide your attention by trying to achieve many goals, you cannot do any of them with excellence.

Looking for a Shorter List?

Wow! That is a long list! Let us look at some shorter ways to remember the basics of goal-setting.

Use the acronym SMART (adapted for our use) to assist in setting achievable goals. (Regretfully, acronyms do not translate well in various languages. Perhaps the words can still be used.

S	Specific (focused)
M	Measurable
A	Attainable
R	Realistic
T	Time-related

Another acronym to help guide goal-setting is CROW.

C	Concrete (definite, definable)
R	Realistic (attainable)
O	Observable
W	Worthwhile

Time Divisions for Goal-Setting	
Short-term goals	Up to one year.
Mid-term goals	One to five years.
Long-term goals	More than five years.

Goal-setting Questions

In *The Power of Focus*, Jack Canfield provides a number of questions to focus on when determining goals.

1. What do I want to do?
2. What do I want to have?
3. Where do I want to go?
4. What contributions to society do I want to make?
5. What do I want to become?
6. What do I want to learn?
7. Whom do I want to spend my time with?
8. What will I do to create and maintain my best health?

To this list add:

1. What do I want to leave behind as a legacy (a gift to others)?
2. Do my goals fit into God's plan for my life?
3. Do my goals honor and glorify God, or are they selfish, carnal, or worldly?
4. Did I pray for direction before setting my goals? Are these goals from God?

Top Ten List of Goals

A small girl was drawing a picture when her proud daddy noticed. He complimented her and asked, "How do you draw so well?"

She responded, "First, I think. And then I draw my think."

Goal-setting is "drawing our think." It is good to put "our think" into writing.

Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson, in *One Minute Manager*, teach that a goal and its performance standard should be written in 250 words or less. The shortness of the goal ensures that anyone could read it in a minute.

Make a list of ten goals that will help you achieve your vision. Utilize the points given in this lesson. Use additional paper, if needed.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Study Questions

1. What is the purpose of goals?

2. Explain what is meant by the acronym "SMART."

3. What are the time divisions of goal-setting?

4. According to Dan Reiland, what passion and desire do we have?

5. What happens when we give attention to many goals at the same time?

6. What is reverse goal-setting?

7. List three reasons people do not set goals.

A.

B.

C.

8. Why should goals be written down?

9. Using what Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson said, comment on the number of words to be used in writing a goal.

10. What is the meaning of the CROW acronym?

Personal Study Notes

LESSON 14

How to Do the Main Thing

Key Verse

“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” (Mark 6:31, NIV).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Ascertain their main things
- Organize their activities to keep their work balanced
- Know the importance of rest
- Read the “three gauges of life”
- Explain how doing the main thing provides strength.

Introduction

H. Dale Burke in “How to Overcome Overload” says that our “main thing” includes three characteristics.

1. My main thing is “mission critical.” It is essential to the growth of the ministry. Done well, it moves the organization forward.
2. My main thing is “top priority.”
3. My main thing grows out of my unique abilities.

Organizing the Work Week

H. Dale Burke, in *Less Is More Leadership*, suggests grouping activities into four major categories and setting time aside for each in order to keep his work balanced. This requires planning your week in large blocks of time, either full or half days. Focus on one objective at a time.

Rest Time

Focus on your health, spirituality, and marriage.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates” (Exodus 20:8–10, NIV).

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (Matthew 11:28–30, The Message).

“Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest’” (Mark 6:31, NIV).

In “How to Deal with Stress,” Mary Southerland tells the story of a tourist taking a safari in the jungles of Africa. He hired locals to carry his supplies and to serve as guides. On the first day they walked rapidly and went far. The tourist was thrilled with the progress, and rose the second day, eager resume the journey. The locals refused to budge. They insisted that they needed to sit and rest. They explained to the tourist that they had gone too fast the first day. Now they were waiting for their souls to catch up. Southerland concludes, “The more responsibility we carry and the busier we are, the more we need regular solitude!” A Greek proverb says, “You will break the bow if you keep it always bent.”

God is willing to help us if we will obey His Word, rest, and spend time in His presence.

Renews

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Restores

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake” (Psalm 23:1–3).

Refreshes

“The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

Cecil Murphey, in *Live Ten Years Longer*, encourages pastors to do three things.

1. Find a regular exercise you will enjoy.
2. Change the way you eat and drink. He doesn’t recommend a diet (which implies taking things away) but suggests a balanced diet. He also urges pastors to drink more water. During the night bodies lose the equivalent of two glasses of water in moisture.
3. Get more rest. Getting plenty of sleep is essential to the body. The body repairs the wear and tear of the day through sleeping. When you don’t take time to sleep your immune system suffers. He also encourages pastors to rest their mind by laying aside the stress they carry within.

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (I Corinthians 6:19–20, NIV).

Results Time

Focus on the “main things” that advance the mission. Time needs to be spent focusing on the unique role God has for you personally. Use the portion of the day or

week when you do your best work. Structure your schedule around the “main things.” Tackle priorities one at a time and in order of their importance. It may help to break a project down into chunks and approach the work one chunk at a time.

Burke finds that when he tries to fit more than one of these needs into a block of time, he experiences frustration and defeat rather than fulfillment.

Response Time

Focus on things **that result from your result time or main thing**. These things are not critical to the mission but still important. They are usually focused on others, processing things that flow out of your main thing, including administration and follow-up.

Refocus Time

Focus on how you adjust **what** and how you undertake projects. This is when we work on the mission, reflect, assess, adjust, and innovate for the future. Retreat to refocus. Refocus weekly, monthly, and yearly. An ancient Chinese proverb says, “Muddy water let stand will clear.”

Rick Warren, in “Seven Secrets of Stress Management” says, “Preparation prevents pressure but procrastination produces it. You work by either priorities or pressures.” The old cliché “don’t put off until tomorrow what can be done today” goes a long way to prevent overload.

When involved in emotionally draining activities, take time to prepare and then to recover. In *Margin*, Richard A. Swenson said, “Calendar congestion and time urgency have robbed us of the pleasure of anticipation. Without warning, the activity is upon us. We rush to meet it; then we rush to the next; and the next.” He advises that when the activity is over take time to reflect, evaluate, and remember.

Reading the Gauges

In his *Leadership Journal* article titled “Reading Your Gauges,” Bill Hybels talks of three gauges that we need to routinely check in our lives.

Spiritual Gauge—How am I doing spiritually? The spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, Bible reading, meditation, sacrifice, and others pump high-octane fuel into our lives providing strength for ministry.

Physical Gauge—How am I doing physically? Exercise, proper diet, and rest are important.

Emotional Gauge—How am I doing emotionally? Certain activities drain our emotional petrol tank. Bill Hybels calls these “Intensive Ministry Activities,” which include confrontations, counseling sessions, exhausting ministry sessions, board meetings (to name a few). Refilling your emotional tank takes time.

To maintain emotional resources, use your spiritual gifts or unique abilities. Many times you will feel more energized after using them. Serving outside your gift areas tend to drain you.

Remember Jesus at the well talking to the Samaritan woman? When His disciples returned bringing food, Jesus said, “My food . . . is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (John 4:34, NIV)

Doing what He was called to do was fulfilling and energizing, rather than draining. You will receive strength from doing your main thing, and the church will be thrust forward.

Peter Brain, in *Going the Distance: How to Stay Fit for a Lifetime of Ministry*, cites a comment made by Christmas Evans, a British evangelist: “I’d rather burn out than rust out in the service of the Lord.” Many pastors operate on a similar principle. James Berkeley gives this alternative:

I admire the bravado. It sounds dedicated, bold, and stirring. However, when I view the burn-outs and the almost burn-outs who lie by the ecclesiastical road, the glory fails to reach me. I see pain and waste and unfinished service. Is there not a third alternative to either burning out or rusting out? In Acts 20:24, Paul stated, “I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.” Herein lies the model I choose to follow. I want neither to burn out or rust out. I want to finish out the race.

Study Questions

1. What are three characteristics of “our main thing”?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

2. We should group activities into four categories. What are they? Briefly explain each.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____
 - D. _____

3. What are three things Cecil Murphy encourages pastors to do?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

4. How can one best focus on the main things that advance the mission?

5. Identify and briefly explain the three gauges mentioned by Bill Hybels.
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

6. Explain how doing the main thing provides strength.

LESSON 15

Preparing Today for Tomorrow

Key Verse

“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Understand the need for a successor
- Know how to prepare a successor
- Avoid the two major mistakes leaders make
- Realize positions are not lifetime appointments
- Look to Paul as an example of a mentor

Introduction

The early church experienced dynamic growth because they knew how to prepare leaders. They sought out and appointed capable men to lead each church.

This lesson deals specifically with the ministry but can be applied to many areas of service, including the workplace.

We are at a critical point. We have been entrusted with a great responsibility to impact our world. We must prepare to become all we are called to be for our generation and the ones that follow. In order to build a strong, well-equipped, empowered church (or any organization), we must continually train new leaders and discover new talent. Wise leaders plan for the next generation. They continually train others to take their place. They see that their replacements have the best possible training to give them every opportunity for success. Given proper preparation, the carefully mentored successor can step in when the leader is no longer in that position. It has been rightfully said, "There is no success without a successor."

The apostle Paul is a good example of a leader who consistently discipled successors. Paul sought out men with potential and prepared them to continue the ministry after he was gone. He made the following statement concerning training successors:

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2).

From the moment leaders take a responsibility, they need to begin looking for someone who can serve as their successor. They must realize that the privilege of filling a leadership role is not a lifetime appointment. Sometime they may be called upon to fill another, heavier leadership responsibility. Will they be able to accept this responsibility if they have not trained a successor? At other times leaders reach the age of retirement or simply a stage when they have done all they can do in that capacity.

Leaders often make one of two mistakes. They either stay too long or not long enough. Which one is most often the case? You are right if you said leaders often stay too long. Wise leaders will know when to step down or to move on to the next level. This will be difficult if they have not been involved in training the next generation of leaders. They may feel, "Who else could lead better than I do?" This type of thinking is not progressive and does not encourage or develop strong leadership, church growth, or expansion. Humility is a key in successful leadership transition.

Paul said, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are

labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building" (I Corinthians 3:6-9).

Lyle Schaller said, "Leaders who stay too long do much more damage than those that don't stay long enough."

Hans Finzel, in *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*, suggests a number of reasons why leaders are afraid to let go. They include:

- **Job security.** (What am I going to do next?)
- **Resistance to change.** (I am comfortable where I am.)
- **Self-worth.** (My job is my whole life. To change positions will cause me to lose my identity.)
- **Lack of confidence in the successor.** (He can't do the job as well as I can.)
- **Fear of retirement.** (What will I do now? I will be useless.)
- **Loss of investment.** (I have invested a lot into this position and/or organization. I am receiving a lot of benefits here.)
- **Love for the people and the job.** (I love these people.) Remember God loves them too and will do what is best.

The wastage of gifts and talents in the kingdom of God is quite surprising. Some older ministers do not have any idea of what to do with the younger leaders. The older leaders sometimes feel threatened. The younger leaders may feel frustrated and overlooked. As a result, the young leaders may divide the church and begin to lead through manipulation. This is a sad picture. We are not suggesting we should only train younger leaders. Many of the people that we develop may be older than we are. Age is not the significant thing here, but preparing the next generation of leaders is.

There are many churches which pour cold water on any life which begins to bubble where they are not bubbling. Any time a person shows initiative, they knock the effort on the head, and the person retreats back into mediocrity . . . True life will always break out in new initiatives. The only place where there is no initiative is in the cemetery, where the occupants stay peacefully in their quiet "hotel rooms." We should not make our churches function like cemeteries. (*Wanted: Servant Leaders* by Gottfried Osei-Mensah)

David was a tremendous leader. When he was old, he made a prayer to the Lord. "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared

thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come" (Psalm 71:17-18).

Like David, we must be willing to train the next generation and allow them to continue what has been started.

Eastwood Anaba stated:

Most of all our spiritual giants have been doing the same things for years without any promotion in the things of God. The reason is that they have not trained anyone to take their present position. God does not promote a man who has no replacement to occupy his present position. Our condition as a church is therefore miserable. No one is going up. Those who are beneath are being suppressed and those who are above are being overburdened. We are in a state of crisis—a generation of effective ministers can easily fade away without replacement (*Productivity Vitamins*).

Anaba's statement applies directly to the church, but fits in many area of leadership.

Another principle is "you have to give up to go up." Obviously, leaders cannot remain on the same level if they want to go to a higher level. They cannot move to the next level until they have trained someone to do what they are doing. It has been said, "The road to the next level is always uphill." Training the next generation is not always easy, but it is crucial for the ongoing success of any endeavor.

Would to God that we would learn this . . . today! Our national leaders [in some countries] want to stay in office until they drop dead, and when they drop dead nobody has been prepared to take over from them. It is the same in the church—perhaps our church leaders have copied this pattern from our national leaders. . . . The church today needs leaders who are able to disciple younger leaders and prepare them, not just as leaders of tomorrow, but as God's servants to serve today (*Wanted: Servant Leaders* by Gottfried Osei-Mensah).

Study Questions

1. Who does the most damage: the leader who stays too long or the one who does not stay long enough?

2. List some reasons leaders are afraid to let go of positions.

3. According to Eastwood Anaba, why have some spiritual giants been doing the same things for years?

4. Why does Anaba feel the church is in a miserable position?

5. In the close of this lesson, what problem did Gottfried Osei-Mensah bring attention to?

6. According to him, what type of leader is needed in the church today?

7. According to this lesson, what are two mistakes that leaders often make?
A.

B.

Missionary Spotlight

Donald H. and Abigail O'Keefe

By Donald H. O'Keefe

When I was sixteen years old, I had an unforgettable experience with God. I was walking through Nichol Park in Richmond, California, with a friend when suddenly I had a vision. In the vision, I saw a multitude of black people with tears running down their faces. They had lifted their hands toward God in worship, and their faces expressed gratitude and indescribable joy. Then the God spoke to me and said, "I will bring the beauty of this vision to pass in your life if you will serve me." This experience left me stunned and shaken, and I told nobody about it.



Donald and Abigail O'Keefe
1996

Then in 1958 I received the Holy Ghost and was baptized in the name of Jesus. That night that I received the Holy Ghost, God reminded me of the vision He had shown me as a sixteen-year-old boy. When I received the Holy Ghost, I also accepted His call to serve Him wherever it would take me.

My wife and I received our appointment to go to Africa as missionaries in 1974. We ended up going to a little country called Sierra Leone. I had never heard of it. Most people that I met had never heard of it. My wonderful wife willingly followed me through the hardships and sacrifices that my calling would require. And our three sons, Mark, Tom, and Don, were taken away from the American Pentecostal fellowship, language, and culture to be submerged in a strange new world.

Sierra Leon was listed by the United Nations as the least developed country in the world. The annual per capita income was less than two hundred dollars. Ninety percent of the people could not read or write. One-half of all babies born in the country would die by their second birthday. Most of the people had no shoes. They had no electricity or plumbing. Their homes had a dirt floor. Their food was cooked on an open fire outside of the shelter they called a home.

The country had twenty different languages, most of which had never been committed to a written form. So no books taught these languages. In fact, no bookstores for any language were in the country.

Because their languages had not been committed to a written form, no Bibles were in these languages, and if there had been, the people, being illiterate, could not have read them.

Our first service in the country was in a rat-infested shack that had an outhouse to one side of it. On the other side was a sewer filled with rotting vegetation. Candles supplied the only light. The seating consisted of rough, backless benches. About twenty people showed up, but, amazingly five people received the Holy Ghost.



The Donald H. O'Keefe Family
c. 1975

In later services, we often preached from the church into the street where hundreds would gather. Many would pray right there in the street.

Not long afterward, we went to a settlement in a canyon. A large Methodist church was there. The

pastor of that church allowed us to use their building to conduct our services. It wasn't long before the attendance at our services was greater than theirs. We were soon running four hundred.

Passing out tracts in Sierra Leone was exciting and could be a little frightening because people would crowd around you. They wanted the tracts. Traffic jams would take place. Drivers would stop and ask for your tracts. You could distribute tracts as fast as you could hand them out. You could pass out a thousand tracts in a matter of minutes. People who could not read would take a tract and then find someone to read it to them. The people were not only hungry for food, they were also hungry for the Word of God.

Revival became a constant there. People received the Holy Ghost in every evangelistic service. We seldom baptized just one or two people. Ten, twenty, thirty or more might be baptized. Sometimes people on the shore would ask to join

those being baptized. Sometimes the number being baptized was large enough to justify having several ministers baptizing simultaneously.

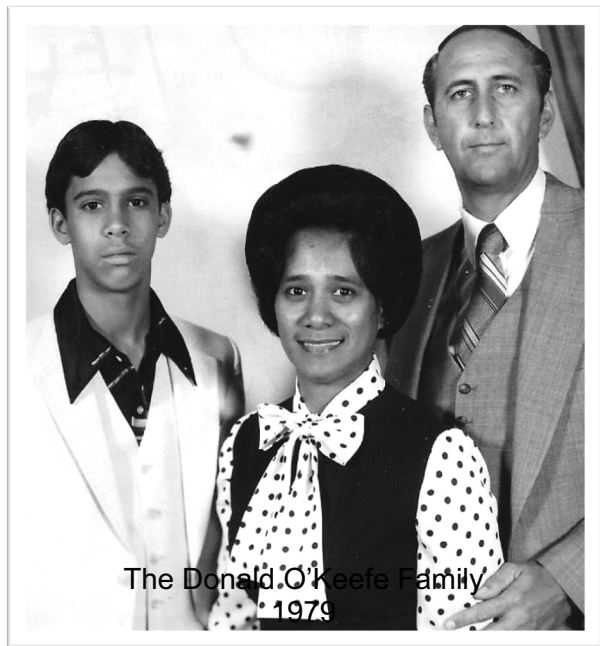
Revival spread until we had twenty churches in the capital city and thirty-four churches in the interior of the country. The church was growing so rapidly that our limiting factor became how fast we could train pastors to take care of the new assemblies. Our first Bible college was in our garage. Later we rented the upper floor of a two-level home. Yet, later we had to rent a large home to accommodate all of the ministerial students that were being trained.

The openness of the people of Sierra Leone to the gospel was amazing. Many of our people attended prayer meeting at 5:00 AM every day of the year. Sometimes every person in a village attended our services. Some had to sit on the floor. When we had no roof or any benches, they stood throughout the service. If it rained, they stood in the rain.

We did not need to have altar calls. When the preaching was over, people would flock unbidden to the altars to pray. When they reached the altars, they prayed with such passion and desire and faith that they were soon speaking in tongues as God filled them with His Spirit. They knelt in the dirt, and if it rained, they would kneel in the mud. They lifted their hands in worship and surrender and would soon be speaking in tongues as they received the promise of God.

The people of Sierra Leone were desperately poor, but they would sacrifice for the work of God. They would give until they had given away their food money, the money for clothes or for transportation needs. They gave with joy and exuberance, literally dancing as they gave their offerings to the Lord.

We erected rough church buildings wherever we had a congregation. They made mud bricks and cut their own boards. The mission would help them put the roof on it when they got the walls up. It was all hard work under an equatorial sun.

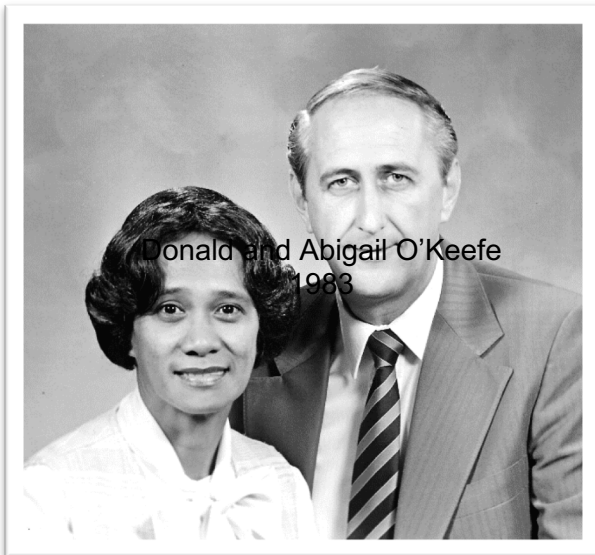


The Donald O'Keefe Family
1979

After the work had developed sufficiently, we began to construct on what we called our Headquarters Church. It would seat one thousand. It would have electricity and plumbing. It would have PA system. It took about two years to finish construction. When the work was complete, it was truly a beautiful building.

When we finished construction, it was time to have a dedication service. When the day came, the people packed the building. It was standing room only. From the opening prayer to the final dismissal, the worship was awesome and beautiful. The people danced before the Lord for hours. Victory marches were taking place almost continuously. As I looked over the multitude of worshiper with tear-stained faces and uplifted hands, God reminded of the promise He gave

me when I was sixteen years old. The realization came over me that God was fulfilling the vision at that moment.



We spent twenty years in Sierra Leone. During that time, eighteen thousand people received the Holy Ghost and eighteen thousand were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. That meant we had an average of two and a half people getting the new birth experience every day for twenty years.

Sierra Leone has gained notoriety in more recent years because of the e-bola epidemic, and before that because of the blood diamond wars and atrocities. The country has suffered intense poverty, unstable and corrupt governments, guerrilla warfare, starvation, military coups, extremely poor infrastructure, and despicable health care facilities.

Because of war and disease, many children were orphaned. Consequently, we operated an orphanage that cared for six hundred children.

Yet, out of the suffering and deprivation, there is a company of saints that love and serve Jesus Christ, a company that will arise to meet Jesus at His coming.

In 1994, the church in Sierra Leone became nationalized. My wife and I then went to Malawi where we lived at the Bible college and served as its director and

one of the instructors. Malawi is a beautiful country with beautiful people. The work of God has prospered there and we felt honored to have had the opportunity to be a part of it.

In 1997 we transferred to the country of Zimbabwe where we served until we ended our service as foreign missionaries in 1999.

We consider the privilege of serving as foreign missionaries the highest honor of our life. To serve God in any capacity is an honor, but we felt exceedingly blessed to be used of the Lord to spread the Apostolic gospel in places where it was not known before.

Recommended Reading: Donald Hugh O'Keefe, *Mounain of the Lion*, Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1996.