

Acts of
Leadership
BOOK TWO

James G. Poitras

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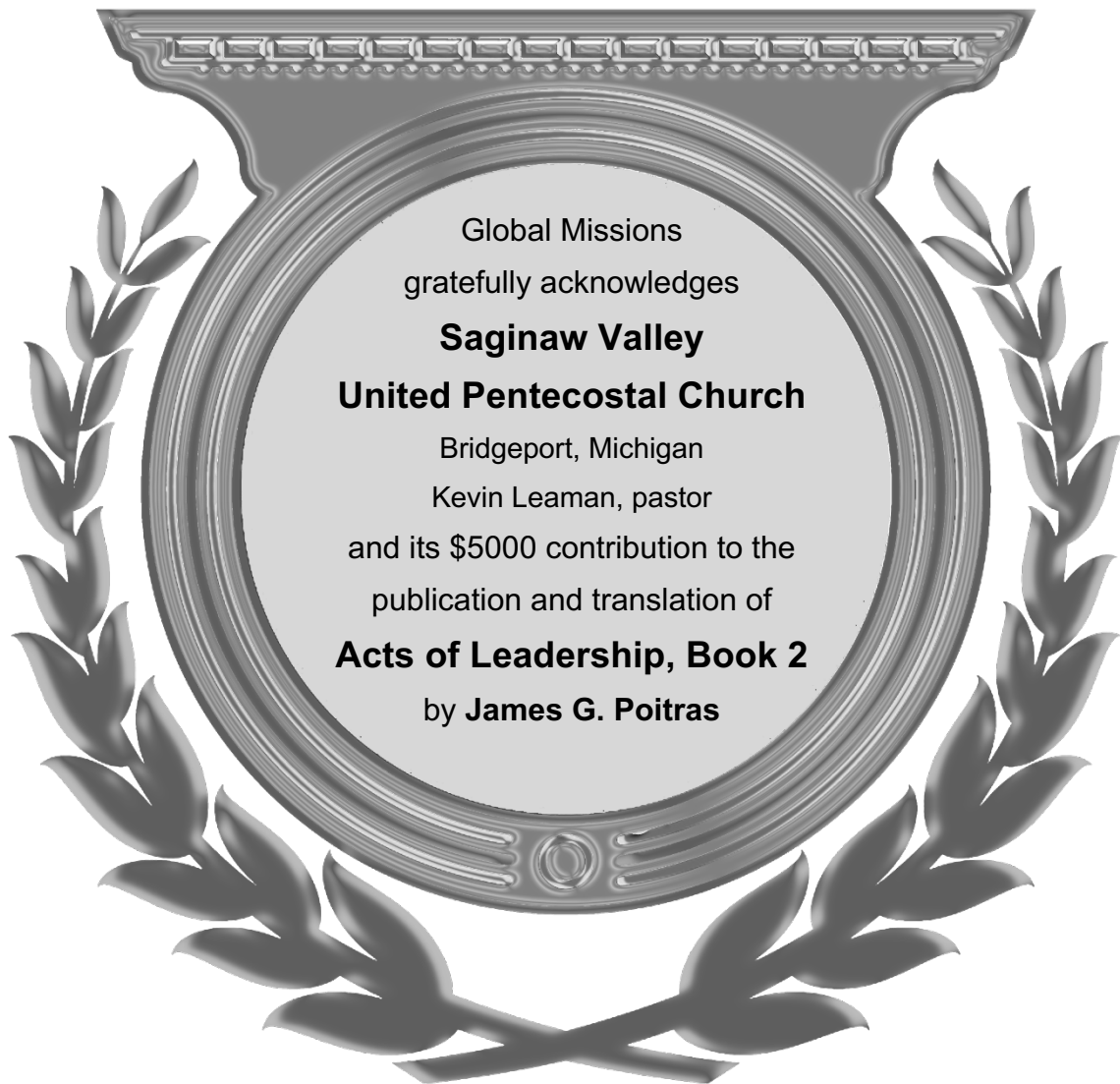
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Acts of Leadership, Book 2

by **James G. Poitras**

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LESSON 1

Biblical Successes in Training Successors

Key Verse

“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek . . . Him would Paul have to go forth with him” (Acts 16:1-3).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Understand the imperative of developing new leaders
- Realize the need to hold positions lightly
- Recognize the danger of training only one person to take their place
- Look to Elijah, John the Baptist, Jesus, and Paul for examples of transitioning well
- Heed John Maxwell’s advice for success

Introduction

Successful men in the Bible trained successors to carry on after them. Moses trained Joshua as a successor. Whom did Joshua train? (He did not train anyone and all of Israel suffered.) Elijah trained Elisha. Jesus trained the twelve apostles

over a period of three years. The apostle Paul trained Timothy. None of these men were threatened by the potential of their successors.

The leaders we develop must produce another generation of leaders. Otherwise, the leadership building process stops. We who are involved in Christian leadership have a responsibility to plan for the future of the church. We should do our best to train successors to take over when we move on.

Jesus is a great example. He knew His purpose when He came to earth. He came to seek and to save the lost and to build His church. To ensure success, Jesus spent time training His successors. He left twelve qualified successors to carry on the vital tasks He had started. Jesus knew that His work would not fail. Why? He had trained the next generation of leaders. From the beginning, Jesus told these leaders that He would not always be with them.

He trained the most successful leadership team of all times. As a result, once their Leader departed, they continued to experience revival and growth as they followed His example by effectively training future leaders themselves. Their success after Jesus departed proves that leadership can be passed on by investing in a plan for succession. Good stewardship includes preparing for the time when a leader will no longer lead.

The challenge of today's worldwide church is to develop leaders who are capable, anointed, and hungry for the revival and church growth that God has promised in the end time. Leaders need to ensure that they have trained a successor.

John Maxwell says, "A leader who produces other leaders multiplies his influence." He claims, "True success comes only when every generation continues to develop the next generation" (*Developing the Leaders Around You*).

A word of caution, when training the next generation of leaders, do not "put all of your eggs in one basket." This means you should not just train one person to take your place (often called the Timothy Principle). You should train several leaders and place them in key leadership roles (known as the Key Man Strategy). If you train only one person to take your place, what would happen if for some reason he or she is not able to replace you?

One secret to successful leadership is to hold positions lightly. The harder we hang on to a position, the more difficult it becomes to release it at the appropriate time.

As leaders, we should acknowledge that the Lord has allowed us to fill a leadership role. He does not give us a responsibility in the kingdom to exalt and/or lift us up. God expects us to humbly serve His people. He also expects us to relinquish our responsibility to another in His timing. “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psalm 75:6-7).

John the Baptist enjoyed a fantastic response to his leadership and ministry. However, when Jesus came on the scene, John said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

Elijah is a good example of a leader that transitioned well. He trained Elisha, reproduced himself in him, and left him his mantle of leadership. God added a double portion of his anointing. (See II Kings 2:8-15.)

The apostle Paul spent a considerable amount of time training the leadership in Ephesus. When he felt it was the Lord’s will to leave, his followers objected. “When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; but bade them farewell . . . but I will return to you, if God will” (Acts 18:20-21). What can we learn from this?

- A leader knows when to move on.
- A leader knows when to say no.
- A leader must follow God’s direction, even when the people want him to stay.
- A leader must surrender to the will of God on a daily basis.

Study Questions

1. Why should leaders be trained for the next generation?

2. Who built the most successful leadership team of all time?

3. How was building this leadership team accomplished?

4. What challenge is facing the worldwide church?

5. According to John Maxwell, when does true success come?

6. Why would it be wise to train more than one leader to assume your role?

7. What does Jesus expect from our leadership?

8. Provide a biblical example of someone who trained a successor. Explain.

9. What did the apostle Paul teach us about leadership in Acts 18:20-21?

LESSON 2

Change Agents in the Church Today

Key Verse

“For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us” (Acts 6:14).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Recognize that growth demands change
- See the Book of Acts as a book of changes
- Appreciate innovative ideas introduced by change agents
- Realize the need to uphold biblical doctrine, which does not change
- Implement steps to become a change agent in well-established organizations

Introduction

It All Began with a Change

The process of salvation is a process of change. God expects a change in our actions and attitude (called repentance). Paul stated, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

When we obey the plan of salvation, God changes us by forgiving us, washing away our sins, and filling us with the Holy Spirit. “Therefore if any man

be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Our Christian experience begins with change. It will also end with change. Don't you think some changes should be along the way, too? "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:21).

Wanted: Change Agents

One of the church's most critical needs is for a new breed of leaders. For the church to advance, we, as leaders, must first advance. Before we can expect others to grow, we must first grow. Howard Hendricks said, "If you want to continue leading, you must continue changing."

It has been said that during times of "no change," mere management, maintenance, and tradition keep organizational wheels winding. In times of "change" strong, creative (new ideas) and innovative (putting new ideas to use) leadership is required. As we progress we need to be careful. Yesterday's advances have a way of becoming tomorrow's traditions. The creative ideas someone had five or ten years ago can easily become church traditions. People tend to hold on to the comfortable past. Effective leaders need to be open to new ideas.

Change agents produce innovative ideas that will encourage change, and they do their best to motivate others to accept these changes. This requires a loving, patient attitude and open communication.

Change in the Book of Acts

The Book of Acts is a book of change.

- Pentecost brought changes so drastic that people asked, "What meaneth this?" (Acts 2:12).
- Lives were changed through water baptism in Jesus' name and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- Worship places changed as believers began meeting from house to house.
- New methods of giving were established as members sold all of their possessions and brought the money to the church.

- Persecution brought change as believers scattered everywhere.
- A new mindset was needed to accommodate the Gentile believers (considered untouchables to the Jews).
- The Jerusalem Council brought about changes in the expectations placed on believers.
- Great men, like Saul of Tarsus, were drastically changed. Saul (Paul) ultimately was used as a change agent to begin the missionary movement.

In Acts 6 the leaders could not continue the apostolic ministry, because they were busy waiting on tables. They had to adjust their priorities. Even today preachers are performing many functions that could be easily handled by the membership and local leaders.

Peter admonished the crowd assembled on the Day of Pentecost to “save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40). He referred to a generation that was spinning round and round on the wheel of traditions.

The early apostles often challenged the status quo (the normal way people did things). They turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). They introduced a new way, “saying that there is another king, one Jesus” (Acts 17:7). They were accused of preaching Jesus, one who would change their customs. “For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us” (Acts 6:14).

Jesus, the God that Changes yet Never Changes

We need to be agents of change. We preach a gospel that is a life-changing message. Jesus taught His disciples to be agents of change (Matthew 23:1–36, 5:21–44).

In Matthew 5, Jesus was on a mountain giving the “be-attitudes” to His people. He mentioned several times, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time” (Matthew 5:21). He followed this each time with, “But I say unto you” (Matthew 5:22). He was trying to change traditional thought. However, many opted to hold onto tradition.

“And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye” (Mark 7:9, 13).

Some Things Never Change

It is imperative we hold to the old paths when it comes to doctrine.

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein” (Jeremiah 6:16).

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1).

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: 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 6:6, 8-9).

We must continue to preach the “same” gospel and uphold biblical teachings and principles. However, methods should change to match changing times. The world around us is constantly changing. We serve an unchanging God in an ever-changing world.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). (He never changes; we do!)

“For I am the LORD, I change not” (Malachi 3:6).

Jesus challenged the Pharisees, the traditionalists of His day. They held to the old ways and refused to tolerate the changes Jesus advocated. The Jewish religious leaders constantly opposed Jesus because He advocated change. He wanted a change of thinking, a change of heart, and a change of lifestyle. One of the greatest enemies to the church today may not come from outside. It may be “traditionalism,” insistence on doing things the same way that they were done years ago. This brings a sense of security, often called a “comfort zone.” If the way things are done works, keep it. If it does not work best, let us be bold enough to change.

“If you always do what you have always done,
you will always get what you have always gotten.”

It is easy to recognize traditionalism in others, but seeing it in ourselves is more difficult.

We need to continue to walk in the old paths of doctrine and godly living. In other areas we need to dig out new paths of creative change. The old ways often do not fit the new circumstances. It has been said, “No condition is permanent.” Conditions change. New options must be examined and risk taken. Even in the physical body, all that grows—changes. (The body moves through the process of aging.)

As leaders, we need to establish a sense of urgency for change. We must motivate others to see the need. Focusing on the potential gain from change does this. We must be able to answer, “Why is this better?”

Recruiting More Change Agents

Changing times need a renewed emphasis on the ministry of the body. Members should be taking their places of responsibility within the body.

If the tradition of a particular society is such that there is no room for people to exercise their gifts, then let our traditions be shattered to pieces! Let us look at other structures that will make it possible for God’s people to use their gifts. If our traditions mean that one person is needed to drive the bus, and everyone else is a passenger behind, let us remember that the church is compared to a body, not a bus.

There is not just one driver with all the others sitting comfortably behind occasionally patting the driver on the back to assure him he is doing a good job and that he should carry on. What are we doing to make sure that members—ordinary members—have discovered their gifts and that a way has been made for them to exercise those gifts for the profit of all?” (Gottfried Osei-Mensah in *Wanted: Servant Leaders*).

This quote refers to membership becoming involved in the “body ministry.”

Change Agents in Older Organizations

Being a change agent in a well-established ministry or organization is not easy. Editor Randall Roberts, in the book *From Lessons in Leadership: Fitly Respected*, mentions several points in how to be a change agent in a well-established ministry.

- **Always preserve the reputation of the past.** Frequently praise and never criticize past leaders. The foundation that they have laid is the heritage that the present leader enjoys. If former leaders are still living, keep them informed of progress. Give them special attention.
- **Move slowly.** It takes ten years to make major changes in older organizations. Don't make major changes the first year. Get to know the people and the history of the organization.
- **Seek wide support for change.** Try to get everyone's support for change. Get everyone moving in the same direction.
- **Change is painful.** Be ready for the pain. It is not easy to bring about change.
- **Give away your best ideas.** Allow other people to claim your ideas as their own. Plant seeds in every meeting.
- **Challenge, encourage, and empower everyone that you work with.** Never be satisfied with low quality, but seek for excellence.
- **Prepare some change agents to come after you.** Mentor those that will be the next generation of change agents.
- **Look back.** You need to know how far you have come so that you will understand how far you have to go. (These points are adapted from the e-mail newsletter "Ministry Tips – Reinvigorate Your Ministry.")

Study Questions

1. Explain how the Christian experience begins and ends with change.

2. What is one of the most critically needed resources in the church today?

3. What type of ideas is needed during a time of organizational change?

4. Briefly explain the kind of changes that Pentecost brought.

5. What is meant by the phrase “status quo”?

6. According to Acts 6:14, what did Jesus want to change?

7. What should never change (as related to the Word of God)?

8. What is one of the greatest enemies of the church today?

9. What does *traditionalism* mean?

10. How can leaders motivate others to see the need for change?

LESSON 3

Change: Let It Begin with Me

Key Verse

“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Embrace the need for change
- Understand the changes necessary to transform Saul of Tarsus into the apostle Paul
- Create an environment of quality
- Realize that stagnation, the opposite of growth, is sure death
- Appreciate Stephen Covey’s advice about what to focus on.

Introduction

What would you like to accomplish in your lifetime? What are you doing today to make it happen?

David McNally suggests you ask yourself two simple questions every night before you go to sleep.

1. Did I today, in some way, grow as a person?

2. Did I today, in some way, make the world a better place in which to live?

It could be added:

3. Did I today, in some way, make progress toward what I want to achieve in my lifetime?
4. Did I help make the church a better place for souls and for the future generations?

You may have heard the song that says, "Lord, send a revival, and let it start in me." When it comes to change, it needs to start in me (and you). People say, "Prayer changes things," but most of the time they should be admitting, "Prayer changes me!"

In an effective organization, the first to be changed should be the leader. Once leaders realize how difficult it is to make changes in their lives, they will know how hard it is for others. It has commonly been said, "A leader that leads, precedes." They set the example and implement the changes in their lives first. John Maxwell claims, "Change the leader; change the organization."

Howard Hendricks states in *Teaching to Change Lives*, "The more you change, the more you become an instrument of change in the lives of others."

Moving to the Next Level

To move to the next level of church growth and evangelism, we must be willing to accept change. Change is required for success. Consider a story John Maxwell quotes from Paul Wharton's book *Stories and Parables for Preachers and Teachers*.

I was a revolutionary when I was young and all my prayer to God was: "Lord, give me the energy to change the world." As I approached middle age and realized that my life was half gone without my changing a single soul, I changed my prayer to: "Lord, give me the grace to change all those who come into contact with me, just my family and friends, and I shall be satisfied." Now that I am an old man and my days are numbered, I have begun to see how foolish I have been. My one prayer now is: "Lord, give me the grace

to change myself." If I had prayed for this right from the start, I would not have wasted my life.

Think about it. How much time do you spend thinking or talking about how others could improve and/or change? A much better investment of time and energy could be directed at changing yourself.

From Saul to Paul

In referring to his life as Saul, the apostle stated, "Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Galatians 1:14). Saul was a prime candidate for potential change. Not only was he zealous for tradition, he was bound by it.

Saul's story begins with "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9:1) and "persecuting . . . unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4). Through his actions, he hoped to turn the Christians back toward Jewish tradition. Little did he know that he was in for a change—a big change.

From there, his story dramatically changed to being knocked down, trembling, astonished, blinded, and helplessly waiting on Straight Street. (It is unfortunate that some people need to be knocked down before their eyes are opened.)

When Saul encountered the Lord, he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). It could be said that he asked, "Lord, how do you want me to change?"

Conversion on the road to Damascus brought Saul to a street called "Straight" and into a journey called "Change." Once Saul was changed, he was better equipped to assist others in the change process.

On the Day of Pentecost those assembled inquired, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). These people recognized that they needed a change. They were pricked in their heart. They basically asked, "How can we be changed?"

We All Need to Change

None of us are perfect. We all need to change. Areas of our lives constantly need to be changed as we strive for perfection. Paul stated:

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 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 3:12-15).

Moving Forward

H. S. Vigevano claims, “Dr. Elton Trueblood says that the church must either advance or decay. Any group that ceases to grow and spread is already dying. Standing still is stagnation and sure death.”

You need to ask yourself two questions. That’s right; don’t ask others, but ask yourself.

1. What could be done to move the church forward?
2. What am I personally going to do to help achieve this?

“To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.”—Winston Churchill

To be effective in a changing world, we have to keep learning. We need to keep advancing.

One of the best ways to motivate change is to create an environment of quality. “To begin the process of quality improvement, do what you can to improve what you can, where you can, when you can” (Stan Toler and Alan Nelson in *The Five Star Church*).

Stephen Covey offers sound advice when he tells us we have two options. We can focus on things that are within our scope of control or focus on things outside of our scope of control. When we focus on things within our control, we tend to make progress and accomplish our goals. However, when we focus on

those things beyond our control, we usually cannot do anything about it and end up complaining and blaming others.

When you look at the church, you can see a lot of things that need to be changed. It does not take a special gift to find these areas. It does take a special discernment to know what to do to solve these problems. One man said, “Don’t come to me telling me of the problem if you can’t at the same time tell me the solution.”

One Bite at a Time

Change in the church must start with you and me. The next step in bringing about change is to find an area of the church requiring change that we are able to tackle and work on. You cannot bring about change in the entire church at one time, but you can work on an area until it is changed. This will improve you, life in the church, and inspire others to be involved in change.

“Devoting a little of yourself to everything means committing a great deal of yourself to nothing.” – Michael LeBoef

How do you eat an elephant? You do it one bite at a time. The longest journey starts with a single step. The first step is to begin. It is not possible to implement all necessary changes at once.

Quotes on Change

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” (Elmer Towns)

In an earlier lesson it was mentioned, “Right things done repeatedly over time compound success.” In order for us to be our best and reach our highest potential, we must be intentional and perpetual. We cannot give up! We must work at change every day – consistently.

Someone aptly said, “Today’s preparations determine tomorrow’s achievements.”

“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.”—Ralph Waldo Emerson

To form new habits (changes), Donna Fisher suggests in *People Power*:

- Be aware of the need to change and desire to change.
- Choose new actions, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Focus on and implement the new habits.

Study Questions

1. What two questions does David McNally suggest we ask nightly?
A. _____
B. _____
2. Which person in the organization should be changed first?

3. Relate the story of the revolutionary who wanted to change the world.

4. What was Saul's second question on the Damascus Road?

5. In Acts 2:37 why did the people ask, "What shall we do"?

6. To move the church forward, what two questions should be asked?

- A. _____
- B. _____

7. Since it is impossible to bring about all change needed at one time, what should be done?

8. What is one of the best ways to motivate change?

9. What happens when people devote a little of themselves to everything?

10. Stephen Covey suggests that we have two options. What are they? Which one is best?

Personal Study Notes

LESSON 4

Tips for Growing Successors

Key Verse

“And, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus . . . believed . . . Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him . . . And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:1-5).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Recognize talents of potential successors
- See the necessity to pray for successors
- Delegate responsibilities
- Monitor progress of potential successor
- Allow questions from potential successors

Introduction

The apostle Paul spent time training young men to carry out God’s work in the future. Two of these young men were Timothy and Titus. Paul wrote three epistles in the New Testament to them.

Below are thirty-one tips specifically designed for training the next generation of leaders. However, a father can use many of these in training his son(s) and/or daughter(s) for the future. Our children will carry on what we have begun.

- Allow them into your life by building a relationship.
- Pray with your potential successor(s) regularly.
- If appropriate, take them on trips with you, or include them in meetings so that they can see how you operate firsthand.
- Never be intimidated or jealous. Their success will be to your credit.
- Think out loud. Express how you think through problems and make decisions.
- Treat potential successors as an intern. Go through the steps of effective teaching. (I do, you watch. I do, you help. You do, I help. You do, I watch.)
- Assign portions of your responsibility away (delegate) and check on progress. Provide productive feedback.
- Be a friend but lead with a gentle firmness.
- Provide training programs for your potential successor(s).
- Give them public credit for the work they do.
- Express appreciation and encouragement. Affirm.
- Evaluate progress regularly.
- Provide honest and open communication.
- Give the same type of respect that you would like to receive.
- Be willing to invest in their future (seminars, recordings, books, and workshops).
- Share your vision from God.
- Be there when needed.
- Do not criticize your potential successors to others.
- Remember that your potential successors are a product that you are helping to create.
- Pray and fast for your potential successors.
- Care about them and their family.
- Provide incentives for growth.
- If you read a book that is helpful, buy it for them or recommend it. (What blesses you, may bless them.)
- Allow them room to make mistakes and learn from them.
- Do not expect them to be a carbon copy (duplicate) of you.
- Recognize their talents, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. Strengthen the strengths first and then work on the weaknesses (if necessary.)

- Be careful how you correct. People are sensitive. You are building leaders, not pulling them down. Be gentle, but firm. Lift them up. Do not be degrading or speak down to them.
- Allow your potential successors to ask questions, lots of them. When questions are asked, do not respond in a way that would make them feel inferior or ignorant. Asking questions is a great way to learn. Howard Hendricks says, “You need to understand that the only foolish question . . . is the unasked question.”
- When assigning responsibility, do not constantly look over their shoulders to check on them. Set proper directives and clearly defined expectations for operation. Provide a clear understanding of what the responsibility entails.
- When giving your successors responsibility, let them do it. Do not pick it up and do it, causing unnecessary frustration.
- Remember you were learning to be a leader once. Treat them as you would have liked to be treated.

John Gardner alleged, “Nothing is more vital to the renewal of an organization than the arrangements by which able people are nurtured and moved into positions where they can make the greatest contributions.”

It is important how we grow successors. Our future depends on it.

Study Questions

1. What three epistles were written to Timothy and Titus?

2. What are the steps of effective teaching?

3. Why should we be careful about how we correct our potential successor?

4. According to Howard Hendricks, what is the only foolish question?

5. Provide ten tips for training successors or the next generation of leaders.

- A.

- B.

- C.

- D.

- E.

- F.

- G.

- H.

- I.

- J.

LESSON 5

Why People Resist Change

Key Verse

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Realize the need to change
- Understand the reluctance to change
- Know steps that lead to change
- Recognize the need of commitment for change
- Show how change will benefit the organization or individual

Introduction

Repeatedly in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, the Pharisees resisted change. They refused to leave their traditions. Actually, the Pharisees were not alone. People throughout time have resisted change. Why?

In their book *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church: And How to Fix It*, Thom and Joani Schultz suggest several reasons why people resist change. They include:

- They are content. They are happy where they are and have grown accustomed to it. They are satisfied.
- They lack understanding. They do not understand the problems or the solutions. They don't understand how the suggested changes will work.
- They are not willing to pay the price. They may understand the need for change but do not believe it is worthy of the investment of time or trouble.
- They are tradition-bound. Their theme song, "That is the way we have always done it!"
- The fear of loss. What will they lose if the new change is implemented?

John Maxwell, in his book *Developing the Leader Within You*, added the following to this list:

- The change is not self-started. People will reject the change because they do not have ownership of it. People normally will reject what they have not had a part in deciding (even if the change is a good one).
- Routine is interrupted. Change threatens habits that are formed.
- The change creates a fear of the unknown.
- The purpose of the change is unclear.
- Change creates a fear of failure. People think that they cannot do it or that it will fail.
- The rewards for change do not match the effort that change requires.
- Change will not happen when people engage in negative thinking.
- Change may be resisted because the followers do not have a trust and respect for the leader that is making the change.
- Change requires more commitment. People may not feel that they have the time it takes to implement the change.

Plan for Change Agents

Thom and Joani Schultz also suggested a plan for change agents. This plan includes:

- Explain the need. People are content with their old habits and ways. They will need to understand the problem.
- Focus on the gains that will be received with the necessary change. Most people think of what they have to lose by the new change. You must help them focus on what they have to gain instead.

- Understand that not everyone will be happy with the change. You cannot please everyone. All progress is made with—and in spite of—people opposing.
- Do not try to implement all changes at the same time. Guide your people through the change process one step at a time.
- It could also be added: Give the people ownership of the change. Show the people how the change will benefit them.

Change Is Necessary

The Reverend Jerry R. Richardson said, “If we, as a church, will rise to the next level, there must be a change. We must be willing to change.”

It has been said, “The road to the next level is always uphill.”

Change is not easy. Our attitude should reflect a willingness to change in order to achieve success in church growth and world evangelism.

Where do we begin change? The first step is simply — begin. Action is needed. Start today. Tomorrow is too late.

Study Questions

1. List ten reasons why people resist change.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____
- G. _____
- H. _____

- I.

- J.

2. What plan could change agents follow to bring about change?

3. Where (or how) do we begin change?

LESSON 6

You Cannot Handle It Alone!

Key Verse

“Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 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. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2-4).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- See need for delegating responsibilities
- Know how and what to delegate
- Recognize Jethro’s wisdom
- Understand the team building concept
- Employ willing workers for the task

Introduction: Widows Go Hungry

In Acts 6 we find the principle of delegation. (This is not the first time that delegation took place in Scripture.) A problem had surfaced. The widows were being neglected. The twelve apostles met and discussed the issue. The church was growing so rapidly that responsibility needed to be delegated. They decided to

choose seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. Once this was done, the apostles gave themselves to important tasks—prayer and the ministry of the Word. Effective delegation and rearranging priorities led to greater church growth.

The reasons deacons were appointed and the apostles refocused their attention on their priorities were:

1. To serve people *more* effectively.
2. To serve *more* people effectively.

Another word for *delegate* is “share.”

Warren Wiersbe said, “You can never achieve great leadership without effective delegation. By delegation, you will increase the job commitment of others by spreading your task effectively over a broader base.”

Good leaders delegate to achieve goals. Ed Roberts advised that:

- Delegation relieves you of the burdens that can be shouldered by others.
- Delegation increases the motivational level of people.
- Delegation helps you spend more time on important matters like planning the future.
- Delegation always results in an increase in the total amount of work being done.

Other reasons delegation is necessary are:

- A few people cannot do everything.
- The task is great.
- To share the burden.
- To increase commitment from others.
- To be better equipped to reach the world.
- To create order and organization.
- To network as a team to accomplish the vision.

Moses, You’ll Wear Yourself Out!

“Moses’ father-in-law replied, ‘What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out.’”

The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But elect capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.' Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said" (Exodus 18:17-24, NIV).

Moses was trying to do everything himself. Jethro knew that Moses would wear himself out. The needs were so many that one person could not do everything. Jethro told Moses to delegate—select capable trustworthy men and share the burden of the work with them.

Many times we are like Moses. We try to do everything on our own. We have the people but do not develop them to their fullest potential. The leader should try to help people reach their highest potential. This can be done by giving them a portion of the work to do.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

"Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them" (Exodus 18:21).

Jesus, the Team Builder

Jesus equipped leaders to continue the work that He began on earth. He knew what Moses did not know (until Jethro told him.) The burden of leadership is far too great for anyone to carry alone. Jesus established a team. They could share in the work of the ministry. Because of the way Jesus taught the apostles, they knew exactly what to do when they had a problem.

The Lord established the five-fold ministry in the church to prepare the team (the saints) for the work of the ministry. As Paul stated, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

As of July 2015, the world’s population was estimated to be greater than 7.2 billion (<https://www.reference.com/world-view/world-population-statistics-31feef629ef2d035?qo=cdpArticles> Accessed December 30, 2016). Every twelve years another billion is added. Every twenty-four hours 212,000 babies are born. How will these souls be reached? They will be reached through effective delegation of responsibility. It will require a team effort. The task of reaching the world with the gospel is too great for just a few to accomplish. Jesus said, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few” (Matthew 9:37).

Why Are You Doing Nothing?

In Matthew 20:1–16, a man hired laborers to work in his vineyard. At the eleventh hour, he found other men who were not doing anything. He asked them, “Why have you been standing here so long doing nothing.” The answer from these unemployed laborers was, “Because no one has hired us.” No one had delegated them a work to do.

W. E. McCumber said, “Sometimes people are doing nothing because no one has asked them to do something.”

When we delegate, we ask people to help us complete the task. Failure to delegate will hinder church growth. Paul was able to establish many churches because he appointed elders to take care of each church. He first got a group of people together. He then trained them in leadership. From this group, he chose capable men to lead. These men met the qualifications for leadership that Paul later outlined to Titus and Timothy. Paul came back later to encourage and strengthen the group.

“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. And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia” (Acts 14:23–24).

Study Questions

1. Warren Wiersbe claims that we cannot achieve effective leadership without what?

2. What is another word for *delegation*?

3. Ed Roberts suggests several reasons for delegation. What are three?

A.

B.

C.

4. What are some other reasons for delegation given in this lesson?

5. What type(s) of people did Jethro encourage Moses to find?

6. What type(s) of people were to be appointed as deacons in Acts 6?

7. What did Jesus know that Moses did not know (until Jethro told him)?

8. What is the duty of the five-fold ministry of the church?

9. Why were workers standing around at the eleventh hour doing nothing?

LESSON 7

The Encourager

Key Verse

“Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:36–37, NASB).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Write a biography of Barnabas
- Define *encourage*
- Identify John Mark
- Take steps to encourage someone
- Recognize danger of being position or power-minded.

Introduction

If you could be any character in Acts, who would it be? Would it be Peter, the Pentecost preacher? Would it be Dr. Luke, the prolific writer? What about Paul, the magnificent missionary? How about Apollos, the mighty man of Scriptures? Would you settle for Timothy, the learner?

I've dreamed of being like all of those. However, one champion stands out: Barnabas, the encourager. That was his nickname; one that has stuck throughout the ages. If fellow believers, coworkers, or family members were to give you a nickname, what would it be?

Barnabas is best remembered for only one thing: he put courage into the hearts of others. It was his constant attitude—a way of life. He is one of the most influential men in the New Testament. He didn't write any of the books of the New Testament (except possibly the Book of Hebrews). However, he was indirectly responsible for most of the New Testament. Without Barnabas, it is doubtful we would have Paul's letters, Luke's Gospel or Acts, or the Gospel of Mark.

How did Barnabas accomplish this? The answer is short but not always simple. He encouraged them. Through utilizing encouragement, he helped spread the gospel throughout the whole world. He assisted others in their personal, ministerial, and spiritual growth. He invested in the lives of others, to "edify" them or build them up, and expected little in return. The result of his efforts was always the same: the church was strengthened and the kingdom of God expanded.

J. Robert Ashcroft, a president of a theological college, once said, "Let your emphasis be on the creative and constructive above the critical and corrective." He counseled a developing former student, "There's nothing wrong with being critical and corrective, just don't put your emphasis there. Give yourself to being creative and constructive."

Fault-finding is not a spiritual gift. Locating problem areas in any relationship, team, family, ministry, and/or organization is not difficult. Solving these takes initiative, innovation, insight, intelligence, inspiration, inventiveness, imagination, and input. Being critical and corrective is the easy, low road. Being creative and constructive is the difficult, high road. The difference is night and day.

One of the challenges of getting older, or being part of any group for an extended period of time, is not becoming cynical or critical. We tend to carry many painful memories, moans, misfortunes, and mistakes of the past and allow them to color the future.

Someone has said, "The young want to change the world and the old want to change the young." It is fairly easy to look at the next generation in any movement and criticize, condemn, complain, and caution. It would be more

correct and constructive to confirm (affirm), encourage, charge, consecrate, and comprehend.

Encourage is a fifteenth century English word that means we can inspire with courage or confidence. It is an attempt to persuade, to spur on, to help. It is the effort to build confidence. We can do that.

Barnabas risked his life and reputation to encourage Saul and to bring him to the apostles at Jerusalem. “And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus . . . Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied” (Acts 9:26–31, NKJV).

Later, he again sought out Saul (Paul) and brought him to Antioch.

“And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:21–26, NKJV).

Barnabas encouraged Paul, who became one of the greatest missionaries of all times. He encouraged the church at Antioch; they were strengthened. Believers became known as Christians in Antioch. John Mark was rejected by Paul, but Barnabas didn't give up on him. John Mark went on to write the Gospel of Mark. Later, because of Barnabas's tender encouragement, Paul wrote, “Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (II Timothy 4:11).

Paul could only see the failures, shortcomings, and liability of John Mark. Barnabas saw beyond that to his fullest potential. He injected courage into him.

Otherwise, the young man would have returned from his missionary trip discouraged, disgraced, and dejected. He could have drifted away, fading in the pages of Acts and never be heard of again.

One would think with Paul being a recipient of encouragement, care, compassion, and consideration, he would have been reciprocal. It certainly didn't manifest itself in his dealings with John Mark. Eventually, Paul got it and matured to encourage others. His epistles to Timothy and Titus are letters of encouragement. All of Paul's writings contain such elements and were designed to strengthen the church. But, this is best seen in Paul's letters to Timothy, his adopted son in the ministry. He encouraged him to keep the faith (I Timothy 1:3), stir up the gift (II Timothy 1:6), and to pass on the truth to others (II Timothy 2:2). The apostle Paul could have understandably been critical and cynical as he sat in a cold, damp, dark prison cell, close to the end of his earthly life. Instead he was creative and constructive. Under the direction of the Spirit, he penned supportive words to Timothy and Titus. He made every effort to encourage tomorrow. He understood and integrated the example Barnabas had so aptly modeled with him.

Ever wonder why the early church did not select Barnabas to be one of the senior leaders? A valuable lesson can be learned: it is not necessary to be selected for an office in order to faithfully serve and/or impact the organization.

Barnabas clearly was not position minded or power hungry. Most people are prone to defend their territory or what they consider their acquired ministry or earned place in the kingdom of God. Not so with Barnabas. Amazingly, as Paul's popularity and ministry grew, the ministry and reference to Barnabas began to shift and fade. We see things starting out as Barnabas and Saul (Paul) (Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2, 7), shifting to Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:46; 13:50; 14:12; 15:2, 12, 22; 25; 35; 36); and finally Barnabas fades altogether and Paul takes center stage. The real test of leadership is how leaders respond once they are no longer in the spotlight. Many have turned into a chief disappointment.

According to Bob Sanders, "the acid test of an encourager is the ability to let someone else take the lead and get the credit. To recognize potential in a colleague and encourage him/her to move ahead without becoming jealous or resentful – that's Barnabas."

Barnabas knew how to call forth the best in others through encouragement. Rowland Croucher, in "Barnabas the Encourager: May His Tribe Increase," told how an elderly man sent him a note. It said, "If he earns your praise bestow it; If you like him, let him know; Let words of true encouragement be said. Do not wait

till life is over. And he's underneath the clover; for he cannot read his tombstone when he's dead" (www.jmm.org.au/articles/11528.htm, posted January 5, 2003 Accessed December 26, 2016).

One of the significant ways that Barnabas encouraged others was through his words. Rudyard Kipling said, "Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind."

Glenn Pease said, "Words are powerful tools of influence. All of us can speak words and so all of us have the power to encourage or discourage others."

Speak a Word

Wise Solomon spoke of words that are fitly spoken (Proverbs 25:11). Power is in words; the right words at the right time. "So encourage each other with these words" (I Thessalonians 4:18, NLT). "So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing" (I Thessalonians 5:11, NLT). "We sent Timothy to visit you. He is our brother and God's co-worker in proclaiming the Good News of Christ. We sent him to strengthen you, to encourage you in your faith, and to keep you from being shaken by the troubles you were going through. But you know that we are destined for such troubles" (I Thessalonians 3:2-3, NLT).

Share a Word

As I was working on this lesson, a dear friend called to share an encouraging Scripture. When was the last time you shared the Word with a friend? God's Word will lift a person's spirit and increase his faith (Romans 10:17). Isn't it great when you read in the Bible, "And the word of the Lord came . . . saying"? "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near" (Hebrews 10:25, NLT).

Write a Word

A young, struggling friend met an elderly lady. He wrote, "A woman told me she had something to show as she handed me a book, *God's Promises for Me*. She told me to read the first thing I came to. I opened the book to this, 'But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing' (James 1:4). She will never know how I felt at that very moment but this verse is so true in my life right now." Take time to send a note to someone to encourage them. It doesn't have to be long. "I have written and sent this short letter to you with the help of Silas, whom I commend to you as a faithful brother.

My purpose in writing is to encourage you and assure you that what you are experiencing is truly part of God's grace for you. Stand firm in this grace" (I Peter 5:12, NLT).

Pray a Word

Prayer unites your words with the forces of Heaven. Take every opportunity to pray for someone needing encouragement and do it while he is listening. "As soon as I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me strength" (Psalm 138:3, NLT).

Here is your assignment: Think of a time that someone spoke a word, wrote a word, shared a word, and prayed a word with you. How did it impact your life? Be willing to share one of these experiences with others.

Your next assignment: Speak a word. Write a word. Share a word. Pray a word. Do this for someone this week. Why not today? Be the encourager!

In closing, let us share a personal prayer:

"Lord give me a ministry –
Not of pulling down, but of building up –
Give me a ministry –
Not so much of confrontation, as of reconciliation.
Not so much of criticism as of intercession.
That life might be a prayer and benediction for those You love"
(Rowland Croucher)

Study Questions

1. Describe Barnabas's character.

2. Define *encourage*.

3. Why does the author say that without Barnabas we might not have over half of the New Testament?

4. What is one way that Barnabas encouraged others?

5. What does Bob Sanders describe as the “acid test of an encourager”?

Personal Study Notes

LESSON 8

Dreaming Dreams, Seeing Visions

Key Verse

“And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Define *vision*
- Understand perspective
- Explain the grasshopper mentality
- Improve relationship with God for a greater vision
- Clarify the meaning of “no open vision”

Introduction

Helen Keller was a woman who was both blind and deaf. She overcame these handicaps and raised money for the blind through the sale of her books and lectures. She was once asked, “What is worse than being blind?” She quickly responded, “Having sight but not being able to see.”

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter repeated the Old Testament prophecy concerning the visitation of God’s Spirit upon all flesh. He reiterated that young

men shall see visions, and old men shall dream dreams. The wise man in the Book of Proverbs 29:18 wrote, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Vision

George Barna, of the Barna Research Group, defines *vision* in his book *Power of Vision* as: "Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, one's self, and circumstances."

He also related that someone asked Duke Ellington, the late jazz musician and band leader, to provide a definition of rhythm. "If you got it," he replied, "you don't need any definition. And if you don't have it, there isn't a definition that will help."

Visions and dreams for ministry are like a picture of the way things can or should be in the future.

A village chief lay dying and wanted to choose a successor. He called his three sons and told them, "Sons, I am about to go to the place of the departed spirits and I must first choose one of you to be the next chief of this village. I want you to go to the yonder mountain, climb it, and bring me something from the mountain. Hurry because I will soon die. Life is quickly passing from me."

The three sons hurried off to the mountain and individually began to climb it. After a couple of days the first son came and stood before the aged chief. He said, "Father, I have climbed high on the mountain and I have brought you a tree limb." The chief asked him to go and wait for the return of the other two sons. Several days passed when the second son returned to the father. "Father, I have climbed high on the mountain and have gone above where the trees are. I have brought you a rock from the mountain," he stated, visibly tired from the journey.

It seemed like a long time and the third son had not returned. Finally, he came and appeared before his father. "Father," he began, "I have climbed high on the mountain. I have gone above where the trees are, and have climbed to the top. From the top of the mountain I could see far into the distance. I could see the river flowing, and smoke rising from distant huts. I saw the beauty of God's creation. However, my dying father, I have

nothing in my hand to bring you." The old chief whispered, "You, my third son will lead my people because even though you have nothing in your hand to bring me, you do have something in your heart."

What Do You See?

Jesus questioned His disciples one day, "Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?" (Mark 8:18). Immediately following His statement, Jesus came to Bethsaida and they brought a blind man to Him. Jesus led this man, by the hand, out of the town, spit on his eyes, put His hands on him, and asked him if he could now see. The blind man looked up and said, "I see men as trees, walking." Jesus wanted the man to have correct vision so He put His hands on his eyes once more and told him to look up again. This time "he was restored, and saw every man clearly" (Mark 8:23-25). It is interesting to note that He immediately asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" He was asking, "How do others see me?" then "What about you? How do you see me?"

Our prayer should become, "Lord, give me eyes to see what you see. Give me ears to hear what the Spirit would have me to hear."

What we see is a matter of perspective. In I Samuel 3:1 we are told the "Word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision." Everyone was doing what they felt was right in their own sight. Eli, the man of God had failed to pass on the faith to his sons. The Bible records a tragic statement concerning them, "They knew not the Lord" (I Samuel 2:12). Into the hands of this spiritually impotent leader was placed the young Samuel. Samuel did not yet know the Lord (3:7) and Eli was a man whose "eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see" (3:2). It took God calling Samuel three times before Eli realized it was a possibility God was revealing Himself to the boy. How tragic that Eli could not see.

In contrast, Moses was 120 years old when he went up into the mountain and God showed him the Promised Land. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deuteronomy 34:7). Perhaps the difference was revealed in Deuteronomy 34:10, "whom the Lord knew face to face." Moses had a relationship with God, knew God face to face, and could see what God saw.

In the Old Testament we recall the story of the twelve spies sent to view the Promised Land. What these twelve spies were able to see was a matter of

perspective (how they looked at it). They were told to look at the land (Numbers 13:18). They went and came back to Moses.

Perhaps Moses asked them upon their return, "Men, what did you see?" Ten of them said, "There we saw giants . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (13:33). However, two of them boldly stated, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (13:30). The other ten argued, "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we . . . It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature" (13:31-32).

The majority prevailed and wanted to stone the minority. The difference in the report of the two groups can be found in their perspective. The majority saw their abilities and the giants. The minority looked above the giants to see God was bigger. Ten said, "We cannot," and two said, "We can." It was the same with David and Goliath. The Israelites saw how small they were but David saw how big His God was. He proclaimed, "Is there not a cause?" (I Samuel 17:29).

Elijah reached the place where he cried out to God, "I am all alone." That was what he saw. However, God said, "I've still got seven thousand that have not bowed their knee to Baal" (I Kings 19:14, 18).

If we can focus on Jesus Christ and understand the attributes of God, we will believe God for great things and see things as He would have us to.

In II Kings 6:14-19, Elisha was in trouble for telling the king the secret battle plans of the king of Syria. He sent his men to capture Elisha.

Early in the morning Elisha's servant rose up and saw the city was compassed about with horses and chariots. Elisha comforted the servant by explaining those, "that be with us are more than they that be with them." Elisha knew the problem was with the way the servant saw things and prayed that the Lord would open his eyes. "And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." He then asked the Lord to smite the opponents with blindness. Zechariah was asked in Zechariah 4:2, "What seest thou?"

It is the will of God to open our eyes (Luke 4:18) and it is the devil's will to blind us (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (I Corinthians 2:9).

In his book *Wake Up Your Dreams*, Walt Kallestad wrote, “Dreams can help us see the invisible, believe the incredible, and achieve the impossible.” Jesus was a builder of dreams and visions. Walt Kallestad also expressed how Jesus allowed people to fulfill their dreams in his following statements:

- Blind people who dreamed to see saw.
- Deaf people who dreamed to hear heard.
- Crippled people who dreamed to walk walked.
- Hungry people who dreamed to eat ate.
- Lonely people who dreamed of friends found friends.
- Anxious people who dreamed of peace found peace.
- Addicted people who dreamed of transformation were transformed.

Study Questions

1. What was Helen Keller’s response to the question, “What is worse than being blind?”

2. What is *vision*?

3. Give two examples of Old Testament stories that illustrate what we see is a matter of perspective.

A. _____

B. _____

4. What is a Bible verse that talks about *vision*?

5. What can dreams help us see?

6. Give a scriptural reference that shows it is the will of the devil to keep us blinded.

7. What will happen when we focus our eyes on Jesus and His attributes.

LESSON 9

Vision: What Is in the Blank?

Key Verse

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

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Understand “the blank.”
- Know the steps to getting a vision
- Quote Jeremiah 29:11
- Believe God has a plan for your life
- Fill in the blank of your life

Introduction

Cultures around the world have many differences. Languages vary. Ways of life and manner of dress change. However, every living person shares three similar elements. Each one has a past, present, and Lord willing, a future.

- Past: Where have you been?
- Present: Where are you now?
- Future: Where are you going?

Charles Kettering said, “My interest is in the future because I am going to spend the rest of my life there.”

I found T. D. Jakes’ book *Maximizing the Moment* helpful and used it in the preparation of this lesson. He mentioned that John F. Kennedy was born in 1917. He made his mark in life as the thirty-fifth president of the United States of America. President Kennedy is well remembered for many things, one being this statement: “Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what can you do for your country.”

On November 22, 1963, an assassin killed Kennedy. His simple tombstone reads: 1917 – 1963.

A lesson can be learned from this. Each person has a date of entry (birth date) into this world and a date of departure from this world (death date). All that is between the two is the hyphen or blank.

Your Blank

What are you putting in the blank between the time of your entry into this world and your departure?

What we place in the blank determines the impact that we have between the two dates. David was hoping to make an impact in life when he penned these words: “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 71:18).

We were born for a reason. God has a plan, purpose, or vision for each one. In *People Power* Donna Fisher says, “The life we desire deep in our being is the one we’re created to have, consistent with the way God made us.” She quoted Basil Pennington who said, “It is your life’s work to learn to think and act in accord with who you are by creation.”

Saul

When Saul was knocked down on the road to Damascus, Jesus told him, “For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose” (Acts 26:16). Paul had an understanding of his purpose in life and ministry. Later, he concluded, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (II Timothy 4:7).

How did Paul get this vision? He asked. After asking, "Who art thou, Lord?" (Acts 9:5), he then asked, "What wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

The Lord gives us a vision and then helps us to reach a successful conclusion. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Discussion Points: (It Is Time to Think)

What is the name of an important historical personality in your country?

When was he or she born? _____

When did he or she die? _____

What are some things that this person accomplished in life? _____

What other verses of Scriptures can you find that talk about how brief life is?

In the what Scripture verses did you find, how is "life" described?

Psalm 90:10 mentions that "our years are threescore years and ten." With this figure in mind, approximately how many years are remaining in your lifetime? _____

"LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days,
what it is; that I may know how frail I am" (Psalm 39:4).

Study Questions

1. Quote the statement made by John F. Kennedy used in this lesson.

2. What three elements do we all have in common?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

3. What three questions about your "life" will assist you in understanding God's purpose and vision for you?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

4. On a tombstone we notice "1960-1999." What can we learn from this?

5. How was Paul (Saul) able to know the vision or purpose that the Lord had for his life?

LESSON 10

Where Are You Going?

Key Verses

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40).

“I have appeared unto thee for this purpose” (Acts 26:16).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Know their present location in life
- Have an end goal
- Understand the handicaps associated with being blind
- Explain “Failure to plan is planning to fail.”
- Look to Jeremiah as a leader who had direction

Introduction

You might remember Mr. Huxley from [a previous lesson](#). He was the man who had just finished a series of attacks against Christians. He was in a hurry to catch a train, and as he left the hotel, he assumed that the doorman had told the taxi driver his destination. Huxley jumped in the taxi and demanded, “Hurry, I’m almost late, drive fast!” As the taxi rushed through the streets of the city, Huxley finally realized that the driver was not going in the right direction. He shouted,

“Do you know where you are going?” Without looking back, the taxi driver responded, “No, but I *am* going very fast.”

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter admonished the people to save themselves from this untoward generation (Acts 2:40). It was a generation going somewhere. They did not know where, but they were going very fast. We can get caught in the same situation. It has been said, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will take you there.” It could also be added, “And you’ll never know when you get there.”

A small child was riding his bicycle round and round in circles. An older man asked, “Where are you going?” The boy responded, “Nowhere,” and continued to ride in circles. The man continued to ask, “Where are you going?” Each time the little boy responded, “Nowhere!” This is the sad predicament of many, going nowhere.

- Do you have any idea where you are going in life?
- Do you understand your purpose in the journey of life?

In order to understand where you are going, you must first look at where you have been (past) and where you are (present.) After Adam and Eve transgressed in the Garden of Eden, God asked, “Adam, where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9). The same question could be asked of you, “Where are you?”

- What is your ministry?
- What is your vision?
- What is the will of God for your life?

We are most effective when we are in the center of God’s will.

Imagine what it would be like to be blind. What are some of the different emotions that you would feel?

Now imagine what it would be like if you were blind, and another blind person was leading you down the street. What emotions would you feel? (Instructors should have the students try it, using blindfolds and see what happens.)

Would you like to get on a bus or in a taxi with a blind driver? What about if the driver was always becoming distracted and turning around to talk to others instead of focusing on the road ahead?

No one wants to follow a leader who is blind (without a vision)—not a spouse, not a family, not students in the classroom, not workers in the workplace, not saints in the church, not members of any organization—No one! Followers will always be afraid of the proverbial “falling in the ditch.”

“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:14).

Vision is a clear picture in our minds of what life will be like down the road. It gives us an understanding of where we are going. Vision sets direction and serves as our roadmap. Once we understand where we are going, we must know how to get there from where we are. We fix our eyes on our destination and start working on a *plan* to get there. Our destination needs to be kept clearly in sight.

Some spiritual people have a problem with planning. They think that “walking by faith,” means that you have no plan. It has been aptly said, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Planning and faith go hand in hand. Effective, biblical faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Faith involves having something that you hope for (a goal, plan, or vision). Look at the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11. Notice that many of them had a vision. God used men of vision to bring the church into existence (Acts 2).

Nehemiah was a visionary leader who prayed and planned. He did not ask God for a miracle—he asked for an opportunity. Lots of opportunities come our way. We need to take advantage of the ones that will enable us to fulfill the vision God has given us. Each opportunity and open door should be assessed by asking, “How will this help me fulfill my life’s calling and vision?”

Not all good ideas are God’s ideas, so we must be careful. Everything that moves us forward toward accomplishing our vision gets a green light. Everything else gets a caution light or even a red light. We need to continually align ourselves and focus on our vision for ministry. This way we will conform our lives to the roadmap and plan that God has prepared for us.

How Will We Get There?

Once we understand where we are going, it is only natural to ask, “How will we get there?” We must be careful here because we can “how” our vision to

death. In fact, others will try to “how” your vision to death by asking many questions. Where did the vision come from? If it is from God (and it should be), then “how” is God’s problem. What God has ordained, He will bring to pass.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11).

For each man of faith in the Bible, God provided not only the “what,” but also the “how.” Moses was asked to deliver God’s children from Egypt. He was told what to do and how to do it. Noah was told to build an ark. He was told what to do and how to do it. In the construction of both the Tabernacle and the Temple, men were told what to do and how to do it. The disciples were called to take the gospel to the whole world. They were told what to do and how to do it. (Ask the students to think of other Bible men of vision who were told what to do and how to accomplish it.)

As we look at the history of visionary leaders throughout the Word of God and throughout time, we conclude:

- “What” comes before “how.”
- You will often know “what” to do before you know “how” to do it.

It is important to wait on the Lord, in prayer, until you know the steps (the how’s) needed to accomplish the vision.

In Luke 1 an angel gave a virgin named Mary a vision for her life. What was it? She would bring forth the Messiah and call His name Jesus. Quite naturally, the first thing that came into Mary’s mind was, “How shall this be?” The angel gave her a brief explanation and wrapped it up with, “For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

Perhaps, in your mind you have already made a list of “why” the vision cannot be done through you. When you complete this list of vision killers, you need to give it a befitting burial.

(T. D. Jakes’ book, *Maximizing the Moment* was helpful and used in preparing this lesson.)

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

Study Questions

1. In Acts 2:40 what did Peter mean when he spoke of an “untoward generation”?

2. What should take place before you can determine where you are going?

3. What question did God ask Adam in Genesis 3:9?

4. What happens when one follows a blind leader (Matthew 15:14)?

5. What is *vision*?

6. Show how effective faith includes planning or having a vision.

7. Nehemiah did not ask God for a miracle, but for what?

8. As we look at the history of visionary leaders throughout the Word of God, what can we conclude?

9. What did the angel say to Mary in Luke 1:37?

LESSON 11

The Heavenly Vision

Key Verse

“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:19).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson the students should be able to

- Tell Paul’s testimony to someone
- Be familiar with biblical, visionary leaders
- Write personal heavenly vision
- Test the vision
- Know the predictors of future success

Introduction: God’s Vision for Paul

God’s vision for Paul was revealed to a disciple named Ananias in Acts 9:15, “for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles.”

In Acts 26:16-18, Paul explained to King Agrippa what Jesus had said to him on the road to Damascus. Read Acts 26:16-18.

When Paul was converted, he knew exactly what his purpose and vision in life was. God has a plan for each one of us. Paul knew what God wanted him to do, and he did it with excellence. Because of this he was able to reach the end of his ministry and say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7).

Receiving a Heavenly Vision

The apostle Paul received his heavenly vision by asking, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Throughout his lifetime (as we should also do), he continued to ask this same question.

The heavenly vision always comes from God. Can you state in one sentence what are God's purpose, plan, and vision for your life? In the small box given, write your God given vision for ministry. Keep this in mind, and remember it on a regular basis and explain it to others.

My heavenly vision is...

God spoke to Habakkuk and said, "Write the vision, and make it plain" (Habakkuk 2:2). Writing down the vision will help you remember what God originally said to you. Thank God for His direction and allow the vision to develop through prayer, fasting, and obedience. Most people go through life as a passenger in the vehicle called life. We need to get into the driver's seat with our map of God's vision and drive into the future. Remember, "If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there."

<p>"Some men see things as they are and ask, 'Why?' I dream of things that never were and ask, 'Why Not?'" —George Bernard Shaw</p>

The Heavenly Vision Will Be Tested

Whenever you receive a vision from God, people will try to persuade you that it is not from Him. Satan will also try to convince you that God has not spoken to you. Paul stated, "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, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Visionary Leaders

Joseph

Joseph was given a vision for his life through two dreams. These dreams revealed that he was going to be in a place of leadership over many people including his own family. His family members rejected this and his brothers became so jealous that they plotted to kill him, and eventually sold him into slavery. Through Joseph's experiences in the pit, in slavery, in prison, and in problems, we see that when God says Yes, no one can say No! We learn that although our vision may be tested, it will still be brought to pass.

Moses

Moses received a vision from God at the burning bush. However, getting Pharaoh to release the Israelites, and then taking the people of God through the wilderness was not an easy job. Pastoring this complaining, rebellious, stubborn group truly tested his vision. God promised that they would go into a land that flowed with milk and honey. This was His vision for His people. However, for them to possess the land they still had to fight the inhabitants. Did you ever think of "milk" and "honey"? They may have received the milk and honey but they still had to wrestle with the cows and the bees in order to get it.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah was a godly leader with a vision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He received this vision from God during a time of prayer and fasting. He was a man that was able to do the most possible dream because of his dependency on God. The Book of Nehemiah reveals an accomplished vision through prayer, fasting, sacrifice, hard work, and overcoming difficulties. Opposition reached such a level that those rebuilding the wall worked with one hand and held their weapons with the other hand. Every one of them had their

sword by their side. They refused to disobey the heavenly vision and the walls of Jerusalem stood as their testimony.

Paul

Look at what happened between Paul receiving the heavenly vision and his finishing his course explained in II Corinthians 11:23-28:

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

In spite of all this he was determined to obey the heavenly vision with singleness of purpose. He stated, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14).

Vision – Looking at the Future

Our vision for ministry is the best predictor of our future. Vision is looking at the future. It is always looking ahead instead of merely looking at our past. No matter what has happened in your past, your future is spotless. It is fresh from all sins, failures, and mistakes. Each day God gives us a new chalkboard with nothing written on it. It is totally clean. What are you going to do with the future that God is going to give to you? George Barna stated, "Vision is not dreaming the impossible dream, but dreaming the most possible dream." You are not asked to dream the impossible but dream the most possible thing you can do with your life and ministry. As we look at our God given vision we focus on God.

We expect Him to do great things through us and for us. Vision is an explanation of what God wants to accomplish through us.

“For I know the thoughts [plans] that I think [plan] toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jeremiah 29:11).

God wants us to reach our expected end. Like Paul we can say, “I have finished my course.”

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Why did Jesus appear to Saul?

2. What was Paul able to say when he reached the end?

3. What did God tell Habakkuk concerning vision?

4. What did George Bernard Shaw say about dreams?

5. Who will try to persuade you that your vision is not from God?

6. Give an example of a biblical leader who had his vision tested?

7. Where is vision always looking?

8. What is the best predictor (indicator) of our future?

9. What did George Barna say about *vision*?

10. What question did Paul's heavenly vision begin with?

LESSON 12

Side Effects of Biblical Vision and Purpose (Part II)

Key Verse

“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9:15-16).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- List dangerous side effect of ministry
- Describe Paul’s suffering
- Define *sacrifice*
- Give five areas of sacrificial service
- Defend the statement, “Ministry is not an easy road.”

Introduction

We all could excitedly go for several aspects of Saul’s Damascus Road encounter:

- Saw a brilliant light from Heaven.
- Heard an audible voice.
- Spoke directly to Jesus.
- Received revelation.
- Healed of blindness.

Jesus had a grand purpose for Saul's life. He was "chosen." He was God's "vessel" – an empty cup ready to accomplish the Master's purpose. God was going to show him "great things." Sounds like an ideal situation. But show him what? "I will show him how much he must suffer for me" (Acts 9:16, NLT). Now, wait a minute! Did you mention "suffering"? Surely, this is an isolated case, meant for Paul, and not for other ministers of the gospel (like me). Certainly, we can go for the vision, and bypass discomfort.

Have you ever taken a strong medication and experienced side effects? They are the undesired, unwanted, consequences of taking medication. Such side effects include (among others) a headache, rash, increased heart rate, blurred vision, dry mouth, sleepiness, weight loss, a drop in blood pressure, constipation, and diarrhea. Two people can take the same medicine and have different experiences. However, side effects are usually worth the risk, because health is restored. Having a biblical vision and purpose also has side effects too. Success costs! Not all ministers experience the same side effects but all testify, "Ministry is not an easy road."

Ministry side effects might include:

- Suffering
- Sacrifice
- Surrender
- Submission
- Stewardship
- Service
- Sensitivity
- Steadfastness

Suffering

At times, we suffer persecution because of our faith for righteousness' sake. Even fellow "Christians" may persecute us when we take a stand on a biblical issue.

Suffering or trouble can be for our benefit, because they strengthen us as Christians. "It takes a world with trouble in it to train men and women for their high calling as children of God. Faced with trouble, some people (like Joseph) grow wings; others buy crutches. Which kind are you?" (*Daily Walk Bible*).

Here's a promise in God's Word you may not normally pray for:

- “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Timothy 3:12).

All who live godly will suffer persecution.

- “For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. We are in this fight together. You have seen me suffer for him in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of this great struggle” (Philippians 1:29-30, NLT).

Check it out. All God’s prophets suffered for their faithfulness to Him. Stephen asked, “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?” (Acts 7:52).

God’s call, will, and vision may require suffering.

- “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (I Peter 4:19).
- “This suffering is all part of what God has called you to. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps” (I Peter 2:21-22, NLT).

You probably have heard enough about suffering, but let us add the following Scriptures:

- “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; also greet the church that is in their house” (Romans 16:3-5, NASB).
- “[But what of that?] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time (this present life) are not worth being compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us and in us and for us and conferred on us!” (Romans 8:18, AMP).
- “Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. And as Christ’s soldier, do not let yourself become tied up in the affairs of this life, for then you cannot satisfy the one who has enlisted you in his army” (II Timothy 2:3-4, NLT).

- “So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace” (II Timothy 1:8-9, NIV).
- “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:17-18).
- “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11).
- “And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:41-42).

We do not pray to suffer, nor do we rejoice for suffering, but we can rejoice in being able to suffer for His name’s sake.

- “Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me” (John 15:20-21).

Paul knew well suffering so he could realize his vision and purpose. Because of his willingness to suffer the gospel spread throughout the known world. Consider this short list of things he encountered:

“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 11:23-29, NLT).

With which, if any, of Paul's sufferings can you identify?

In a prosperity-pleading and success-conscious world, suffering for His name's sake is far from popular.

So, what should you do with this discussion about suffering? Warren and David Wiersbe advise the following in *Ten Power Principles for Christian Service*:

- Expect it (I Peter 4:12; John 15:18, 20).
- Accept it as God's gift (Philippians 1:29).
- Evaluate it and yield to God's purposes (Job 23:10).
- Learn to live a day at a time and give your cares to God (Psalm 69:19; I Peter 5:7).
- Trust God to turn suffering into eternal glory (II Corinthians 4:17).

Surrender

- "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

We choose to surrender what we perceive as our rights and place ourselves in the hands of a higher power. We give up, so God can take up, and use us for His glory. An old Nigerian chorus proclaims, "Jesus surrendered His life for me. What have I done for Him?"

At times, even though we may not express it verbally, we feel that we are "owed" something for ministering the gospel. The church owes us for our sacrifice. The people owe us for our work. We sometimes approach giving of our finances the same way. We give to get, instead of give to bless, or extend God's kingdom. This is faulty thinking. We own nothing. But, we surrender everything to

accomplish His vision. We must surrender ourselves to the vision that God has given us, to His will, and ways.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is not merely for divine favor, but to honor God. We owe everything to God, who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus' sacrifice accomplished His vision and purpose on the earth. He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10); to give abundant life (John 10:10); to destroy the works of Satan (I John 3:8); and to build His church (Matthew 16:18). Sacrifice pays off!

- "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17, RSV).
- "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).

Daily one must pull himself onto the altar of sacrifice.

- "[Come] and, like living stones, be yourselves built [into] a spiritual house, for a holy (dedicated, consecrated) priesthood, to offer up [those] spiritual sacrifices [that are] acceptable and pleasing to God through Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5, AMP).

Consider the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:20-37). Jim George (*God's Man of Influence*) suggests five areas of sacrificial service.

- Sacrifice of time (he stopped and helped the wounded man).
- Sacrifice of resources (he gave his bandage and dressing for the wounds.)
- Sacrifice of personal transportation (he carried the man to the inn).
- Sacrifice of life (he personally took care of the man).
- Sacrifice of money (he gave money and promised to pay for the wounded man's continued care).

He closes his study on sacrifice by saying, “The greater the level of your service to others, the greater the level of your influence on others.”

“Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing. If the minister’s life is without a measure of pain and sacrifice, his ministry will be without blessing.”—Warren and David Wiersbe

Study Questions

1. Comment on the following statement: “Ministry is not an easy road.”

2. List five side effects or results of ministry.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

3. According to the *Daily Walk Bible*, what are the two responses to troubles that people take?

A. _____

B. _____

4. What does I Peter 2:21–22 say about suffering?

5. What did Paul tell Timothy in II Timothy 2:3–4?

6. Why did the apostles rejoice in Acts 5:41-42?

7. List five types of suffering that Paul endured.

- A.

- B.

- C.

- D.

- E.

8. What response(s) should we give to the discussion of suffering?

9. What did Jim George say about the level of service to others?

10. How often should one pull himself or herself on to the altar of sacrifice?

11. List the five areas of sacrifice provided by the Good Samaritan.

- A.

- B.

- C.

- D.

- E.

12. Write out the closing quote used in this lesson.

Personal Study Notes

LESSON 13

Side Effects of Biblical Vision and Purpose (Part Two)

Key Verse

“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).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Defend the statement that “Submission and obedience are inseparable.”
- Define *submission*
- Understand how Jesus was the Servant-leader
- Know nine insights for establishing a servant ministry
- Live Christian stewardship

Introduction

This lesson is a continuation of lesson 12. We will continue discussing the side effects of ministry.

In order to achieve a biblical vision and purpose you must be willing to submit to God's will, in God's way, and to obey His instructions. Submission and obedience are inseparable.

Submission

Mark portrays Jesus as the "Selfless Servant" who was immediately submissive to the will of God. The word *immediately* is recorded at least seventeen times in the sixteen chapters of the Book of Mark.

Think of submission as bringing yourself under the protection of someone in authority. We must submit to our leaders if we expect our followers to submit to us.

At a wedding celebration in Cana, Mary told the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). We offer the same advice to you, preacher and student: Whatever, Jesus tells you to do, do it!

God's Word often refers to submission in connection with:

- God
- Leadership and authority
- Society
- Other believers

"They have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it" (I Corinthians 16:15-16, NIV).

At times, we need to submit to others and help them accomplish their vision. Many times this also helps us accomplish our vision.

Service

Jesus set the example for all of us and came in the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7). He testified, "I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:27, NIV). During the final night He had with His disciples, He picked up a towel and basin and washed their feet. Why? He explained, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:15).

Jesus is the real leader of the church and its ministries. We are His servants and please Him when we help others in reaching their potential. We are called to “prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Ephesians 4:12, NIV).

Jesus taught James and John, the Sons of Thunder, a vital lesson. They came to Him with a request, “We want you to do for us whatever we ask.” This statement demonstrates not only ignorance but a selfish attitude. Leadership is not about being served (receiving) but serving others (giving).

They went on to say, “Let one of us sit on your right and the other on your left in glory.” The world today would likely applaud James and John but Jesus corrected them. They mistakenly thought that the Lord’s kingdom was the same as all the others. Jesus explained His kingdom was not like those of this world that exercise authority over others, but that the greatest is the servant of all. (See Mark 10:35–37; 41–45).

We are servants to our:

- God
- Family
- People
- Vision

The apostle Paul referred to himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. Additionally, he wrote: “I became a servant of this gospel” (Ephesians 3:7, NIV). We have the privilege of proclaiming a life-transforming message.

“By God’s special favor and mighty power, I have been given the wonderful privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News. Just think! Though I did nothing to deserve it, and though I am the least deserving Christian there is, I was chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. I was chosen to explain to everyone this plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning” (Ephesians 3:6-9, NLT).

In *God’s Man of Influence*. Jim George offers nine insights on establishing a servant ministry. They include:

1. Serve for a higher purpose (I Thessalonians 2:1).

2. Serve in spite of your situation (I Thessalonians 2:2).
3. Serve with integrity (I Thessalonians 2:3).
4. Serve to please God (I Thessalonians 2:4).
5. Serve with pure motives (I Thessalonians 2: 5-6).
6. Serve with love (I Thessalonians 2:7-8).
7. Serve sacrificially (I Thessalonians 2:9).
8. Serve blamelessly (I Thessalonians 2:10).
9. Serve to nurture (I Thessalonians 2:11-12).

Understanding that we are servants is simple. To actually serve, that is a problem. It does not fit into the world's view of leadership nor does it please the desires of the flesh. We must constantly strive to be the servant that God wants us to be.

Stewardship

David J. Hesselgrove states in *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* that stewardship involves what a Christian possesses:

- His time
- His talents
- His treasures

Add to these:

- His tongue
- His testimony
- His temple

He notes seven basic principles, which he attributed to Ralph Martin, the author of *Worship in the Early Church*.

1. The basis of stewardship is God has given abundantly to His children.
2. The most important offering is committing one's life to God.
3. All Christian giving should be voluntary and cheerful.
4. Stewardship is offered in accordance to one's ability and the needs of others.
5. God is no man's debtor.
6. Churches and people should be open in providing accountability in the area of finances.

7. Concern for the welfare of others creates a bond of love between the giver and the recipient.

“It is more blessed to give than to receive” could be talking about more than giving of money (Acts 20:35). We also give our time and talents.

An African proverb states, “The hand that gives is always higher than the hand that receives.”

In an article “Removing the Curse of Poverty” (as quoted in *Wisconsin District News*), Anthony Tamel states, “When we talk about the prosperity doctrine, we can go to the extreme and believe that God wants you to have plenty for any purpose you desire. The truth of the matter is that God wants us to have things in abundance to be used for His glory.”

Tamel defines *poverty* as holding something in your hand for fear of letting it go. It is living in fear of not receiving. He says, “If you don’t open your hand then you can never receive. You see, it is when I open my hand to let go of what is in it, that it is open for God to put something back.”

God will not bless us financially if we are careless with finances, withhold it from accomplishing our vision, or hoard it. Giving generously can break the spirit of poverty. It is through giving that we are able to prove God.

The only time we are told to prove God and to test Him is in the financial area (Malachi 3:10). What better way than to invest finances in a vision that outlasts a lifetime?

- “For the bishop (an overseer) as God’s steward must be blameless . . . he must not be grasping and greedy for filthy lucre (financial gain)” (Titus 1:7, AMP).
- “SO THEN, let us [apostles] be looked upon as ministering servants of Christ and stewards (trustees) of the mysteries (the secret purposes) of God. Moreover, it is [essentially] required of stewards that a man should be found faithful [proving himself worthy of trust]” (I Corinthians 4:1-2, AMP).

We can also use spiritual gifts as good stewards of God’s grace.

- “As each of you has received a gift (a particular spiritual talent, a gracious divine endowment), employ it for one another as [befits] good trustees of God’s many-sided grace [faithful stewards of the extremely diverse powers and gifts granted to Christians by unmerited favor]” (I Peter 4:10, AMP).

Ask yourself these questions taken from the *Daily Walk Study Bible*:

- Are you faithful in little things? Little responsibilities? Little promises? Small amounts of time, or talents? (Luke 16:10)
- Are you faithful with money (Luke 16:11)?
- Are you faithful with the associations of others (Luke 16:12)? Are you as careful of the properties and reputation of others as you are with your own?

Accomplishing a vision will require faithful stewardship of time, talents, and treasures. These are the prices on the road to success. Like the DaVinci Awards ad says, “Honoring those who have a will and have found a way.” There is a divine will to be accomplished in the right way, and that requires stewardship.

Sensitivity

God is leading us and expects us to be sensitive to His directives. In order for this to happen we must:

- Know God
- Know His Voice
- Know how to respond
- Know the needs of others

“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (I Corinthians 2:2).

Steadfastness

Consider Daniel when he heard the decree that for thirty days no one could pray to any god or man except the king. What did he do?

- “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem,

he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously" (Daniel 6:10, AMP).

Notice carefully these five words, "as he had done previously." Robert K. Hudnut, in *Call Waiting*, says, "Daniel makes the pages of history because he finds himself on his knees three times a day in good times and bad."

- "Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king said to Daniel, May your God, Whom you are serving continually, deliver you! [Psalms 34:7, 19; 37:39-40; 50:15.]" (Daniel 6:16, AMP).

The king knew Daniel's steadfastness, and identified his lifestyle these words, "whom you are serving continually."

Daniel had formed a habit in his life. He adhered firmly and faithfully to what he believed. Once God has given us a vision, we must be firm, resolute, and unchanging. Our eyes are fixed on accomplishing that vision.

The early preachers "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). As a result, they turned the world upside down with their doctrine (Acts 17:6).

- "For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ" (Hebrews 3:14, NLT).
- "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58).

The model of each of these side-effects of biblical vision and purpose is our Savior, Jesus Christ. His willingness to submit, surrender, suffer, sacrifice, and serve were according to the Father's design.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Jesus was steadfast in fulfilling the reason He was born. He was an exceptional steward and always sensitive to the reason for existence. His motivation was:

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12–14, NIV). Can we settle for any lesser guiding motivation in life?

Steadfastness requires discipline. It is astonishing how much of the Christian life boils down to discipline.

- “Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:7–11, NIV).

Theodore Roosevelt explained:

The one quality which sets one man apart from another—the key which lifts one to every aspiration while others are caught up in the mire of mediocrity is not talent, education, or educational brightness. It is self-discipline. With self-discipline, all things are possible. Without it, even the simplest goal can seem like the impossible dream.

In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins studies qualities that cause companies and leaders to excel to greatness. He found that one outstanding characteristic is a commitment to discipline.

Discipline involves things we need to do, and is also required to stay away from things we don’t need to do. We must discipline ourselves to:

- Pray.
- Fast.
- Study God’s Word.
- Witness.
- Live a holy and righteous life.
- Overcome sin.
- Memorize Bible verses.
- Prioritize.
- Manage our time.

- Exercise properly.
- Walk in the Spirit.
- Read the Bible.

Someone has said there are two types of pain in life:

- The pain of discipline.
- The pain of regret.

There is no gain without pain. The choice is yours. Do you want to achieve your biblical vision? Get ready for the pain of discipline.

Paul Batura says in *Gadzooks* that discipline in life is like oil in an engine. It keeps the motor running. It keeps the train on the tracks. It keeps a motorboat moving.

Perhaps, this closing quotation will provide a fitting conclusion. Bobby Knight (as quoted in *The Magic of Team Work*) gave this definition of *self-discipline*:

- Doing what needs to be done.
- Doing it when it needs to be done.
- Doing it the best it can be done.
- Doing it that way every time you do it.

Study Questions

1. How does Mark's Gospel portray Jesus?

2. What is *submission*?

3. What are four areas that God's Word usually connects with submission?

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

D. _____

4. What is the minister's purpose according to Ephesians 4:12?

5. Name four areas where we provide service.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

6. According to Hesselgrove, stewardship involves three areas. What are they?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

7. List five of the nine insights on establishing a servant ministry.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

8. What other types of stewardship does this lesson mention?

9. List three of the seven basic principles of stewardship.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

10. Quote and explain the African proverb given in this lesson.

11. What is poverty?

12. What does Anthony Tamel suggest we should do in response to poverty?

13. What can break the spirit of poverty?

14. What four things must we know to be sensitive to others?

- A.

- B.

- C.

- D.

15. Why does Daniel make the pages of history?

16. What words did the King use to identify Daniel's steadfastness?

17. What habit did Daniel form in his life?

18. Quote Acts 2:42.

19. Who is the role model for each of the side effects of ministry?

20. According to Theodore Roosevelt, what is the one quality that sets one man apart from another?

21. What is the one outstanding quality or characteristic that causes companies and leaders to excel to greatness?

22. List five areas where one might discipline himself.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____

23. What is Bobby Knight's definition of discipline.

24. What are the two types of pain mentioned at the close of this lesson?

- A. _____
- B. _____

25. Compare discipline to the oil in an engine.

Personal Study Notes

LESSON 14

Forever Faithful (Part I)

Key Verses

“But my life is worth nothing unless I use it for doing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus – the work of telling others the Good News about God’s wonderful kindness and love. And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. Let me say plainly that I have been faithful. No one’s damnation can be blamed on me, for I didn’t shrink from declaring all that God wants for you” (Acts 20:24–27, NLT).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Comprehend why faith and vision are inseparable
- Know the five questions to ask about receiving a vision
- Understand how to remind people about the vision
- Realign one’s vision
- Realize the vision

Introduction

John C. Bowling, in *Grace-Full Leadership*, relates a story of a sculptor who worked vigorously on carving the head of Abraham Lincoln from a large piece of marble. The woman who cleaned his work area swept around the large stone daily. One day, as the sculptor’s work progressed, she began to see Lincoln’s face

emerging from the marble. She quickly stopped, turned, and asked the sculptor, “Is that Master Lincoln?”

“Yes,” he answered.

“How did you know he was in there?” she asked.

When God looked at Saul He saw the chief persecutor of His church. He envisioned what could be. He saw apostle Paul (then Saul) as one of the greatest missionaries and church planters of all time. How was this possible? He utilized “double vision” – the ability to see both what is and what can be. All great leaders possess this ability. Bowling said, “This double vision helps enable us to keep our sights set on the future as we deal with the daily demands of leadership.” It also enables us to see great potential in others. In *Principle-Centered Leadership*, Stephen R. Covey said, “They see the oak tree in the acorn and understand the process of helping the acorn become a great oak.”

H. Dale Burke reminds us that “faith always focuses beyond the present, beyond ‘what is’ to ‘what could be.’” Faith and vision are inseparable.

Walt Disney had a vision for Disney World and Epcot (Florida) that superseded his original Disneyland (California). He passed away before its opening. Walt’s widow was asked to speak at the opening ceremonies. The man doing the introduction said, “Mrs. Disney, I just wish Walt could have seen this.”

She stood up and simply said, “He did,” and sat down.

One of the executives remarked to the press, “You know it’s precisely because Walt could see Disney World that it’s a reality today.” Walt could see each detail of the final blueprint in his mind before the ground was ever broken. Walt was a great visionary. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus studied ninety top leaders. They discovered they had something in common: they all had a gripping vision.

Receiving the Vision

“And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:5-6).

Saul's vision began with a knockdown experience on the Damascus Road. He asked two questions:

1. Who are you, Lord?
2. What do you want me to do?

Once he understood the answer to the first, He spent the rest of his life asking the second. He constantly endeavored to be in line with the Master's will.

Those two questions, lead to three more. These are supplied by H. Dale Burke in his book, *Less is More*:

Destination Question	Where are you going?
Road Map Question	How will you get there?
Value versus Cost Question	What is the cost of making the trip?

As quoted in *The Power Principle*, Ayn Rand said, "Throughout history, brave men and women have gone down new paths armed with nothing more than their own vision." Visionary leaders are pathfinder and pacesetters.

Spiritual vision is a God-sized thing. It takes God's help to accomplish. It will also take the help of others. "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16).

Vision is the plan God has prepared for His servant. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Corinthians 2:9-10).

Vision (many times) outlives the visionary. Paul was a recipient of the vision given to Abraham. It was passed from generation to generation. God's plan to bless the nations can be seen throughout His Word.

"I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the

prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house” (Isaiah 42:6-7).

“And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed’” (Acts 3:25, NIV).

Your vision will make room for you. It will be identified by others. It will pass their test:

“On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews” (Galatians 2:6-10, NIV).

Realigning the Vision

Is this aligned with my vision? Everything should pass this test. Ever notice what happens when a driver takes his hands off a steering wheel or handlebars? The vehicle or bicycle will start drifting a bit to the left or right. Realignment is needed to avoid an accident. A firm grip on the steering wheel helps too.

Obedience to the vision is a daily decision.

“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:18-19).

Repeating the Vision

Nehemiah understood the value of repeating the vision. He repeated it after twenty-eight days. There is safety in repetition.

Paul Atwater explains in his article “How to Start Casting a Vision for Your Church” that “Communicators get tired of repeating the vision just about the time when people are starting to internalize it.” He also said, “The biggest mistake I have made over the years is failing to reiterate the vision enough. Every time I go back to communicating the vision, my best leaders get fired up. They tell me that they needed the reminder.”

He suggested the following ways to remind people of the vision.

1. Commit to preaching about the vision at set times in the year.
2. Make the vision so simple it can be inserted anywhere in a message. For example, John Maxwell said, “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”
3. Experiment with your own ideas. Atwater uses “Sixty seconds of vision” just before the morning sermon. Repeat key phrases or slogans.
4. Tie the vision to life-change stories.

Nelson Searcy adds in “Tips on Developing and Communicating Vision”: Verbalize clearly. If you can’t say it clearly, you don’t know it completely. If you can’t say it—how do you expect them to say it? Make it short. Here’s an example: “Passing the truth to the next generation!” (Jim Poitras). Simpler still: “Entrust.”

Searcy also made another interesting point: “You cannot lead without a vision of the future. Show me a person with vision and I’ll show you a future leader. (I say a future leader because vision must be cultivated, defined, and cast).” John C. Bowling said, “You tell me your vision, and I will tell you your future.”

Maybe that is one of the reasons God said:

“Then the LORD said to me, “Write my answer in large, clear letters on a tablet, so that a runner can read it and tell everyone else. But these things I plan won’t happen right away. Slowly, steadily, surely, the time approaches when the vision will be fulfilled. If it seems slow, wait patiently, for it will surely take place. It will not be delayed” (Habakkuk 2:2-3, NLT).

I love that verse of Scripture, except the part that says the vision won’t happen right away. I like the idea of running with the vision. Words like “slow, wait patiently, and so on,” are not usually in my vocabulary. I guess that is another reason for repeating the vision. People may forget. I may forget. The good things in life are worth waiting for, working for, and worth repeating.

You can place the vision on banners, bookmarks, and bulletins. Use creative ways to keep the vision alive, and before your people.

Mary Axner in “Developing and Communicating a Vision” believes that sharing the vision is the central role of a leader. She said, “As a leader, you have to help people take your vision and make it their own.”

I enjoyed an article titled “Vision Testers” by Melinda Poitras. She writes:

Vision often causes change no-one else can even believe possible (or even want, for that matter) . . . No good change comes without opposition. There are going to be people who criticize you, make fun of you, and more likely than not, try to stop you.

Sanballat became incensed and ridiculed the wall-builders, throwing insults in their faces. Melinda points out their apt response. They prayed. And, they kept right on working. They knew they had a good work to accomplish. Nothing could stop them. Sanballat and a few others even tried attacking them, but they “trusted in God, knowing that everything would turn out alright, and it did.” Nehemiah remained aligned to his vision!

Another word for “realignment” is “focus” Vision provides focus. Unfortunately, we cannot set our vision on “auto-focus.” Obtaining and maintaining correct focus doesn’t just happen. It takes realignment and refocusing. Otherwise, our vision will become blurred. Paul advised that we stay in focus: “keep our eyes fixed.” Jesus pursued His vision with focus: endured the cross, scorned shame, and fulfilled His purpose: providing salvation for all who believe.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-3, NIV).

Study Questions

1. What is double vision?

2. Saul's vision began with what two questions?

3. The questions mentioned in answering question two above lead us to three more questions. What are they?

4. What is vision?

5. Explain how vision (at time) outlives us.

6. Express what is meant by realigning with the vision.

7. What was Paul's vision?

8. What happens when a leader repeats the vision on a regular basis?

9. Identify three ways to remind people of the vision.

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____

10. Why is it important to be able to state one's vision clearly?

LESSON 15

Forever Faithful (Part II)

Key Verse

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended” (Philippians 3:12-13).

Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Breathe new life into the vision
- Compare memories with dreams
- Realize the cost associated with the vision
- List the cost associated with the vision
- Rejoice in the vision

Introduction

Lesson 15 is a continuation of the study of vision began in lesson 14. In lesson 14, we discussed receiving the vision, realigning the vision, and repeating the vision. This lesson covers reviving the vision, realizing the vision, and rejoicing in the vision.

Reviving the Vision

Revival refers to bringing something back to life. Do not allow your vision to die. Breathe new life into it! Wake up your dreams!

“But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

Kofi Annan, the former secretary-general of the United Nations, is a native of Ghana. He returned home a hero. Billboards projected his picture, the United Nations logo, and proclaim, “Welcome Home. You have made Ghana proud!”

In 1997 Kofi Annan addressed MIT graduates and told of his own experience as an MIT student. Walking along the Charles River in his first term, he reflected on survival in the midst of over-achievers. The answer came to him, “Follow your own inner compass. . . . Listen to your own drummer. To live is to choose. But to choose well, you must know who you are and what you stand for, where you want to go and why you want to go there” (Sales 1997). Kofi Annan was able to realign himself with his vision throughout his forty-year tenure with the United Nations.

H. Dale Burke said, “When your memories are more exciting than your dreams, you’ve begun to die.” It’s time to revive your vision!

I like talking about the future. I plan to live there. Bill Allen in *Built to Last* said, “Boeing (*great airplane builders*) is always reaching out to tomorrow. This can only be accomplished by people who live, breathe, eat and sleep what they are doing” (*italics added*).

We need to be consumed by the vision. We should possess a burning desire or passion to see the vision come to pass. There must be fire in our souls.

Realizing the Vision

Realizing your vision will be costly. It will require many things.

Commitment: It’s a daily decision and struggle.

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself [disregard, lose sight of, and forget himself and his own interests] and take up his cross and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying, also]. For whoever is bent on saving his [temporal] life [his comfort and security here] shall lose it [eternal life]; and whoever loses his life [his comfort and security here] for My sake shall find it [life everlasting]” (Matthew 16:24-25, AMP).

Sacrifice:

“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).

Willingness to change:

“To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (I Corinthians 9:22, NIV).

Discipline:

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (I Corinthians 9:21-27, NIV).

Willingness to improve/continuous improvement:

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am

apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended" (Philippians 3:12-13).

Contentment:

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:11-13).

Faithfulness:

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:1-2).

Hard work:

Good things don't just happen. You get what you have planned and worked for. In *Principle-Centered Leadership*, Stephen Covey refers to the law of the farm: "The quick easy, free, and fun approach won't work on the farm because there we're subject to natural laws and governing principles . . . The only thing that endures over time is the law of the farm: I must prepare the ground, put in the seed, cultivate it, weed it, water it, then gradually nurture growth and development to full maturity . . . There is no quick fix, where you can just move in and make everything right with a positive mental attitude and a bunch of success formulas. The law of the harvest governs."

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:7-10).

Rejoicing the Vision

The close of Paul's life found him in a damp, dark, dirty prison cell. Yet, he was not discouraged, defeated, or demoralized. He remained faithful!

"As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness that the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that great day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his glorious return" (II Timothy 4:6–8, NLT).

James Dobson and Gary Bauer share a story in *Children at Risk* that illustrates the point. A Sunday morning terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut left hundreds of Americans killed or wounded as they slept. A few days later, the Marine commandant visited some of the wounded soldiers in the hospital. Among them was a corporal that was severely wounded in the incident. He had so many tubes running in and out of his body that he looked more like a machine than a man. As the commandant visited him, he motioned for a piece of paper and a pen. Racked with pain, he struggled to write a brief note. On it were two simple words—"Semper Fi"—the Latin motto of the Marines meaning "forever faithful."

Here is a glimpse of the end result of Paul's vision:

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9–10).

Surely Paul heard those treasured words, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:23, NIV).

Paul was faithful to his vision. He passed it on to the next generation. Eventually it has been passed to you and me. May those that follow after us find us forever faithful.

"O may all who come behind us find us faithful, may the fire of our devotion light their way. May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe, and

the lives we live inspire them to obey. O may all who come behind us find us faithful.”—Jon Mohr

Study Questions

1. Define *revival* in terms of vision casting.

2. List five things vision costs or requires.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

3. List the steps from receiving the vision to rejoicing the vision.

4. What was the end result of Paul's vision?

Missionary Spotlight

Donald and Donna Bryant

By Don Bryant

Donald and Donna Bryant set sail for Chile, South America in May, 1970, with their two small sons, Errin, six, and Mark, who had just turned two. The couple had met at Pentecostal Bible Institute, in Tupelo, Mississippi. Donald was from Foley, Alabama, and Donna was from Toronto, Canada. After a year's courtship, mostly by correspondence, they married in Toronto, Canada in December, 1958.



Donald and Donna Bryant
1983

In 1960, Donald received his Master's degree in educational administration from Auburn University. He then taught public school in Pensacola, Florida, for ten years, and by then his job was in school administration. Their lives were blessed, and they enjoyed working in their local church, but they both knew that until they heeded God's call to them both, their lives would not be totally complete.

They had a burden for missions; both Donald and Donna had felt a missionary call as children. They knew that they must follow God's leading, and this seemed to be the time. After diligent prayer and seeking God's will, they were led to go to South America, and obtained visas to Chile. They bade farewell to family and friends, not knowing when they would see them again. They were not supported by any church. They depended on the funds they had accumulated from the sale of their home and some support from friends and family. Needless to say, their families were wary of their going to a strange land with two small children, and, although it was probably not the wisest way to go about it, God honored their endeavors in marvelous ways!

So now the Bryants found themselves and their two small sons on a Chilean freighter setting off for their new life. Donald had studied some Spanish in college, but Donna did not know the language. Twelve passengers were on the ship, and one lady was a Chilean lawyer who assured them that they would not be allowed into Chile with the visas which they had obtained. There was much unrest at that

time in Chile, and many Chileans frowned on North Americans. So here they were, on a ship with their few possessions, being told they would not be welcome! But God intervened, and after contacting the Haskell (Hack) Yadon family who were United Pentecostal Church Missionaries, the Yadons met them at the port in Valparaiso, Chile, helped them through customs, and took them to their home in Santiago. The Yadons assisted them tremendously, and the Bryants attended the UPC churches in Chile during their seven months in the country.

The Bryants had planned to begin a work in southern Chile after language study, but in September, Salvador Allende, a Marxist, was elected president of Chile. Now, North Americans were not welcome. Without the proper visas, they realized they would have to leave the country. In early December, after much prayer, they obtained visas to Paraguay, where there were no oneness Pentecostal missionaries or churches. They traveled over the Andes Mountains by narrow gauge rail to Argentina, where they boarded a train to Buenos Aires. There they boarded a bus to Asuncion, a twenty-four-hour journey from Buenos Aires. On a very hot day in December, 1970, they arrived in Paraguay, with no contacts of any kind, praising God for His leading to be able to be the first to carry the oneness message to the land of Paraguay.

After several months of door-to-door witnessing in this 95% Catholic country, a building was rented for services. Although many of those whom they had invited had promised to attend, for quite some time Brother and Sister Bryant and their two boys held church without one visitor! The work finally slowly began to grow after beginning Sunday school with the children. Some of those same children are in the ministry in Paraguay today.

The first person to be baptized in Paraguay was Sister Maria Nuñez, who was about eighty years old. She was so happy to be brought out of darkness into the truth of the Jesus' name message. She could not read, and was thrilled when Brother Bryant taught her, and she was now able to read her Bible. Sister María was faithful unto death.

Slowly, the work grew. Some believers who were now baptized in Jesus' name asked for meetings in their homes. The Bryants found many Paraguayans who were hungry for God, and they opened several works in the interior. One of the first converts was a Catholic lady who had sold five houses trying to get help for her sickness. She had been told to prepare to die. A convert witnessed to her on the street that Jesus could heal, and after prayer, she was instantly delivered! She and her family were brought into the truth.

Brother and Sister Fred Scott were appointed as UPCI missionaries to Paraguay in 1972. They worked with the Bryants who were still in the rented building. Brother Scott bought a small property in Lambaré, a suburb of Asunción, and built a small church. The congregation in the rented building then moved to the Lambaré church.

Brother and Sister Bryant returned to the States in 1973 to apply for appointment as United Pentecostal Church missionaries. They were appointed at the 1973 General Conference in Salt Lake City. Upon return to Paraguay in 1974, the Scotts and the Bryants worked together until the Scotts transferred to Central America in 1978.

Through the following years, the Lord continued to bless the work through the establishment of an annual national conference, youth camps, family camps, monthly fellowship meetings, Bible quizzing, a boat ministry on the Paraguay River, and the organization of The Paraguayan Ladies' Auxiliary. Preaching points were established, some of which became established churches, and several small church buildings were built.



Training national ministers was a priority. Brother Bryant oversaw the construction of the Bible school building, which was completed in January, 1978, on the Lambaré property. It is still the site of the present-day main church and Bible school, and has since expanded into a thriving school for local children through the leadership of the Joseph Bir family.

As missionary kids, Errin and Mark were invaluable to the mission. They were always there to help facilitate the acceptance of the Bryants in new areas and to assist in the work. The boys attended the Asunción Christian Academy, a school established by Free Methodist missionaries. After completing high school, they both returned to the States to further their education.

In 1987 the Bryants returned to the States. The work continues to thrive under the leadership of the Joseph Bir family. The Bryants currently reside in Pensacola, Florida, and are members of the First Pentecostal Church pastored by the Reverend Brian Kinsey.

