

9. Learning to Help People Develop Vision

In John 4:35, Christ told the disciples, “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” In this verse, we see that one of the things the disciples lacked, when they first followed Christ, was vision. The same thing is usually true today. As a result, we need to help developing leaders expand their vision so they are able to help new Christians develop vision.

One of the things we notice in this verse is that the disciples were in Samaria, but they did not really see the people of Samaria as people needing to meet Christ. Instead, the context shows that their primary concern was lunch. They had gone into the town, talked to the people selling food, met other people on the street, and never thought of the fact that those people also needed Christ. Today, the same thing continues to happen. Most Christians walk through the streets and shopping areas of a town or city and never think about the spiritual needs of the people there.

To develop effective spiritual leadership, we must first help people develop a vision for people rather than things. Let’s look at this context to see how Christ helped the disciples develop vision. In John 4:27, we read, “And at this *point* His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, ‘What do You seek?’ or, ‘Why are You talking with her?’” We notice that the disciples marveled that Christ was talking with the woman.

Second, we help developing leaders expand their vision by taking them with us as we talk to people about their spiritual needs. Developing leaders will not develop vision if they never see our vision. They will only see our vision as they go with us.

Third, in John 4:31-32, we read, “In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, eat.’ But He said to them, ‘I have food to eat of which you do not know.’” In these verses, we see that spiritual ministry was more important to Christ than physical food. Christ knew that He could always eat later. However, the opportunity to talk with the woman would be gone if He waited until later. Here, we see that we show developing leaders the importance of taking the opportunities the Lord brings to us. Many Christians never see opportunities, because they are not looking for them.

In John 4:33-34, we read, “Therefore the disciples said to one another, ‘Has anyone brought Him *anything* to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.’” Fourth, people develop vision when the will of God becomes the priority in their lives. Christ showed the disciples that His priority was to do the will of God. We provide an example of the importance of doing the will of God by the fact that doing the will of God is our first priority.

In Luke 18:15-16, we see another passage where Christ expanded the vision of the disciples. Those verses tell us, “Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to *Him* and said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.’” In these verses, we see

that the disciples lacked vision both for the parents and for their children. In contrast, Christ had a vision for both the parents and their children.

Fifth, we see that Christ expanded the vision of the disciples by helping them to see the importance of touching the lives of young parents. The older an adult is, the easier it is for that adult to ignore the parents of young children. Today, we live in a day when many churches are only targeting certain age groups to reach for Christ. One of the groups often ignored is young parents. Developing leaders need to see the importance of reaching out to young parents. The disciples rebuked the young parents who came bringing their infants.

Christ knew that to reach children the place to begin was to reach their parents while the children were infants. Most new parents want to do the best possible job of raising their children, but often have not been shown how to raise children, especially if the young parents grew up in homes where their parents were not Christians. As a result, Christ reached out to both the parents and their young children. In the process, Christ showed, by His example, the importance of reaching out to all age groups. As we take developing leaders with us to visit young families, they learn Biblical answers to the questions that young families are asking about how to raise their children.

Sixth, Christ also had to expand the vision of the disciples to see and minister to hurting people. In John 9:1-2, we read, “Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’” The disciples only saw the man as a topic for conversation. Christ saw the man as a person to be reached. Christ used that opportunity, in verse 4, to tell the disciples, “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work.” Christ expanded the vision of the disciples by helping them to see that we must work the works of the Father during the short time we have in this life, because life is short.

Seventh, Christ focused on finishing the work of the Father. In John 17:4, Christ was praying to the Father and said, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” Here, we see that Christ gave the disciples a vision to finish the work the Father had given Him to do. Later, Christ would reinforce this vision to finish the work that the Father had given when He told the disciples, in John 20:21, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” One of the things that was necessary to finish the work of the Father was to develop the vision of the disciples before sending them out to share the Gospel with others. In the same way, we must develop vision in order to finish the work that the Father has for us.

Eighth, vision is developed as we spend time with leaders and developing leaders praying and seeking the will of the Lord together. Acts 13:2 says, “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” Prayer is not something we do to get God to do what we want. Rather, prayer should be a time when we seek God and ask Him what He wants us to do. As developing leaders pray with us, as we seek the will of the Lord, they learn to focus on obeying the will of the Father instead of their own will. In these times of concentrated prayer, the Lord has a wonderful way of expanding the vision of everyone.

Ninth, vision is developed as developing leaders learn to see the Holy Spirit close and open doors. In Acts 16:6-10, we read, “Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.” The whole team with Paul had their vision expanded to begin reaching out to Europe because they were learning to be obedient to the Holy Spirit.

As we summarize this list, we see that we want to help developing leaders develop their vision by:

- ◆ Helping them to develop a vision for people rather than things
- ◆ Helping them to observe that we share the Gospel with others
- ◆ Helping them to see the importance of taking opportunities when they come
- ◆ Helping them to see that doing the will of God is the priority of our lives
- ◆ Helping them to see that people of all ages need Christ
- ◆ Helping them to see that hurting people need Christ
- ◆ Helping them to focus on finishing the work of the Father
- ◆ Helping them to focus on praying for the will of the Lord
- ◆ Helping them to focus on the leading of the Holy Spirit

We need to remember the vision that the Lord has for the people of the world. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” The Lord will be able to use developing leaders as they have their vision expanded to see and reach people they have not considered before. Then, they will be able to help new Christians also begin to develop a vision for others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders expand their vision to see the world as Christ sees it.