

4. Jesus Showed How to Develop Equipping Gifts

Christ equipped the disciples for ministry and showed them how to equip others. This is a key area of importance if we are going to develop healthy reproducing leaders. In 1 Timothy 4:14, we read, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” As an older spiritual leader, Paul realized the importance of reminding a younger spiritual leader of the need to exercise the equipping gift the Lord had given him. 2 Timothy 4:5 tells us, “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” Here, we see that Timothy was instructed to exercise his gift of evangelist and equip others to share the Gospel.

We also see that Christ equipped the disciples for ministry and showed them how to equip others. Ephesians 4:11-12 says, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” The apostles gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ – Acts 1:21-22. The prophets gave us the written Word of God – 2 Peter 1:19-21. Those two gifts provide the foundation on which other spiritual leaders equip the saints – Ephesians 2:19-22. Evangelists equip the saints to share the Gospel. Pastors equip the saints to minister to one another. Teachers equip the saints to teach and apply the Word of God. Christ showed the disciples how to equip others for effective ministry.

First, Christ showed the disciples how to equip others to share the Gospel. The first thing Christ did was show the disciples what to share and how to share the Gospel. This began as soon as Christ called His first disciples. Matthew 4:22-23 says, “And immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.” Christ took the disciples with Him as He preached the Gospel throughout Galilee. As the disciples traveled with Him, they learned what to share. They also saw, from the example of Christ, how to share the Gospel in the synagogues.

Christ also showed the disciples how to share the Gospel in homes. As soon as Matthew followed Christ, Luke 5:29-32 says, “Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” In this case, Christ showed the disciples what to share and how to share the Gospel in homes. He also showed them the need to share the Gospel with those that society rejected.

After showing the disciples how to share the Gospel for a total of about twenty-one months, Christ sent the disciples out in teams of two to share the Gospel with others. Mark 6:7 and 12 say, “And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits... ¹²So they went out and preached that people should repent.” The disciples had learned what to share and they preached that people should repent. Then, in Luke 10:1, Christ

sent out the seventy two-by-two, “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.” This gave the twelve the opportunity to begin equipping others to share the Gospel.

Second, Christ showed the disciples how to equip others to minister to one another. We have already seen that the disciples traveled with Christ throughout Galilee. In addition to showing the disciples how to share the Gospel, Christ was also showing them how to minister to others. Christ showed them how to minister both to physical needs and also to spiritual needs. He showed them how to minister to physical needs as He healed people with many different kinds of sicknesses and diseases.

He also showed them how to minister to spiritual needs as He showed them how to minister to those who were demon-possessed. In Matthew 17:18-21, we read, “And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.’” Here, Christ showed them that they were not the ones who had the power to cast out demons. Instead, they needed to pray and fast and let God cast out the demons.

He also showed them how to minister to spiritual needs as they watched Him provide comfort to Mary, Martha, and many others who were in sorrow. In John 11, Christ showed them the need to give hope by reminding those in sorrow of the resurrection. He also showed them the importance of weeping with those who weep. Of course, the greatest way Christ taught the disciples to minister to one another was when He said, in John 13:34-35, “‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.’” The disciples were being both shown and taught the importance of loving one another as they ministered to one another.

The disciples had learned how to minister to Christians wherever they met them. Acts 2:46 says, “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” The disciples had learned the importance of ministering to people in their homes, and so, they made it a point to visit people and minister to them in their homes. They also realized that they must equip the new Christians to know how to minister to one another in their homes.

Third, Christ showed the disciples how to equip others to teach and apply the Word of God. Christ began by spending much time helping the disciples learn to teach and apply the Word of God to their own lives. Matthew 5:1-2 says, “And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying...” In the next three chapters, we see that Christ took various passages from the Old Testament and taught the disciples how to apply those passages to their lives.

The most extensive passage where Christ taught His disciples was John chapters 13 through 17. He taught them both by words and by example. However, he made one very important statement early in His teaching that night. John 13:17 says, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” In this verse, Christ pointed out that it is important to know what Christ teaches. However, true blessing will only come as we obey what we know so that it changes and transforms our lives. Christ equipped the disciples to teach the Word of God and apply it to their lives.

However, Christ also taught the disciples the importance of equipping others to teach the Word of God and apply it to their lives. Christ said, in Luke 6:40, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.” Christ showed and equipped the disciples by the way He taught them. Christ also explained to them that, when they were fully trained, they would become like their teacher, and they would show and equip others by the way they taught others.

We see that the disciples had learned from Christ the importance of teaching and equipping others. Immediately after three thousand repented and were baptized, in Acts 2:41, Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” They immediately started teaching these new Christians by getting them into Bible studies. However, they also equipped these new Christians to begin teaching others. This is clearly seen by the accusation the religious leaders made against the apostles. Acts 5:28 says, “...Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!” Many other Christians were now equipped to teach and apply the Word of God with the result that they were teaching others and filling Jerusalem with their teaching.

Christ equipped the disciples, and then, showed them how to equip others. As a result, they were equipped to: preach the Gospel, minister to others, and teach and apply the Word of God. The disciples followed the same process and equipped others for these ministries. Later, Paul told Timothy to continue to equip still others. 2 Timothy 2:2 says, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” The early church was focused on the development of godly leadership for a third and fourth generation. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop and equip people to equip others also.