**EE Practicum – Session # 8**

**The Making of a Laborer**

**Ephesians 4:11,13**

**A. Introduction:** Instill a passion for training and equipping

* As Jesus spent more and more time with His disciples they began to see the Sermon on the Mount lived out daily. These kingdom teachings were modeled constantly. The Beatitudes were the foundation of how Jesus interacted with them and the way in which He treated people.
* Jesus emphasized being salt and light. Salt is the seasoning element for the palate and light is what drives out the darkness in society by overcoming the darkness of the sin sick human soul. Christ came to bring life and He did so by offering forgiveness and freedom to broken people.
* Jesus truly was the “wounded healer” who offered love and salvation to anyone who would follow Him and obey His Word. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, **“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”** In the next verse He said, **Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**
* Other rabbis, weighed down their followers with rigid rules and with a “do” mentality. Religion is known for regulations and requirements. Jesus, on the other hand, modeled acceptance and freedom. He said, **“I am come that you might have life to the full”** (John 10:10). What does that mean?
* Jesus was **“a friend of sinners”** (Matthew 11:19) and was **“full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14). What a welcome relief to the hypocritical lifestyles of the scribes and Pharisees! The religious leaders of the day were the ones who contested His Divine side and labeled Him a blasphemer and a heretic. We must be careful not to make disciples who are legalistic and condemning which only pushes lost people away from forgiveness.
* John records in 6:66 that “**many of the disciples went back and walked no more with Christ.** When Jesus said to His disciples in John 6:67, “**Will you also go away?”** Peter exclaimed, **“Lord to whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life”** (v. 68).
* So when someone experiences salvation by faith alone, plus nothing and becomes a Christ follower, he or she steps into a new world of spiritual exuberance and renewal. The spiritual life begins to blossom!
* Our goal is to help the new convert become a fully devoted servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only Jesus has the words of eternal life. So what are the elements of equipping that must be introduced into the disciple’s life?

**B. Equipping Disciples to Become Laborers**

**1. Deepen their Spiritual Life** – Galatians 5:22

* **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control against such there is no law.”**
* These are the qualities of the kingdom that must be reflected in the lives of Christ followers. These qualities were modeled over and over by Jesus and now Paul shows how these qualities are the exact opposite of the works of the flesh he had just pointed out in Galatians 5:19-21.
* Jesus said in John 13:34,35 that the distinguishing mark for His disciples would be love: **“A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.”**
* Sacrificial love is only possible as the Holy Spirit has His rule in the hearts of men and women. In John 14:16,17 Jesus said, **“I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper that He may be with you forever… you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”**

**2. Discover their Spiritual Gifts** – believer’s have been given a spiritual gift!

* As the head of the church, Christ distributes spiritual gifts to His followers and it is the believer’s responsibility to discover and use his or her spiritual gift in building up of the body of Christ.
* Paul says in Ephesians 4:11,12 that **“Christ gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ.”**
* A disciple of Christ soon recognizes that the way kingdom work is best accomplished is by discovering his own spiritual gift and using it passionately in building up Christ’s church. By using one’s spiritual gift or gifts to their fullest potential brings the greatest satisfaction and fulfillment in their spiritual life. This is where fulfillment and meaning are found.
* The Apostle Paul declares in Romans 12:5-8, **“so in Christ we, though many, form one body and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”**

**3. Define their Spiritual Calling** – What is the Lord calling them to do?

* Jesus said in John 5:30, **“I can do nothing on my own initiative . . . because I do not seek my own will but the will of Him who sent me.”** Jesus understood where He fit in God’s cosmic plan of redemption.
* In John 4:34 Jesus said, **“My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work.”** God has a role for each Christ follower to play in the building of His church in this world. When a disciple finds his spiritual calling he is able to play to his strengths. Finally he is able to get in line with the Master designer’s schematic. He was the only perfect lamb!
* The Psalmist declares, **“Delight thyself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart”** (Psalm 37:4). When a disciple begins to follow the spiritual passions of his heart and submits himself to leading of the Holy Spirit he will begin responding to the individual call God has for him.
* God has a unique calling for each one of his children. He has formed us in the womb for a special part He wants us to play in bringing His kingdom to earth. When a disciple understands and responds favorably to God’s call on his life he will be able to accomplish what God has destined him to do and will one day hear the words, **“Well done thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of the Lord”** (Matthew 25:21).

**4. Develop their Spiritual Sensitivity** – Listen for God’s whispers

* The spirit-filled disciple will become a productive laborer in the harvest of the souls of men and women in this world. When he or she recognizes how God is working through him the joy of the Lord becomes his strength. The Psalmist declares in Psalm 37:23 that **“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delighteth in his way.”**
* Paul says to the follower of Christ **“be careful how you walk, not as unwise but as wise making the most of you time because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is”** (Ephesians 5:15-17). God wants a disciple to be Spirit filled!
* When the Holy Spirit is in control of our lives we are constantly listening to the Spirit’s promptings in our everyday life. Help your disciple follow the example of young Samuel who said, **“speak Lord for your servant is listening”** (I Samuel 3:9). We are to always be listening for His voice!
* Bill Hybels said in his book, “I’ve come to believe that hearing the quiet whisper of the transcendent God is one of the most extraordinary privileges in all of life and potentially the most transforming dynamic of the Christian life” (“The Power of a Whisper”, pages 16-17).

**5. Declare their Spiritual Leadership Role** – Men are God’s method!

* God has always chosen to do His work through men and women who are willing to step forward to speak for God in a depraved and lost humanity. In Ezekiel you hear sadness in God’s heart when He declares through the prophet Ezekiel, **“I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it but I found none”** (Ezekiel 22:30).
* II Chronicles 16:9 says, **“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him.”**
* God is waiting for men and women to step forward to make a difference for good in an ailing world. God desires to show Himself strong in anyone’s life who will willingly offer himself for the great cause of God on this planet called earth to make disciples and teach them to observe all that Christ commanded them to do by both His life and His Word.
* Help disciples to listen for God’s call and then respond like Isaiah the prophet who said, **“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I send me!”**
* J. Oswald Sanders declares, “The church has always prospered most when it has been blessed with strong spiritual leaders who expected and experienced the touch of the supernatural in their service for God” (Spiritual Leadership, by J. Oswald Sanders, page 17).

**C. Conclusion**

* Leroy Eims says, “We have the responsibility under God to prepare disciples for their ministry in the lives of others. We must be very concerned for their spiritual makeup: their dedication, commitment, maturity, vision, ministry skills and the deepening of their lives in the Lord.”
* Even the Lord declares in His high priestly prayer, **“But now I come to you . . . I have given them Your Word . . . Sanctify them in the truth: Your Word is truth”** (John 17:13,14,17). Ultimately we must step back and send them out in to the world just as we release our children to the care of their heavenly father.
* As you are getting ready to launch a spiritually qualified worker in to the harvest field Leroy Eims highlights a host of qualities you want them to have namely: a heart for people; an addiction to the vision of multiplication; a servant spirit; a volunteer spirit; a pacesetter; a productive witness; a Bible study leader; a sensitivity to others; a thinker, the list goes on and on!
* Two very important qualities of a laborer is that he knows (1) how to lead someone to Christ and (2) how to establish a new believer in the faith!
* Ultimately you release a laborer to the care and supervision of God and His world. Listen to what the Apostle Paul says to those he has invested three years of his life to in the ancient city of Ephesus, **“And now I commend you to God and to the Word of His grace which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”** (Acts 20:32). It is time for Paul to leave them on their own
* Three years later, as Paul sits in a Roman prison, awaiting his death he writes to these believes in Ephesus, **“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you will know what is the hope of His calling”** (Ephesians 1:18).
* Finally, we come back to Matthew 9:38 where Christ recognizes that God is the ultimate Lord of the Harvest. He concludes His remarks regarding the plentiful harvest of souls and the age old dilemma of being short on workers by saying, **“Therefore, beg the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”**
* Ultimately we are left like Christ in John 17 and Paul in Acts 20 to entrusting our disciples to God and in the words of Jude 24, **“Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forevermore. Amen!**

**Two Books to Reference:**

1. “The Power of a Whisper” by Bill Hybels; ISBN 978-0-310-32074-6

2. “Spiritual Leadership” by J. Oswald Sanders; ISBN 0-8024-6799-7