**EE Practicum – Session # 9**

**Becoming an Equipper**

**Mark 3:14**

1. **Introduction** – An Overview of Where we have Been!
* Let’s now go back to where we began three sessions ago and review the whole matter of Multiplying Laborers. Leroy Eims gives us a framework for how to envision the task and purpose of disciplemaking.
* He begins with the process of evangelism. Here we looked at what conversion meant to the Lord and we considered “Ten Characteristics of an Effective Witness” and Mark 16:15 highlights the commandment of Christ which says, **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”** The process of evangelism involves proclaiming the gospel!
* The next process is that of **establishing** the new convert in the Bible, Prayer, Worship, Fellowship and Witness and concluded that:
* It takes time to build character, leadership and submission to God’s will.

**Spiritual Maturity = The Word of God + Obedience + Time**

* The next process is equipping for service as a **laborer** in the harvest. This process involves the deepening of the spiritual life; discovering a person’s spiritual gifting; defining one’s spiritual calling; developing a sensitivity to the leading of God’s Holy Spirit and finally demonstrating and declaring one as a spiritual leader.
* A **disciple** needs to be able to lead someone who is far from God into a personal relationship with Christ; a **laborer** needs to be able to lead a person to saving faith as well as be able to establish new believers in their faith and then help them in their walk as a Christ follower.
* The final step involves **personal training** with Christ (Mark 3:14) which enables a person to reproduce the entire multiplication process. He or she begins by knowing how to lead someone who is far from God to a saving knowledge of Christ; to then submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ by becoming His disciple, a follower and learner of Him; he or she then becomes a laborer in God’s harvest field.
* In this next to the last session we want to consider what is involved in being an **equippe**r of others in the grand, life-changing, world transforming endeavor we call the church, God’s **“called out”** ones.

**B. The Qualifications of and Equipper**

1. **The Call** - God has always “called” individuals to do His will!

**Noah** was called to build an ark – Genesis 6

**Abraham** was called to be the father of Israel – Genesis 12

**Moses** was called to lead the children of Israel – Exodus 3

**Joshua** was called to conquer the Promised Land – Joshua 1

**Saul** and **David** were called to serve as Kings of Israel

**The Prophets** were called to speak for God to the people of Israel

* The idea of **“calling”** is also seen throughout the New Testament:

Jesus called the disciples to follow Him – Matthew 4:19

Consider with me the following scriptures that speak of **the call**:

I Corinthians 1:26-29 – **“For consider your calling, brethren, that**

**there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not so that He may nullify the things that are so that no man may boast before God.”**

I Corinthians 7:20 – **“Each man must remain in that condition in**

**which he was called . . . for he who was called in the Lord.”**

Ephesians 1:18 – **“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be**

 **enlightened so that you will know what is the hope of his calling.”**

Ephesians 4:1,2 – **“Therefore I implore you to walk in a manner worthy**

**of the calling with which you have been called with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.”**

Ephesians 4:4 – **“For there is one body and one Spirit just as also you**

**were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in you all.”**

Philippians 3:14 – **“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God**

 **in Christ Jesus.”**

II Timothy 1:9 – **“Who has saved us and called us with an holy calling, not**

**according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which He has given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”**

Hebrews 3:1 – **“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling consider**

 **Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.”**

II Peter 1:10 – **“Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about**

**His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things you will never stumble; for in this the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savor Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.”**

* One must be sure of his call to ministry in order to continue to serve. Os Guiness, a British author, has written a book entitled “The Call” which is subtitled “Finding And Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life.”
1. **Requirements for Ministry –** I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-16
* Ministry is both a privilege and a responsibility. The Apostle Paul says in I Timothy 3:1, **“It is a trustworthy statement, if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.”** Here Paul gives some helpful insight into the call to spiritual leadership in the church.
* Paul uses two Greek words that describe two very different yet complimentary reasons to be a full time equipper. The first word, “orego” translated here **“aspires”** means “to reach after” or to stretch out oneself to grasp something. The second word, “epithumeo” translated here **“desires”** means “a passionate compulsion” and refers to a holy, inward sense of passion and desire.
* A man who is truly “called” to the ministry is marked both by a disciplined outward pursuit of this work as well as an inward consuming passion that drives him to hotly pursue it. Ministry is not just the best option for his life but it really is the only option. It’s not that he couldn’t make it in another line of work but it’s that no other vocation would be meaningful enough.
* The Lord wants His church led by disciplined and persevering men of spiritual passion. The Greek word “episkopos” is here translated **“overseer.”** The “overseers” among the Essene community preached, taught, presided over, exercised care, authority and protected the purity and discipline of a group of people. In a nutshell this describes the activities of a pastor or elder (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1,2).
* He uses the word **“fine”** (kalos) to describe the noble, honorable, excellent and high quality nature of the work of the ministry. To serve as a full-time pastor of a local congregation is the highest calling to which anyone could ever be “called” to follow. I served in that role for thirty-five years and my life has been rich and full of meaning and purpose.
* However, I found early on that the ministry is no nine-five job that you can walk away from at five o’clock and forget about for the rest of the evening. The work of ministry is never ending and depends on maximum effort as well as the power of Christ who is daily at work in your life.
* The work of ministry is such a serious undertaking that no man may enter based solely on his own desire. Anyone who would lead the church must be set apart to that responsibility by the church when it clearly recognizes the person’s giftedness, virtue, calling and service.
* The sign that this recognition had occurred and that a man had been set apart for ministry in the early church was the laying on of hands (I Timothy 4:14). By laying hands on a candidate for the ministry church leaders showed their unity and solidarity with him. They also gave him their commendation, support and affirmation.
1. **Responsibilities of the Ministry –** I Peter 5:1-3
* The writer of Hebrews gives an ominous statement of responsibility to pastors and elders when he says, **“Obey your leaders and submit to them for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give account”** (Hebrews 13:17).
* Giving account to God for the souls of men and women is no small thing. The responsibility of standing before God’s people each week and expounding His Holy Word to them is a heavy weight for anyone to bear.
* Even more challenging is that people are watching your life to make sure the things you preach from the pulpit are actually being evidenced in your life. All of the qualifications that are listed in the passages from I Timothy and Titus are spiritual values, character traits that mark Godly teachers and leaders. Moral purity allows a person to have incredible influence & impact.
* Jesus was the perfect model of the values of His kingdom but no human being, no matter how much he wants to model those values is often sabotages by his own human heart. This the dilemma Paul relates in Romans 7:15 when he says, **“I am not practicing what I would like to do but I’m doing the very thing I hate.”** In verses 21-23 he goes on to say, **“I find then the principle of evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man but I see a different law in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.”** This is the age old struggle between the flesh and the spirit.
* As a pastor your life and marriage are constantly on display and your practices as a parent are seen in how you handle your children and how they respond to you as their father. Any discrepancy in what you say and what you do is constantly causing a pastor to face his own depravity.
* The Word of God is a mirror in which we see ourselves and Satan is a cruel critic who is constantly screaming ‘hypocrite” to any of my thoughts and motives that are not in sync with the Word. Satan is the great accuser whose condemning reminders make us fall down daily begging for mercy.
* Paul exclaims in Romans 7:24, **“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?”** He then answers his own question in the next verse by saying, **“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord”** (v. 25). The substitutionary atonement sets us free!
* Only the grace of God can come to our rescue at these times and the release the Apostle Paul communicates in Romans 8:1 is incredible: **“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!”**
* So the responsibilities of the overseer are to rule; to teach and preach (I Timothy 5:17), to pray for the sick (James 5:14), to care for the church; to be examples for others to follow (I Peter 5:1,2); to set church policy (Acts 15:22ff and to ordain other leaders ( I Timothy 4:14). This is the short list!
1. **Rewards of Ministry –** Philippians 4:1 – “you are my joy and my crown!”
* One of the great rewards of ministry is that you are able to spend your time on things that are eternal. The majority of your waking hours are spent studying the Word of God, which is eternal and then involved in the care of men and women, boys and girls whose souls are also eternal.
* The Apostle John says in II John 1:4 one reward is great **“joy to see people walking in the truth”**. Many times the recognition and appreciation for ministry come years after the fact.
* I have lived long enough to now start hearing about some of the fruit of my labors. Often I will be approached by someone who pulls out a little tattered spiritual birth certificate with my name on it attesting to the fact that I was there to lead them across the threshold of faith years before.
* Recently upon exiting the plane in the airport the young professional that I had just lead to Christ gave me a big hug and thanked me for sharing the good news of the gospel with her. She said it was no accident that you sat next to me today on the plane because I desperately needed to hear this wonderful message of forgiveness.
* Jesus said to His disciples, **“I have called you friends”** (John 15:14). I have many wonderful friends as a result of 50 years in ministry. Also. one of the side benefits about constantly being in the Word of God is that it keeps you from sin. It helps you live a life that has few if any regrets.
* I told both of my daughters, what I have found to be true in my life is that a life of doing right is it’s own reward. And there will be crowns that we can lay at our Savior’s feet thanking Him for the joy of serving Him with our life.

**Two Books to Reference:**

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

2. “The Call” by Os Guinness; ISBN 13: 978-0-8499-4437-6