

How God's Kingdom Grows

Lesson 11: Developing Vision For Kingdom Growth, Part 2

Seed does not produce anything whenever it is left in a granary. Rather, the seed must be put into the soil and be properly cultivated (1 Corinthians 3:5-7). Because God uses people to plant and cultivate the seed of His kingdom, His people must have the vision to do His work well and with the urgency it requires. As we have seen, God has given some leadership roles for people to fill that are influential in helping others come into and grow in God's kingdom. Today, these include evangelists, shepherds, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11-13). Therefore, those who lead in these various capacities must do so with diligence (Romans 12:8). The second area which requires vision is concerning kingdom leaders.

1) Fulfill your ministry well. God is the one who has given some to be evangelists, shepherds, and teachers today (Ephesians 4:11). He is the one who has given these roles in His kingdom and helped people (through His word) to grow into these roles. Furthermore, He is the one who has instructed us concerning what these roles involve. God's expectation, then, is that those who are in these roles fulfill the service God has designed them to do (2 Timothy 4:5). Unfortunately, there are many in leadership roles who do not take their roles as seriously as they should, pervert their roles in a way that leaves God's work undone, or misuse their roles for selfish purposes. This angers God (Ezekiel 34:1-9) and is not God's plan (2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 5:1-3). Furthermore, it can be easy for leaders to get distracted from their main duties by things others could easily manage or by expectations people have for them rather than God's expectations (consider Acts 6:1-7). The result of everyone fulfilling their roles properly, however, is the word of God spreading. Therefore, leaders must carefully understand who God desires them to be in their roles

and what He expects them to be doing – and do it well!

2) Raise the bar. Leadership roles in God's kingdom do not exist for the purpose of holding titles, taking advantage of others, or bossing people around. Rather, a key function of these leadership roles is to help people see how the gospel of Christ calls them to live so they will stretch themselves to live accordingly. So, the leaders should demonstrate a high standard of holy and kingdom focused living in both their own lives and in their teaching (1 Timothy 4:11-16; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3). Others should contemplate their examples and teaching so as to imitate their faith (Hebrews 13:7). In fact, there is even a higher standard of expectation from God for those who are in leadership roles (Hebrews 13:17; James 3:1). For, leaders have a clear impact on others regarding their spiritual salvation or destruction (1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Peter 3:15-18). Leaders who do not raise the bar both in their teaching and example fail to please God and help others grow into the maturity Jesus desires of them (Matthew 23:2-7). Therefore, if you accept the role, you must also accept the responsibilities!

3) Equip the saints. A key component of each leadership role is to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). Unfortunately, some in churches today see the leaders as the only ones who do the work of God. Yet, godly leaders must not see things this way. For, godly leaders must recognize the potential each disciple of Christ has to serve God in a unique way and be committed to helping them do the work of God to the best of their abilities. Ephesians 4:11-16 shows the necessary components of how godly leaders impact others. To do this work, the leaders will work diligently to help people learn the true message of Christ in the New Testament. This will help them develop the proper faith, put on the characteristics of Christ, be united with other disciples, recognize and resist false teaching, and

grow in their spiritual maturity. However, true equipping is not just accomplished through giving information. Rather, equipping will involve helping those who are taught understand how to implement those teachings in their own lives and how to become useful and effective in Christ's service by using their unique abilities and opportunities.

4) Train other leaders. As leaders do their work, raise the bar, and equip the saints, the result should be that more leaders emerge. Consider earthly parents as a model of what God intends. If parents would do everything for their children rather than teaching, training, and equipping their children for life without them, it would be a great disservice to the children! Similarly, spiritual leaders (like spiritual parents) must actively work to help others progress in their faiths to the point of even being able to lead others one day (Titus 2:1-8; 2 Timothy 2:2). As we all have a limited time on this earth, godly leaders must recognize the need and urgency to actively train others who can serve as leaders in God's kingdom, who will be able to teach and train others also. This focus will help one's replacements be trained so there is no lack of leadership in God's kingdom, provide opportunities for others to develop into leaders, and help churches avoid being dependent on any one person or group of people in unhealthy ways!

God has always given His people leaders. He has done the same today in His kingdom by providing the roles that will help His work be accomplished and His people grow. However, if the leaders do not have the proper vision for accomplishing their work, their potential impact for the cause of Christ will be left unfulfilled. Instead, God has called each of these leaders to be diligent in performing the duties of the roles they are in!

Discipleship Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correction: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?