

# How God's Kingdom Grows

## Lesson 12: Developing Vision For Kingdom Growth, Part 3

It is unfortunate when the picture that is often painted concerning work in God's kingdom is one that is primarily done by a select few who are leaders in the kingdom. This, in effect, restricts the potential growth of the seed to whatever those few can accomplish. However, God's word pictures things quite differently – as those who are leaders in the kingdom work to equip all the saints for service in God's kingdom (Ephesians 4:11-16). This will unleash the potential of the seed far beyond what the leaders could ever accomplish! The third area which requires vision, then, is concerning individual saints.

**1) Seek God's kingdom first.** Jesus often expressed the need for His followers to diligently seek after the kingdom of God as the foremost priority of their lives (Matthew 6:33; 13:44-46; 16:24-28; Luke 9:57-62). One of the biggest threats to God's people not contributing to the growth of the kingdom as they could is getting distracted by the things of this life (sometimes immoral things, sometimes busyness, worries, etc.). This can be seen in Jesus's parable of the sower (Mark 4:18-20). There's a helpful contrast seen concerning this point between Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42, when they both had the opportunity to learn from Jesus. While there are certainly things we all must do as we live on this earth (i.e. work, take care of things around the house, eat, etc.), we must all learn to put God's kingdom first so as to choose what is best for the cause of God's kingdom. For, those who are citizens of God's kingdom must view themselves as soldiers in Christ's army and not as civilians who are focused on the things of this world (like those in the world view themselves, 2 Timothy 2:3-4)!

**2) Fulfill your role.** Like an earthly army, not every person will have the same role in Christ's army; but all are important to accomplishing the mission (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)! While every person is unique, the kingdom of Christ needs every

member to identify the roles he/she can and should fulfill – and then to be determined to do whatever he/she can to the best of his/her abilities (Romans 12:3-8). While this passage does *not* mean that people must choose which one(s) from this list he/she can accomplish (as God wants many of these from every Christian, i.e. showing mercy), the point is for each Christian to soberly use his/her opportunities, abilities, circumstances, etc. to the best he/she can to promote the cause of the kingdom of God! For, it is easy to underestimate what we can do in the kingdom of God, thereby hindering the growth of His kingdom. Therefore, you should take some time to carefully reflect over your life (perhaps with the help of a more spiritually mature disciple of Christ) and identify how Jesus can use what only you can do in His service!

**3) Aim to grow and multiply.** If we are not careful, we can limit the reach of God's kingdom by limiting what we think we can do. However, one of the common lessons given throughout the Bible is that God can do extraordinary things with people who never thought such was possible. Think about Moses, who made excuses as to why he should not be the one to lead God's people out of Egypt (Exodus 3:11; 4:1, 10, 13); yet God used him anyways. Think about Gideon, who was hiding from the enemy and was the youngest man in the weakest family (Judges 6:11-16); yet God used him anyways. Think about some of the apostles, who were fishermen (Matthew 4:18-22); yet God used them anyways. In the same way, you must not underestimate how God can use you for the cause of His kingdom. Rather, you must be determined to do the part you can currently give and to grow into other ways of service (Hebrews 5:12; 2 Peter 3:18). You should always be so kingdom focused that you are stretching outside of your comfort zone so you can be continually pruned by God so as to produce more fruit to multiply in His service (John 15:1-8)!

**4) Give yourself to being equipped.** We have seen that leaders in God's kingdom have the important role of equipping the saints for the work of ministry so they can grow, mature, and do their parts in the kingdom (Ephesians 4:11-16). However, this requires that each saint *wants* to be equipped to do as much as he/she can in the kingdom of God! Then, this requires that each saint makes himself/herself available to being equipped! This will require both time and energy to focus on learning how to be as useful as possible to God. For, this equipping process will involve learning the teachings of Christ as well as learning how to put those things into application in the context of your life. Since leaders must equip the saints, this means the saints must put in the work to learn from the leaders to be equipped. For example, while the apostles did not have great knowledge and training from a worldly perspective, they had been with Jesus and been equipped by Him (Acts 4:13)! They sat at His feet, they watched His life, they asked Him questions, they participated in His work, and now they could be sent out without Him physically walking beside them! Therefore, you must commit to being equipped and trained in this same process by those who follow Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2)!

Vision for the growth of God's kingdom is not something that only churches and kingdom leaders should be thinking about. Rather, every disciple of Christ needs to develop the vision for how he/she can be the most effective he/she can be in serving Jesus and spreading the gospel of His kingdom! For, when this happens in the way God intends, God's seed multiplies throughout local communities and throughout the world!

## 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?