

Teams Lesson 1

Introduction to Team Ministry

A Definition of a Team:

A group of people cooperating and working together to accomplish a common task, usually larger than any individual could accomplish on their own; or a greater collective accomplishment than could be achieved through simply pooling individual achievements.

I. The Biblical/Theological Foundation of Team Ministry

Genesis 1:1 cf. 1:2; John 1:1-3 God is Triune and stamps his image on all of creation. God is one God, but exists not as an individual, but as Three Persons. There is a constant interplay of this kind of unity and diversity throughout all creation.

Genesis 1:26 & 27 cf 2:18, 20,21 God creates man in his image in a special way and purposefully draws Adam into the process of understanding that his life is not meant to be lived individualistically. It is “not good” for Adam to be alone. He needs an equal partner. We exist in social community with one another, and need the gifting of each other to fulfill God’s purposes.

Gen 12:1-3 The purpose and fulfillment of the “individual call” to follow God only finds expression in the context of team. [cf Gen 17:9-16]

Exodus 19:3-6 The people of God are constituted as a “people,” a “nation;” not simply as individuals who have an individualistic relationship with God. [Cf Exodus 18:17-24] Moses learns that he must function with a team.

Matthew 1-4 The life and ministry of Jesus reflect the core identity of the work of God among us through teams.

Acts 2 The birth of the church is a complete body/team expression.

Acts 4 The ministry of the church is carried on through team ministry.

Acts 13:4,5; II Tim 4:9-12 Paul’s church planting/apostolic ministry throughout was in the context of a team approach. [Compare II Corinthians 2:12-13]

Rom 12:4-5; I Cor 12:7,12-27 God has sovereignly designed the church so that the only way we can fully accomplish his will is in connection with other team/body members.

We need to be clearly reminded of these things so that we do not

- 1) look for ways to do God's work apart from consideration of the rest of the body
- 2) ever come to the conclusion that we can forsake the body and accomplish God's will on our own [1 Cor 12:12-26]
- 3) fail to put the individual expression of our gifts in their proper, humble place [Rom 12:3-6]

“There is a power for doing God's will that exists in a team that is not to be found in individual effort. And it is a great relief because it takes the burden off of our puny shoulders.” *Jack Miller*

II. The Church as a Team:

A. Our Vision and Purpose: Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16

The Church is a team planted by God in the world to carry out the task of the great commission **of bringing God's righteousness to the world, through faith in Christ. That great commission comes in the midst of nations and peoples and individuals who are in various stages of brokenness and evil.** [Gen 1-11; Acts 2,3,4]

When we accept the breadth of the task for all that God has called us to, it becomes apparent how much we must function with a team. [Isaiah 2:1-5; Isaiah 42:1-4; Ephesians 4:7, 11-17] Compare Kibera Slums ~ St. Louis Region

Embracing the reality of God's commitment to work through teams gives us the freedom to embrace the breadth of the task with hope, because we know God will supply every part that is needed. [Ephesians 4:7,8]

B. Our Motivating Power II Corinthians 5:14ff

Our motivational power lays in the gospel itself and the faith that emerges from hearing the Gospel in our hearts and the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit

Vision is not the fuel of ministry. It does give us direction; just not the power for accomplishing the work of God

Being filled with the love of the God in Christ through the Gospel is what makes teams possible, because we are free to engage in a lifestyle of love and forgiveness as a means of team building.

Without this, teams move towards breakdown or stagnancy because the reality of sin emerges within every team, and the outward forces of evil can simply be overwhelming. These realities, in turn, force a need to learn to deal with sin in light of the Gospel. [Compare I Corinthians 1:1-9] This is the practical application of seeing each other as “new creations” under the Gospel that is meant to inform our heart perspectives on each other and our hope for the world around us.

C. The Defining Characteristic of a Team Beginning to Function – Prophet, Priest and King Gifting Deuteronomy 17:14-18:22

1. The relationship between the Godhead, the Three-fold Covenantal offices of Prophet, Priest and King, and the corollary, needed gifting for teams to function properly.
2. Prophet -- Vision
Priest -- People
King -- Administration

(The “secular” realities of the image of God: CEO, HR, CFO)

A team has begun to exist as a living fellowship when each member is committed to using their gifts for the primary goal of accomplishing the task of the team; moving “I” and “Me” concerns to “We”—how can I make the team leader a success? The other team members? How do “we” accomplish the goal of bringing the love of God to the world in specific areas of ministry he has called us to?

This leaves “self-glorying” to the side and is evidence of God being at work because it is so opposite to our sin nature.

III. Obstacles to Team Ministry

A. Innate Independence

The sin of Gen 3 is written in the very fabric of our sin natures. Adam and Eve’s decision to learn about “good and evil” on their own, and become “autonomous gods” is the root sin that gives expression to the hyper-individualism and hyper-independence of our culture.

This is one of the places we need to take the self-deceiving problem of sin very seriously. [Jeremiah 17:9]

We can hear this warning and if we are not careful, we can go our way in ministry still with a predominate self-centered focus, and then, add a religious coating to our efforts that makes it almost impossible to penetrate. In the name of “God has told me,” we can launch out in extreme forms of independence that leave no room for the humility of working with the body of Christ.

This independence in turn feeds into-

B. Inborn Self-glorying

This is the negative flip side of being independent. If I am truly independent, then I must prove my worth. This is the heart of attaining self-righteousness and in turn leads to:

A sense of myself that says: “it is a glory for me to do this,” “this is my gifting,” “this is my calling,” “this is where I am supposed to shine.”

This is combined with ...

A sense of others that says: “I don’t want anything (anybody) to get in the way,” “I can do it better,” “so-and-so might not do this the right way,” “let others learn to be servants of God here (to me)”. The end result is that we don’t truly value the input of others and recognize our real need of their gifts; we don’t listen and learn from others, we only try to use them to accomplish our goals.

Compare Saul & David – the false humility of Saul [1 Kings 10:20-22] is actually rooted in a self-glorying spirit. His rules during battle were not for the benefit of the team [1 Sam 14:24ff]; at the end of his campaign against the Amalekites he set up a monument to himself. [1 Sam 15:12] Versus David, who endured all things for the sake of God’s glory among his people. [1 Sam 26:9-11; 30:1-8, 21-22]

This self-glorying is a very subtle form of idolatry and if not addressed, frequently becomes the seed for the later fallout of team members, or in the worst case, the collapse of the team.

If, instead of these natural attitudes we ask the Lord to teach us Romans 12:5 -- that we are there for each other – the end result is that each of us will have the sense of confidence we need because we are surrounded by God’s loving team. It also wonderfully takes the heat off of “me” and my desire to perform.

Remember: Christ is on the move through teams; he is not about exalting self-glorying individuals. Team ministry has a vindication of God in it that does not exist otherwise.

IV. Marks of a Healthy Team Ministry

- A. A Fellowship of Love and Joy and Hope and Unity and Endurance and Power and Suffering and Forgiveness and Vision and Purpose

Nehemiah 8:10; Psalm 45:6,7; Hebrews 12:2,3; Rom 14:17; 15:5-6, 13; Psalm 68:35; Rev 1:8-9; Rom 5:1-5; Ephesians 4:32-5:2; Acts 2:17-21

These are some of the most enticing gifts of God's salvation. And the world is sick to death in search of them.

It is rooted in the Covenant faithfulness of God to bring his righteousness and salvation to the world through the Risen Lord and Messiah. [Ephesians 1:15-23]

- B. A Fellowship of Prayer Acts 1, 2, 4...

This is one of the main foundational weapons God has chosen to use to empower the church to accomplish his will. It fleshes out the Gospel for us over and over again.

- C. A Fellowship of Outreach in Weakness and the Spirit's Power Acts 2 & 4 etc....

We are meant to be teams taking the Gospel out to the world, out into our streets. The Presence of God is with us to move us out. And as we encounter weakness and trial along the way, and are broken down, we cry out for the bread of the Spirit [Luke 11:11] and God hears our prayers and fills us – because God has chosen to dwell with the lowly. [1 Cor 1:27-31; 2 Cor 4:7-12; 12:9-10]

As we go, we are encouraged by the discovery that the real Team Leader is Christ Jesus Himself, who will unfold the very works of God before us and through us.

- D. A Fellowship of Complementary Gifts I Cor 12; Rom 12:3-6

Sovereignly distributed by the Spirit, and existing within the community of faith in which God has called us to participate locally, nationally, and globally

If you feel like there is a genuine part of the gift-mix missing, ask the Lord to bring the person along, and look for her/him.

- E. A fellowship of Constructive Conflict Matt 20:20ff; Gal 2:11-16