

Team Ministry - Lesson 3 Teams and Goals

I. The Need for a Plan

A. Vision, Mission, Purpose

These are all words that help describe the overarching sense of direction we are meant to have as the people of God in whatever ministry we undertake. Without this, the people of God perish. The vision trumps everything else and directs and informs our plans. God has one vision, Matthew 28:18-20, that is being unfolded through his people and expressed in a great variety of means and circumstances [Acts 2:17ff]

The challenge is for God's purpose to genuinely, concretely, become our purpose, and not have it remain **undefined and unowned**

1. Own the vision of God. Ask yourself, "Is this the driving purpose of my life and ministry?"

- to "seek first the kingdom"
- to say, "your kingdom come, your will be done"
- by means of "knowing Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering"
- to the end and purpose of discipling the nations

2. Define the Vision of God: Philippians 1:9-11 -- what does it mean for us?

This is an ongoing task and work; you are engaging in this process as you commit to particular areas of ministry to fulfill the work of the kingdom

B. Establishing defined goals which are controlled by the vision and purpose

1. You need a specific goal [cf. Paul, missionary journeys; Rom 1:13]
Christ's specific goal is to demonstrate God's mercy and salvation, and purchase the way in for us

2. But your goal needs to be controlled by God's purpose [Acts 16:6-10; Jesus in John 11; Paul II Corinthians 1:15-21; 2:12-17; Romans 1:13]

A lot of ministry doesn't ever get started because people are too tightly controlling the goal - not trusting God to fulfill the vision through prayer. The specific goal "as I have defined it" becomes the measure of success and sense of accomplishment, and if the goal isn't being met to our satisfaction, we can easily give up.

The only real freedom here comes from a deep sense of free acceptance in the Gospel and the knowledge that God is now and will lead us in triumphal procession, even if the particular goals are not unfolding as we planned [2 Cor 2:12ff]

C. Implementing goals with flexible strategies that are open to whatever change is necessary to meet the goal

You need to have a general sense you are going to stick with a strategy until it is clear it isn't working, and then discard it. Let your strategy be flexible.

1. Strategies are the tools for accomplishing the goals

Jesus, going to Jerusalem; at the Passover; John 7:1-14; Samaritan Woman; John 4

2. But strategies always need to remain flexible, changing as much and as often as needed

The danger is that the strategy becomes the end in itself and dominates the work

Whether or not the goal is being met is overlooked

Strategies that do work in one instance, often will not work in another. When they do work, the danger is for the strategy to turn into a human tradition: "this is the way we have always done things."

The more of a sense of need of being in control yourself, the less freedom you will have to change strategies when needed. You will feel like you are actually losing the goal or purpose; Satan will lie to you, and your flesh will become angry with God

The freedom of the Gospel - that God loves me, that He is committed to fulfilling His will, that He is lovingly in control -- gives incredible freedom to flex and change as needed

Paul - Mission - preach to the Gentiles; Goal - Europe - Strategy - City Centers, Jewish Synagogues; How? Plans; doors closing; doors opening; jail

II. Five Essential Ingredients to Fruitful Team Ministry

There are many things a healthy team needs to flourish. At the heart of it all there must be a believing of the Gospel that gives the team the freedom to grow in whatever ways it needs to. Along with that, there are some other essential ingredients, which, if they are missing can cause the team to easily flounder and fail.

A. Loyalty: Commitment to the Team

1. Many teams simply never gel; never get started. People have an idea, but it never really goes anywhere. Often, that can be because there is no real leadership. There is no one to help feed vision of how God wants to save the lost and disciple the nations through this particular area of ministry.

The general result is a lack of loyalty that grows out of not owning a vision/goal. People are only half in it. There is often a mistaken sense that something “magic” might happen just because you showed up. In reality, you end up working harder as part of a team than you ever would individually. Teams give you that freedom precisely because you are not carrying the load alone.

2. Evidence of lack of loyalty: poor attendance; not showing up on time; lack of communication on whether or not you are coming.

3. What loyalty looks like:

During times of feeling bored/wasteful/why are we doing this?, the solution is not to withdraw. If the vision is of God, you need to be willing to be bored “together” if you are going to go anywhere.

Loyalty at times feels like you are simply going through the motions. If that is *all* you are doing, trouble. But at times that is what it feels like.

B. Endurance: Long-term Commitment to the Goal of the Team

Endurance must flow from the Gospel

While the first team fails for lack of gifted leadership, this team often has many gifted leaders, but dies quickly. Why? What happened?

In part, they can be too aware of their gifts and shift the focus of their faith from God’s blessings freely bestowed in Christ alone to their gifts and sense of vision

Without the ability to endure that comes from the Gospel itself, all the giftedness in the world won’t matter

Paul's last letter, II Timothy, is fundamentally about this need for endurance and the power for it that comes from the Gospel. Repeatedly Paul talks to Timothy about endurance [2 Tim 2:3,10,12; 3:10, 4:1-5]

In 2:8-10, Paul tells Timothy to remember the Gospel, and that because Paul himself remembers it, he is able to say, "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect."

The team will need to be able to face rejection, hardship, difficulty as Christ and the Apostles all did. Their endurance will come from the hope of the Gospel

Endurance and the suffering that goes with it, produces stability and character- this is where we learn wisdom [Rom 5:1-5; James 1:2ff]. If we learn the Gospel, we can learn endurance.

C. Courage: Commitment to move out of your safety zone

This team fails because they end up being inwardly focused - which is simply a means of protecting ourselves. The Christian life is one of Risk, with a capital "R." We are living sacrifices; called to die daily; willing to be led like sheep to the slaughter [Rom 8:17, 35, 36]

Teams that lack courage often have lots of meetings; lots of warm feelings; lots of fellowship - but are singing "Jesus Savior, pilot me" while still tied up to the dock. In the end, you become very dry

Even secular business people deal with the need for risk; here are some quotes from some of the most successful:

"Chaotic action is preferable to orderly inaction."

"You've got to be willing to fail."

"No geniuses. You just have to keep at it."

The foundation for courage is found in a "soaking in" of the promises of God; getting God's mind, so you have a vision that is clear: the kingdom will grow, Christ will win the day [Joshua 1, Matthew 28 cf. John 17:18]

D. Zeal: a single-minded focus on the goal

The "inward focus" of those who lack courage often takes place slowly over the course of time. The focus shifts, and zeal dies out. You start out consumed with a passion of what God wants to do, and over time it starts to grow cold

How does Paul keep the mindset of being spent for the Gospel - even as an older man?

Return to the zeal and passion and love **of God**. Not focusing on your zeal, but on God's. Always coming back to II Cor 5:14

E. Honesty: living in a faith tension with your failure

This team may have lots of endurance, but little wisdom. If you are not being fruitful, need to ask why. Failure needs to be openly dealt with and become a good foundation for further growth. But if failure is all there is- something is wrong

In a good sense, there is always going to be a healthy tension that exists in the church until Jesus returns: a tension of the need to keep reaching to a lost world until the nations are won to Christ. Meetings that don't address this issue aren't being honest. Sometimes the meetings aren't painful enough.

Do not resolve the tension of failure by giving yourself excuses: "God has called us to be faithful, not successful;" "Many are called, but few are chosen." We need to recognize we cannot define success in worldly terms, or even on our own terms, but Jesus did say, "I have chosen you to bear fruit- much fruit- fruit that will last- fruit that will bring glory to my Father." [John 15:8, 16ff]

The look of a successful team struggles in each of the five areas, but relentlessly comes back to the Gospel, believing the promises of God together in prayer, being renewed in the love of God for themselves and for the world. It endures in love. And the kingdom grows, slowly and steadily like a tree that becomes a rich source of strength and encouragement to believer and unbeliever alike.