

Elder Training Series

Session 22 - Job Duty of 'Directing The Affairs Of The Church': Category Of Making Fruit-bearing Disciples (NIV based)

(Repeating) NOTE: Again perhaps it would be prudent for you to mark or highlight the items in this document that you need to work on or improve.

READ (Job Duty): "**The elders who direct the affairs of the church well...**" (1 Timothy 5:17a), "**But you** [pastor Timothy]... **discharge all the duties of your ministry**" (2 Timothy 4:5);

READ (Category): Matthew 28:19a - "**go and make disciples of all nations...**", John 15:8 - "**This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**", and John 15:2 - "**He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.**"

SECTION POINT: Elders, overseers, and pastors have the duty before God to provide opportunities and facilitate each believer in becoming a fruit-bearing disciple.

-- In regard to elders, overseers, and pastors fulfilling the job duty functions that relate to "directing the affairs of the church", this document will continue the study of another category that is common to most churches and ministries for which elders, overseers, and pastors need to exert oversight.

-- 8. Making Fruit-bearing Disciples

GOD'S AGENDA:

- - In the 'directing of the affairs of the church', it is easy and common for the leadership to either miss, or to lose focus on, or to slowly drift away from the main objective that God wants and instructs to be accomplished - to "make disciples" who "bear much fruit". (Matthew 28:19a; John 15:8)
- - In most churches and ministries, the leadership naturally and typically establishes by their activities that the main goal and focus is to grow the attendance of each program. But this numerical growth goal and focus does not necessarily align with God's objective, which is to grow fruit-bearing disciples who excellently do the work of the ministry that produces the results of growing even more fruit-bearing disciples.
- - Also typically, the leadership tends to subjectively self-evaluate its own performance as indeed 'making disciples', but an objective long-term examination produces concrete evidence that in fact very few or no fruit-bearing disciples have been made as a result of the leadership's years or decades of ministry functioning.
- - So, this faulty self-evaluation lulls them into complacency, in which they are maintaining the running of their programs in their present form, and thinking fruit-bearing disciples are being made when in fact there are very few or none actually being made. (e.g. Revelation 3:1-2)

MAXIMIZATION:

- Analytically looking at accomplishing this objective of God's agenda, the core of the challenge is to:

- - - successfully make actual fruit-bearing disciples - persons who were not a disciple or were not bearing any fruit for God's kingdom when they started attending your church or ministry, who as a result of attending your ministry functioning for a few years or less have developed into a disciple who thereupon and thereafter consistently bears much significant fruit for God's kingdom;

- - - effectively make fruit-bearing disciples - persons who are made into fruit-bearing disciples by or as a result of the deliberate design and specific actions of your ministry program(s) that are intentionally formulated and precisely implemented in order to effect the direct result of making those attending persons into disciples who bear much fruit;

- - - productively make fruit-bearing disciples - the ministry program(s) produce proportionally many fruit-bearing disciples, meaning the number of the persons that are indeed made into actual fruit-bearing disciples is occurring at a high percentage of the congregation or group size.

- - From this previous statement, attaining 'a high percentage of the congregation' 'being made into actual fruit-bearing disciples' seems to be unrealistic and unattainable in today's world, but consider God's will and agenda for every true believer, as cited by Jesus in John 15:8, "**This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.**"

- - Notice the link here in John 15:8 - that a "disciple" is not merely a listening, and observing, and learning, and agreeing follower of Jesus, but is also a doer of God's will and agenda of "bearing much fruit" for God's kingdom - a doer in whatever capacity God designates. (James 1:22)

- - Jesus cites an additional dynamic in John 15:2, "**...every [believer] that does bear fruit, [God] prunes so that [believer] will be even more fruitful**".

- - As evident from these verses, if God wants, expects, and even is working to accomplish this agenda, then why should the leadership be afraid, or hesitant, or negligent in overtly pushing this agenda as well?

- - And if God is so serious about this agenda that He even attaches a dire threat reality consequence, "**He cuts off every branch in [Jesus] that bears no fruit**" (John 15:2), then why should the leadership be afraid, or hesitant, or negligent in directly declaring and regularly keeping this threat fresh in the minds of their congregation as well?

- - Obviously, each elder, overseer, pastor, and ministry leader needs to steadfastly hold this agenda of God as a premier core value that is foundationally present in and determines the nature and composition of every aspect of the ministry functioning of the programs and activities of their church or ministry.

- - And the leadership must "keep reminding", "warning", and promoting this agenda of God to the congregation, for the congregation to not only hear but also to see. (from 2 Timothy 2:14)

STEPS FOR FACILITATING:

- - Obviously, then, a main ingredient of 'making fruit-bearing disciples' is 'facilitating' - taking distinct steps of action to nurture and expedite the process of each believer being transitioned from merely being a disciple of Jesus into being a disciple who is bearing "much fruit". (John 15:8)

- - The leadership has the duty and responsibility before God to "doing everything you can to help" the believers "on their way" to becoming fruit-bearing disciples "and to see

that they have everything they need" to do that well and do that 'much'. (from Matthew 28:19a with John 15:8 and adapted from Titus 3:13)

-- Some practical steps for elders, overseers, pastors, and ministry leaders of how to do this facilitation are:

- - - creating opportunities - intentionally creating situations in which believers are invited to short-term try out and experience what it is like to engage in doing a particular ministry position activity, which can start at a simple low level and then can progress on to more sophisticated higher levels, for examples such as: (low level) teach the memory verse in a 2nd grade Sunday School class; or (medium level) lead a small sub-group of Jr. High students in discussing the Bible lesson that they just finished hearing; or (upper level) be a sub-group leader of high school students on a missions trip; or (high level) substitute preach a sermon to the congregation while the pastor is briefly out of town, and etcetera;
- - - temporarily suspending restrictions or perhaps slightly changing restrictions on norms, for examples such as: allowing sufficiently musically-talented children and youth to perform on the 'praise and worship music team' of the adult worship service on occasions when the music leader is out-of-town; or allowing a spiritually-mature older high school student to lead a selected devotional during an off-campus outing event of the high school youth group; and etcetera;
- - - conducting group training sessions on discovering and developing one's spiritual gifts; (Note: Contents from 'Sessions 11-16' of this 'Elder Training Series' can be fairly-easily adapted as curriculum for conducting these group training sessions on spiritual gifts.)
- - - conducting preparatory group training sessions for ministry positions, such as: Bible teachers; children's and youth groups workers; special events coordinators and workers; home groups leaders and hosts; evangelism outreach teams and events workers; deacons; elders; finance committee, pastor search committee; and etcetera;
- - - personal coaching of the believer before, during, and after the believer tries out engaging in a ministering position activity that is new to him/her;
- - - presenting feedback to the believer after the believer has tried out engaging in a ministry position activity, which could include: privately presenting honest, constructive, and pertinent feedback and evaluation, along with encouragement if appropriate; if warranted, gently and considerately diverting or transitioning the believer into trying some other ministry function that might be better suited or matched to the believer; and etcetera;
- - - contacting the believer weekly at the beginning or periodically later on, checking in to see how he/she is doing, helping him/her to adjust to the various conditions, and assisting in solving or remedying problems that the believer encountered while trying out engaging in a ministry position activity; and etcetera;
- - - conducting one-on-one mentoring of a believer who shows substantial desire, a teachable attitude, and great potential to possibly becoming an excellent ministry leader;
- - - regularly urging ministry leaders to replicate themselves by means of taking on an apprentice;
- - - encouraging the believer to attend a credible Bible college or seminary for training in ministry, and perhaps arranging financial support for him/her.

LEADERSHIP'S AGENDA:

- - This active 'encouraging and promoting - that believers in a church or ministry try doing various ministry position activities' (plug them in) needs to be an important

foundational agenda and activity of the ministry philosophy of the leadership in the church or ministry.

- - And this active 'encouraging and promoting - that believers try doing various ministry position activities' needs to be proactively occurring on an ongoing basis within all of the ministries of the church, rather than merely reactively and solely occurring only when there currently is a vacancy in a ministry position.

- - Therein, a necessity exists of having each elder or pastor persistently pushing this agenda, creating and maintaining it in the culture and functioning of the ministries that each of them oversees, and ensuring that it always remains as an advertised open opportunity for believers in the church or ministry to try out.

MOTIVATION:

- - In order for a disciple to actually 'bear much fruit' in an ongoing persistent long-term manner, the disciple has to be sufficiently motivated to do ministry work.

- - The disciple must want to do a particular kind of ministry work, with the presence of one or more motivations that generate that want.

- - Upon the disciple having tried out doing a ministry work, and therein has occurred the removal of the unknown of the question "What would it be like if I did this ministry work?", now other criteria come into importance for that disciple.

- - The disciple is processing whether or not he/she is suited to do that particular ministry work - if it aligns with his/her personality.

- - The disciple is watching, listening, and struggling to determine if God has gifted him/her to do that particular ministry work.

-- The disciple is evaluating his/her experiences of trying out that particular ministry work, determining:

- - - - whether that ministry work was personally fun, or enjoyable, or fulfilling for him/her;

- - - - whether that ministry work was edifying to his/her listeners or recipients;

- - - - whether that ministry work contributes to the accomplishing for his/her listeners or recipients a spiritual purpose that the disciple values or holds important;

- - - - whether that ministry work is personally satisfying, and sufficiently engaging or challenging for the disciple, which leads to his/her contentment in doing that ministry work;

- - - - whether that ministry work puts to good use the disciple's ministry skills and academic ministry training;

- - - - whether that ministry work fits in with or branches upward from his/her past ministry work experiences that went well for the disciple;

- - - - whether that ministry work involves or inherently contains any detriments that for the disciple would fatally terminate any further trying out, or pursuing, or working in that particular ministry work.

- - In some cases, continued exposure to trying out a particular ministry work can lead to a sprouting and growing love within that disciple for doing that ministry work.

- - And conversely, in some cases, continued exposure to trying out a particular ministry work can lead to a repulsion within the disciple for doing that ministry work.

- - It is important to note, though, that the repulsion may not necessarily be targeted at that kind of ministry work, but rather because of (for examples) how poorly that ministry is being run, or how the teaching in that ministry is too low of quality or mismatched for

that audience type, or how that ministry's functioning significantly misses even trying to accomplish God's purposes for that audience type.

- - God can and does use this repulsion to drive that disciple to make significant structural and operational improvements to how he/she is going to run a ministry in the future, in comparison to how he/she saw it run poorly during the time of his/her exposure of trying out that particular ministry work. (An application of some concepts in Ephesians 5:15-17, "Be very careful, then... **wisely** making the most of every opportunity... understanding what the Lord's will is".)

APPLICATIONS:

- - As an elder, overseer, or pastor, are you now steadfastly determined to staying focused on the high priority of "making disciples" who "bear much fruit"?
 - - Do you now have in mind some practical steps that you are definitely going to implement in the ministries that you oversee, in order to facilitate the believers in your church or ministry to move towards becoming long-term bearers of much fruit for God's kingdom?
 - - Within your capacity of 'directing the affairs of the church' or ministry, are you going to promote, structure, and maximize the achieving of this objective? With the other elders and pastor(s)? With the ministry leaders? With the ministry workers? With the believers?
 - - Do you understand the important role that incurring agreeable motivation plays in making a disciple into a fruit-bearing disciple? If so, are you going to excel in accommodating (as much as possible and appropriate) the generating of agreeable motivations within believers when they are trying out and experiencing what it is like to do particular ministry work?
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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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