

The God's Eternal Purpose

and how reach it

The God's Eternal Purpose and how reach it

Counsel of God Series

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This work is a new edition of the book *The God's Eternal Purpose and how reach it* restructured in lessons.

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This update was made in March 2014, complying to the most recent Portuguese text, correcting typing errors and changing the format (Disciples in New Jersey, USA).

The Bible version that we are using in this work is the New King James Version (NKJV), when otherwise the version it will be referenced locally in the text.



Fazendo Discipulos

www.fazendodiscipulos.com.br

e-mail: contato@fazendodiscipulos.com.br

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Presentation

It has been great satisfaction to note that the booklet Elementary principles, has been of real utility, not only for the brothers in Salvador, but also for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in other cities of Brazil.

We also hope that this book, The Eternal Purpose of God and How to Reach it, which we are putting at the disposal of the brethren, may cooperate with the building up of those who seek to understand the Father's heart and execute His will .

We want to honor our brother Ivan Baker from Buenos Aires, Argentina. His patience and love has been a clear instrument of God cooperating with the Lord in the teaching of the truths contained here.

Everything that we do will have eternal value insofar it cooperates with God's purpose. We pray that our precious Lord Jesus may be glorified in the lives of those who, leaving the present century and denying traditions of men, become prisoners of the holy calling: participate and cooperate with the Lord's purpose.

The basic content of the first booklet is the port of entry into the Kingdom of God. This second focuses, basically, in the Goal for those who are in the kingdom. All the booklets that will follow, will deal with various aspects of the Way to reach the Goal.

Salvador, October of 1991

Presbytery in Salvador

How Teaching in the Church Should Be

The disciples who learn and then teach should be able to do it in simple instructions. The Lord teaches us to feed “sheep” and not “giraffes”. Those who have greater capacity should humbly kneel down to eat from the plate of the littlest ones. Jesus said, “I give you thanks, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and have revealed them to children” (Mat 11:25-26). The church does not need a sophisticated academic teaching framework (1Co 1:18-31; 2:1-16).

The example of the first church in Jerusalem is to be remembered as a role model in all the ways for all times. The brothers from that time were simple people, many of whom did not know how to read or write. They did not have a printing press or paper, nor did they have bibles. Looking at the way they lived, we notice that the apostles used the method of constant repetition (catechism). Those who learned could absorb and keep the word in their minds and hearts. They did not walk around seeking novelties or inventing things. But the important things that they taught were repeated many times until everyone understood them well (Php 3:1; 2Pe 1:12-15).

The apostles were very aware of the necessity of passing on the whole counsel of God and not theological opinions. Every disciple had to be formed in the image of Jesus Christ (Act 20:26-27; Php 4:9; 2Ti 2:2). The teaching of the apostles spoke of basically three things:

- The revelation of the Christ; his person, his power, his promises.
- All of the commandments that Jesus gave us in order to live.
- All of the principles for the functioning of the church.

We have to return to simplicity so that the whole counsel of God can be received and absorbed by all the brothers, especially the less educated. God will never examine us about our knowledge with respect to the contents of the Bible. He will ask us how we lived. A doctrine should only indicate how the disciples should live (Tit 2:1-15).

How to Work with this Material

This book is divided into lessons to be studied by the disciples on their own as well as in conjunction with their disciplers.

Because we do not want to digest all the teaching for the disciple, there are two sections in each lesson: Seeking Revelation and Understanding More.

Seeking Revelation

In this section we want the disciple to have contact with God and His Word, and to receive revelation and the knowledge of Him and His Word through prayer.

The disciple should read each of the verses indicated in the Bible Reading section, praying to the Lord for revelation.

He should also seek to answer the questions from “Help for Meditation” in his notebook, making note of everything that he has learned as well as any questions he has.

In each lesson, there are some phrases and Bible verses to memorize. These should be memorized as they are found in the book, so that all the disciples will have memorized the same verses. They were chosen in the best translation of that verse.

Understanding More

This section is for the disciple to deepen and enrich his understanding of that which he has already meditated on.

However, he should only go on to this section after having carefully done the previous section (Seeking Revelation) and after having shown his meditations and notes to his discipler. Together the disciple and discipler should then read the content of Understanding More.

Part 1	The God's Eternal Purpose
	And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Rom 8:28-29)

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Gen 1:26; Eph 1:4-5,11.

Help for meditation

- What God meant when he created man? What was His will and purpose?
- How was man when was created? What was his characteristics?

Memorization

What was God’s purpose when he created man?	Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”. (Gen 1:26)
<i>God wanted a family of men in His likeness.</i>	

Understanding More

God's Purpose in Creating Man

This is a fundamental matter. We should open our hearts to hear what God has to say to us about his purpose. It cannot be just the studying of a booklet. This matter should overtake our minds and hearts. The knowledge of the glory that there is a purpose of God, should take over our whole being. His purpose, objective, goal should direct our lives.

Our whole life, way of life, behavior, our work and effort is directed by one goal we have. For this reason, God's purpose should become our purpose, our goal.

If we cooperate with God we should know his desires, his heart, and his purpose. Everything we do will only have eternal value in itself, as long as it cooperates with God's purpose.

A Very Common Mistake

Many of us lived several years without knowing God's purpose for our lives. We believed erroneously that our goal as Christians was to get into heaven. We looked to the Bible with a humanist focus (man at the center of everything), and we concluded that God's purpose was the salvation of men, everything revolving around man and his needs.

This mistaken vision occurred because we always saw God's purpose starting with the fall of man. So, as man is lost, salvation became the center of God's purpose. This is an error which should be corrected.

It is clear that God wants to save all men. It is evident in the verses of 1Tim 2:3-4; 2Pe 3:9 and John 3:16. However, we should not to confuse God's wishes with his purpose. God's purpose did not start with man's fall. It is something that was already in His heart before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4-11).

Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (Eph 1:4)

Let us think a little about the following argument. If God had as His purpose to save man before the creation of the world, then God is an accomplice of sin, because God needed man to sin in order to fulfill His purpose.

When God said, “Do not eat of this fruit”, in truth He wanted man to eat and sin, to be lost in darkness. In this way God would be able to fulfill His purpose of saving man and showing His great love.

Look, this is a serious confusion! God never wanted man to sin. Salvation was not the purpose of God’s heart. Redemption was necessary because of the fall. The fall was not programmed so that there could be salvation. We need to know God’s first intention, which is the purpose in God’s heart when He created man.

What Was God’s Purpose in Creating Man?

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” (Gen 1:26)

When God made man, he wanted to have children in His image, with His nature and His life. God wanted to have a large family that would express His glory and authority on earth.



When God created man, He wanted a family of men after His likeness.

So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that [lives](#) moves on the earth.” (Gen 1:27-28)

Therefore, Adam and Eve were created in God’s image. We know that every living thing reproduces accordingly its own species. Hence, when Adam and Eve would multiply, would reproduce children in God’s image. That would be the family of God. A family of holy and perfect men and women like God is. What a glorious and loving purpose!

Lesson 2 | What happened
when man sinned?

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Rom 3:12; 5:12; Gen 5:3;
- Heb 6:17; Isa 46:10.

Help for meditation

- What happened to man because of sin (Rom 3:12)?
- What kind of children Adam bared after he lost the life and image of God? (Gen 5:3)
- If Adam was dead, in what condition their children were born?
- Did God give up His purpose because of sin?

Memorization

What happened when man sinned? <i>Man became worthless for God's purpose</i>	They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. (Rom 3:12)
Did God give up His purpose because of sin? <i>No, God did not give up His purpose.</i>	


Understanding More

What happened when man sinned?

They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. (Rom 3:12)

How sin did interfere in God's purpose?

We all know the sad story. Adam's sin was a violent, diabolical interruption in God's purpose. Because of sin man became guilty, the object of God's wrath, worthy of eternal punishment, cast out of God's presence without communion with Him. "The salary of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).



With sin, man became a useless creature to God's purpose.

But the problem was not just that man had become guilty before God, but also that his very nature was corrupted and spoiled. Man lost God's image and life. He became another creature. He was not the same man anymore, he was a dead man to God, useless for God's purpose.

Not only Adam that did become useless, after he was corrupted he had children in his own image after his likeness (Gen 5:3). Now, all of Adam's descendents became ruined and useless for God's purpose. The Word states that sin was conveyed to all men.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. (Rom 5:12)

Did God give up His purpose or change His plans?

Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath. (Heb 6:17)

God never changed His initial purpose. He did not have several plans, He did not create a new goal, nor did He give up what He wanted from the beginning. The purpose of God is unchangeable. (Heb 6:17) Hallelujah!

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure'. (Isa 46:10)



God did not give up
of His purpose because of sin.
He is unchangeable.

Lesson 3 | What did God do to Accomplish His Purpose?

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- 2Co 5:17; Col 1:27.
- 1Co 15:45-48.

Help for meditation

- If man has become worthless, what did God do to fulfill His purpose?
- Meditate and explain the text in 1Co 15:45-48.

Memorization

If man became worthless, how does
God hope to achieve His purpose?

*He gives us a new life in Christ.
God's hope is the life of Christ in us.*

Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a
new creation; old things have passed
away; behold, all things have
become new. (2Co 5:17)

Christ in you, the hope of glory. (Col
1:27)

Understanding More

What did God do to accomplish His purpose?

God created a new race of men

And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. (1Co 15:45-48)

Now since all of the first man's descendants became useless for His purpose, God had to create a new race. How did God do that? Throughout the new birth that every man must experience. By natural birth (flesh and blood), we belong to the race of Adam, spoiled and useless. By the new birth we become participants in the heavenly race.



God gives us a
new life in Christ.

The hope of God
is the life of Christ
in us.

Adam lost God's image because he was rebellious (Gen 3:17). Jesus always did the Father's will (John 4:34), in everything He pleased Him (John 8:29), and was obedient until death (Phil 2:8).

Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2Co 5:17)

Man becomes a new creation, receives the nature of God (2Pe 1:4) and the image of the one who created him (Col 3:10), when he believes in the one that the Father has sent (Joh 6:29). He denies himself, takes up his cross and loses his life (Matt 16:24-25), receives the lordship of Jesus Christ (Rom 10:9), and is baptized in Christ (Mar 16:16).

All the glory of God's plan was not lost in sin. God did not give up His purpose. What is God's hope to fulfill it? Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col 1:27).

Through Christ, God restores His purpose, creating a new race of men in His image after His likeness.

Lesson 4 | What is God's Purpose Today?

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Rom 8:28-29; Eph 4:13.

Help for meditation

- Which one is God's family? Who is the firstborn?
- How many families does God have? What does it mean?
- How many children in this family? What does God want?
- Which is the characteristic of these children? To whom are they alike? What should we seek for?

Memorization

What is God's purpose today? <i>God wants a family of many children in Jesus' likeness.</i>	And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to <i>His</i> purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined <i>to be</i> conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Rom 8:28-29)
Why a family? <i>Because God wants unity.</i>	
Why many children? <i>Because God wants quantity.</i>	
Why in Jesus' likeness? <i>Because God wants quality</i>	Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:13)

Understanding More

What is God's Purpose Today?

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Rom 8:28-29)

How can we define God's purpose today?

This verse shows us God's purpose very clearly. We can define it like this: God wants a family of many children in Jesus' likeness.



God wants a family of many children in Jesus' likeness.

Let's look at that in stages:

A family ...: This tells us about unity. This is an indispensable requirement for the fulfillment of God's purpose. Although unity is not emphasized in the text above, we know that children in Jesus' likeness cannot be quarrelsome, factious or sectarian. The unity of the family is emphasized very well in passages like Joh 17:20-22; 1Cor 1:10-12; 3:1-4; 10:16-17; Eph 2:14-16; 3:15; 4:1-6; 4:12-16; Phi 1:27; 2:1-4; and many others.

... Of many children ...: This tells us about multiplication, disciples that make more disciples, etc. (Mat 28:18-20). Where there is natural life, there's always multiplication. Spiritual life should also be like that. He who has the life of Christ, is fruitful and multiplies this life in the others. There is a comic and almost ridiculous way of thinking that says: "we are a few and good". Well, if they were good would not be only a few, because the ones who have the life of Christ make disciples and multiply. God wants many children.

... Like Jesus: This tells us about edification. God has no contentment in quantity, nor is satisfied with numbers. It is necessary that his children have quality of life. That they live like Jesus and walk as Jesus walked.

Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Eph 4:13)

What is our position in God's purpose?

When we understand and embrace God's purpose, it becomes our calling and our vocation (2Tim 1:8-9; Rom 8:28-29). In a simple way, we can define our calling as to be participants in God's purpose and cooperate in its fulfillment.



When we comprehend
and embrace the purpose of God,
it becomes our calling and duty.

Oh that God may enlighten the eyes of our hearts, so that we may know what is the hope to which He has called us (Eph 1:8), so that this eternal purpose would be to us much more than studying a booklet. The one who receives God's purpose in his heart, understands his vocation and becomes a prisoner of this calling (Php 3:12-14). We should walk in a manner worthy of the calling (Eph 4:1-3) and make every effort to confirm it (2Pe 1:10).

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- 1Joh 2:6; Col 1:28.
- Mat 11:29; 1Pet 1:15; Joh 13:14; 17:18; Col 3:13; Joh 13:34.

Help for meditation

- What should be our goal?
- Meditate in the texts above and describe in which way we should be like Jesus?

Memorization

But the purpose of God is not man's salvation?	He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1Jn 2:6)
<i>No. Salvation is the way to achieve this purpose. His purpose is that we must be like Jesus.</i>	
In what ways should we be like Jesus?	
<i>To be meek and humble like Jesus</i>	Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Mat 11:29)
<i>To be holy like Jesus</i>	But as He who called you <i>is</i> holy, you also be holy in all <i>your</i> conduct. (1Pe 1:15)
<i>To serve like Jesus</i>	If I then, <i>your</i> Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (Joh 13:14)

In what ways should we be
like Jesus?

*To preach to the world like
Jesus*

As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent
them into the world. (Joh 17:18)

To forgive like Jesus

...even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must
do*. (Col 3:13)

To love like Jesus

A new commandment I give to you, that you
love one another; as I have loved you, that you
also love one another. (Joh 13:34)

Understanding More

We must be like Jesus

Salvation is a mean and not an end.

The redemptive work of Jesus Christ is something so tremendous and wonderful, that we risk seeing it as if it was the whole thing. This salvation is so great that we have the tendency of confusing it with God's purpose. But that is not so. We must not think that God's purpose its simply to save man from hell taking him to heaven.

Jesus Christ, the admirable Son of God, with his redemptive work, gave man a new life, restoring his communion with the Father. He also gave God resources of infinite grace, to continued with his eternal plan.

The redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ is incarnated by the church. It is the mean by which God restores all things, and thus fulfills His purpose.

The redemption could never be an end in itself, but just a mean of grace to fix a big mistake. To Paul, the redemption was never God's purpose. He understood that God's purpose was an eternal family (Eph 1:4; Rom 8:28,29), a perfect family in Christ (Phil 3:12-14). His work for the Lord did not consist of just seek man's redemption, but to present man before God, restoring him to the image of Jesus Christ.

Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Col 1:28)

God wants that we must be like Jesus

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1Jn 2:6)



God's purpose is that we must be like Jesus.

Salvation is not the goal,
it is the way to achieve this purpose.

In what ways should we be like Jesus?

- To be meek and humble like Jesus.

Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Mat 11:29)

- To be holy like Jesus.

But as He who called you *I* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct. (1Pe 1:15)

- To serve like Jesus.

If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (Joh 13:14)

- To preach to the world like Jesus.

As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. (Joh 17:18)

- To forgive like Jesus.

(...) as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. (Col 3:13)

- To love like Jesus.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (Joh 13:34)

Part 2	The service of the church to accomplish God’s purpose
	And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.
	(Eph 4:11-13)

Lesson 6 | Who are the priests?

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Exo 19:6,13; 20:18-21.
- 1Pe 2:9; Rev 5:10.

Help for meditation

- What is God's desire, since the beginning, towards His people (Exo 19:6)? What happened to them (Exo 20:18-21)?
- To whom is this word of 1Pe 2:9? Who are the priests in the church today?
- Is there anyone who is not a priest and proclaimer in the church?

Memorization

Who are the priests in the church?

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1Pe 2:9)

All of the saints are priests.

Understanding More

Who are the priests?

When someone has in mind a determined purpose, a goal to reach, he should also plan the steps he will take in order to achieve it. He should not act in any which way, using whatever strategy and “shooting off” in whatever direction. He should have a specific strategy and seek coherent ways to take the steps that will allow him to reach the intended goal.

God is like that also. He elaborated the purpose and also defined the resources, the strategy, and which steps should be taken. The church is the incarnation of God’s purpose, and is full of God’s resources for the development of this purpose. In this topic we will seek to understand well some main points of the divine strategy.

In God's people everyone is a priest

From the beginning of the creation of His people on the earth, God wanted everyone (the entire nation) to be priests (Ex 19:6). The people rejected their priesthood because they were afraid to enter into God’s presence (Ex 19:3; 20:18-20). So the Lord constitute, the sons of Levi, a tribe of priests. Moses, who knew God’s heart, also desired for all of the people to have the Spirit of the Lord and be prophets (Num 11:26-30). Later, God promised to pour out His Spirit upon everyone (Joel 2:28,29). Jesus said that this promise would come to empower all to serve God (Acts 1:8). With the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the establishment of the church, God’s desire to have a nation of priests was fulfilled.

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1Pe 2:9)

These words above rupture with centuries of Jewish tradition. The tradition was a “priestly caste” where only a few could be priests. This was a limitation in the times of the old covenant that could only change with the coming of Jesus, and the descend of the Holy Spirit. That’s why we can perceive a tone of exaltation in Peter’s words. The Holy Spirit was waiting for a long time to bring this revelation. Notice the words; people and nation. Everyone is a priest. Hallelujah!

Unfortunately, the church did not know how to preserve this revelation. The church generally has fallen into the error of losing the revelation of the

new covenant to embrace the concepts of the Old Testament. As much as one talks about the priesthood of all the saints, in practice the church maintains the idea of a people divided into two types. The Catholics divided themselves into the clergy and laymen. The evangelicals divided themselves into servants of God and the sheep, into the “anointed ones” and the others. By evangelical tradition, “God’s servants” must complete heavy requirements. They should deny themselves, give up everything and consecrate themselves totally to the Lord, being dedicated completely to his work. The others only need to attend some meetings, read the Bible and pray a little. If some in the midst of the people do more than that, soon they would stand out as very consecrated people. This is a terrible sickness that hinders the whole development of God’s purpose.

In these days we must recover the lost revelation. We must receive God’s word given to us through Peter and believe, live it and proclaim it. “we are a nation of priests”. There is only one calling, one vocation; one and the same condition for all. All are God’s servants and the church should offer conditions so that everyone develop their service. If the church is a place for some “pulpit superstars” while the others sit and hear, it is not a place for everyone to develop their priesthood, than it is atrophied. In this way it is no more than a reformed Judaism, a halfway between the new and the old covenant and cannot reach God’s purpose.



We are a
nation of
priests. All
disciples are
servants of
God.

When Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it”, He was not thinking of some extremely gifted preachers. He was thinking of His people. He was thinking of you. Hallelujah!

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Eph 4:11-13; 1Co 12:12-31.

Help for meditation

- What are the specific ministries in the church (Eph 4:11)?
- According to Eph 4:11-12, how the edification of the Church happens? The apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors are the ones who edify the church? Who edifies the church?
- What tells us 1Co 12:12-31? There are some common ministries that all brothers should develop in the church?

Memorization

Who builds up the body of Christ?
The body of Christ builds up the body of Christ.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Eph 4:11-12)

Understanding More

Who builds up the church?

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Eph 4:11-12)

How does The Building Up Of The Church happen?

The problem seen above, of the church being divided into the “servants of God” and the others, produced a distortion of the biblical standard for the building up of the church. Then a tradition was formed, that the church is built up by the pastors.

But that is not what we see in the scriptures. In Ephesians 4:11-12 we see how the church should be built up.

Let us first look at verse 11:

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

First we have to observe that Jesus did not only put pastors and evangelists in the church as seen in the practice today. In the beginning there were also prophets and apostles. The church should be like that today.

Second we should ask ourselves: Why did Jesus put these ministries in the church? What is their function? The traditional answer would be that they were put in place to build up the church. But upon analyzing verse 12, we see that it is something very different. There we can see which the true functions of these ministries are.

Let us look at how the verse develops into three distinct stages:

- . For the equipping (correctly order) of the saints...
- . For the work of ministry (service)...
- . For the edifying of the body of Christ

Observation: The words “to correctly order”, while they do not appear in any English translation, are really the best translation for the Greek word “katartismos” that appears in the original Greek. This is completely confirmed by those who profoundly know the greek of the New Testament.

Let's note how the text develops into three stages. The third and last stage is the building up of the body of Christ. When we say that the pastors build up the church, we are jumping directly from verse 11 to the last stage of verse 12. Thus, We are annulling the first two stages.

In truth, for the body of Christ to be built up, it's necessary for the second stage to happen: the works of ministry (service) of the saints. The building up should not be the result of the work of some pastors, but rather the fruit of the saints' works of ministry, all the saints. Only when each member of the body develops his works of ministry there will be the building up of the body of Christ. No matter how much the pastors and some leaders work, even with great effort, if there is no development of the works of ministry of the rest of the saints, there will be no building up of the body to reach the level found in verse 13 (perfect man).

In this way, we can understand the functions of the ministries in verse 11. They should first work to correctly order the saints. In doing that, they will develop their works of ministry. Thus, the building up of the body of Christ will happen. That is why we can affirm:



The body of Christ builds up the body of Christ.

In order to practice this, it is necessary to break up with our traditions. Unfortunately, the structure of the church today is focused on the functioning of the ministries of a few. Everything rotates around pulpits and a few "star" preachers. A major part of the time, energy, and resources are channeled to produce big meetings and great events where the few bend over backwards to build up a "mass" that sits to listen and listen.

The early church had nothing of that and did not miss it at all. They still changed the world. This is because they understood that everyone was a priest, everyone was a worker, with works of ministry to perform.

Now we have to answer the next question: What are the works of ministry that the saints should develop?

The specific ministries and the common ministries

Whilst there are many services and practical tasks to be done (such as cleaning, organizing local meetings, host brothers out, preparing supper, play instruments, etc.), the service of the saints is much more than that. These

simple tasks are very important, but certainly not a ministry or priesthood. No one can do only these things and say, "I am fulfilling my ministry." The ministry of the body is to multiply the life of Christ. This happens when through this service, someone converts to Christ or someone grows in Christ.

All saints must participate in this ministry. Everyone have grace and anointing from the Lord for that.

The ministries found in verse 11 are not given to all brothers, because they are specific. God, by His sovereign will, puts specific people to perform them. However, there are some services that are not specific, since they are given to all brothers. Common ministries given to all, in which all should be trained and exercised to work.

Common ministries given to all brethren

We can summarize these common ministries in basically two:

- Be witnesses. Act 1:8 and 1Pe 2:9.
- Building up in the joints and ligaments. Eph 4:15-16 and Col 2:19.

The remaining subject in this booklet will show us how these ministries function.

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Act 1:8; 1Pe 2:9.

Help for meditation

- For what purpose was the Holy Spirit poured out (Act 1:8)?
- What is one of the main roles of the priest (1Pe 2:9)?
- What is to proclaim the virtues (excellency) of Jesus?
- To whom is given this witness and proclaimer service?

Memorization

How do we begin the work of making disciples? <i>By being witnesses and proclaimers</i>	But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Act 1:8)
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Understanding More

The ministry of witnesses (part 1)

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Act 1:8)

In the text above Jesus tells us what is the real motivation for the descending of the Holy Spirit. To give us power to be witnesses. Since the Spirit was poured out upon all, this power is for everyone. This is one of the common works of ministry that all of the saints should develop.

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1Pe 2:9)

Peter here says that our role as priests is to proclaim the virtues (excellencies) of Him who called us. This is the same as being a witness.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. (2Co 5:20)

In the text above, Paul tells us that we are ambassadors for Christ, or representatives of Christ to the world. This also involves the ministry of being witnesses.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen. (Mat 28:18-20)

Jesus commanded us to make disciples. But how the ministry of making disciples starts? It starts when we function as witnesses. After the people are baptized, then we have to teach them to observe all that Jesus have commanded.

How do we develop the ministry of being witnesses? Let's follow some principles that will help the disciple develop in this ministry.

How to “approach” people

We should “approach” people in a natural and simple way. In order to do that we need first understand something important: we cannot convert anyone. This is the function of the Holy Spirit (Joh 16:7-8). We are only cooperators. Our role is not to convert people, but to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

Here is an example: We cannot create a chick. Only God can. But we can put an egg under a chicken. In this way, we are harmonizing two elements of nature: the egg and the chicken. This task is very simple but indispensable, because without it there will be no chick.



We are cooperators only.

To produce a new life in Christ, it's the same thing. We can't do it. Only God can. However, we have an indispensable task to harmonize two spiritual elements: God's Word with spiritual hunger. We do not have anything to produce this hunger. This is God's task. We are cooperators only.

In this way, we have a very important task: To seek people that are hunger and thirst for righteousness, people in whom the Holy Spirit is already working so that we can cooperate with Him.

The “hook”

In our first contact with people, we are seeking who is interested in listening. It's as if we are casting a line in the water to see if the fish bites. It works like a radar that detects a plane behind the clouds. It emits a wave and if it does not find a plane, the wave is lost. In the opposite case, the wave returns. Jesus clearly said that people show different reactions of interest to hear the Word of the Kingdom. (Mat 13:1-23)



The "hook" is to find out who is interested in listening.

The initial approach contact should be like this: we cast a word and wait for the return. We should not talk the whole time, or be forceful, or insist, or argue. It is not the time to preach, but to seek. We should feed a bite of the word of the Lord and await the reaction. We need to be careful to not want “fabricate” or inflict a reaction. If someone

demonstrates an opening or interest, we continue. For those we must give everything: our time, our dedication, our friendship, our lives. We have to see these people as very precious lives. So let us cooperate with God, with all our heart, filled with love and compassion. Let us see them as Jesus does it (Mat 9:36).

Attention: Some people can give the impression that they are not open because they have a lot of questions. For this reason, we should be attentive and seek to answer with love and patience the questions they ask. Many times they are sincere and have coherent doubts and questions.

Important: When someone does not show interest, is a sign that is not yet the time to preach. However, it does not mean that we should abandon him. We should, instead, be awakened and challenged to prayer and fasting. If we do so, certainly over time his reaction will be another one.

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Act 1:8; 1Pe 2:9.
- 2Co 5:20; Mat 28:18-20.

Help for meditation

- In Mat 28:18-20 Jesus command us to make disciples. How this task get started?
- What does it mean to be a witness?
- Meditate and write a personal testimony of your conversion and what God has done in your life?
- In short, what everyone in the church should be?

Memorization

How do we begin the work of making disciples?	But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Act 1:8)
<i>By being witnesses and proclaimers</i>	

Understanding More

The ministry of witnesses (part 2)

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Act 1:8)

Giving Personal Testimony

However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." (Mar 5:19)

A testimony is called as such, because can tell about concrete facts that we participated in or saw it. The simplest concrete thing we have to tell is our personal testimony. In Mark 5:19 we see that even the man recently set free from demons could testify about Jesus. When we find someone who hears the word of the Lord and shows a positive reaction, we should give him our personal testimony.

We call a personal testimony the conversion experience story of each individual, based on the Word received when we had heard the gospel. We were all generated by God's word (1Pe 1:23). In our personal testimony, we should tell in a simple way our conversion experience, announcing also the word that transformed us. This testimony should be given with conviction and joy to communicate to others the blessing of the word of God in our lives.



Personal testimony
is the most simple
and concrete thing
we have to tell.
It is irrefutable.

Announcing the Gospel of the Kingdom



*Preaching the Gospel
of the Kingdom is
talking about Jesus and
the Kingdom's door.*

When a person is fully open to hear God's word and is willing to receive us in his house, we usually call these people "contacts", then we should tell them about God's Kingdom clearly.

The proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom consist in speak everything about Jesus and the door to the kingdom (repentance, baptism in Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit). It is essential to help the contact to see the love of God in Christ Jesus. We must emphasize that God wants to give him a new heart, capable of doing all His will. Teaching about what is sin, independence and the need to self-deny and then submit himself to God.

Observations:

- There is no fixed rule to develop evangelism. Every person is different than the other. Some need time to understand, to meditate, and calculate the price of following Jesus. We cannot hurry them. We should accompany the Lord, cooperating and waiting for Him to complete the work. However, there are other people ready, very hungry and thirsty. They can convert right away, maybe in the first day of contact. In this case we should not hold back the work of the Lord. Therefore, we must always be sensitive, seeking to discern in the Spirit the actual situation of each person so that we might act correctly.
- When a disciple is announcing the gospel for the first time, he should not work with the “contact” alone, but with someone more experienced.

The church was always at the streets

How did Jesus teach his disciples the ministry of being witnesses? Jesus was always on the road with them. Rarely He did stay within four walls. They learned to be witnesses seeing Jesus always in contact with people. They could see Jesus doing the work. The classroom of the disciples was the streets, for the people were there.

Even when Jesus taught something to the disciples, he did it outside, before the crowds. The crowds also heard Jesus’ teachings. (compare Mat 5:1-2 and Mat 7:28).



Jesus was always at the streets with the disciples, and it is there that we must be as well.

After Jesus went up to the Father, the disciples continued using his strategy. In Acts 2:46 and 5:12, we see that the brothers and sisters usually met together in the temple, at Solomon’s Portico. Now, this was not a meeting place with benches and pulpits like we have today. It was a crowded public place. It was the main city’s gathering place for the people.

If today we want the brothers and sisters to be trained as witnesses, speaking to people with boldness, we must be on the street with them as much as possible. “Going out” with them in every way; in small groups, with some disciples, and also with larger groups. We must be on the streets with the disciples, in the midst of the people.



A disciple has an intense desire to win as many lives
as possible.

Lesson 10 |

The ministry
of joints and ligaments

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Eph 4:15-16; Cl 2:19.

Help for meditation

- Meditate and comment in detail the text of Eph 4:16.
- What is necessary for the build up of the body of Christ to happen?
- According to Col 2:19, how the body is united?
- Study and explain what are joints and ligaments?
- According to the texts, what are the joints and ligaments for?

Memorization

What are joints and ligaments in the body of Christ?	But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head —Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph 4:15-16)
<i>Joints and ligaments in the body of Christ are strong and resistant relationships between its members.</i>	
What are joints and ligaments for?	
<i>To unite, nourish, and build up the body of Christ.</i>	

Understanding More

The ministry of joints and ligaments

But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head —Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph 4:15-16)

This is another ministry that God gave to the church, to all of the saints. Let's observe the text of Eph 4:16 as we did with verse 4:12. This verse also develops in three different stages:

1. From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint....
2. when each part is working properly...
3. makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Here we have a chained sequence for the building up. The third stage of the verse contains a tremendous affirmation. The Holy Spirit is affirming that it is the body itself that produces its own growth and edification. At once we are able to understand that it's not the ministries in verse 11 that are going to produce this building up, but the body itself that builds itself up.

But how is the body going to produce this building up? Let's note that, just as in verse 12, we cannot reach the third stage without completing the second. The body will produce this building up when there is the proper cooperation of each part (each member), and not by the cooperation of a few. Here we have again the ministry of the saints, like we saw in verse 12.

Now let's go to a main question: How do we reach this? How do we lead each member to cooperate? The answer is in the first part of the verse. For each member to do his part, it's necessary that the whole body be united and held together by every joint with which it is equipped. We need the body to be adjusted and joined, and the way to obtain that is by the joints.



All members of the body must be united and well-adjusted through the joints and ligaments.

Nowadays the church forgot this little word “joint”, but we have to remember that the Holy Spirit is not writing poetry about the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is using human language to speak to us about a spiritual reality. We know well what a member of the human body is, so we can understand what a member in the body of Christ is and how each member is important. Thus, we must know well what joints and ligaments are in the human body, and accordingly, to know what ligaments are in the body of Christ.

And not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God. (Col 2:19)

What then are joints and ligaments? The verse Col 2:19 helps us because here it talks about joints and ligaments. According to the Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, a ligament is “tough fibrous band of connective tissue that supports internal organs and holds bones together properly in joints”. The ligaments pass through the joints and give strength and resistance to these connections. Joints and ligaments serve to harmonize the human body. Each member of the human body must be in its rightful place to function, strengthening each other and working together through a specific, strong and resistant bond with other members.

If the joints and ligaments in the human body are connections between members, then logically in the body of Christ, they are strong, resistant and specific relationships among its members that produce this supplementing, cooperation, growth and building up. If the church is not structured like that, it will be like a “bag of members” and not like a body. A bag can contain all the members of a body, but if they are not joined by joints and ligaments, there will be no harmony, no life.

What an amazing affirmation in Col 2:19! Whoever is not joined together in this way to the body does not retain the head, since the head cannot command him. It is clear! How can the head command a “bag of members”?



Joints and ligaments in the body of Christ are strong and resistant relationships between its members.

Joint and ligaments of discipleship (part 1)

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Mat 28:18-20; Mar 3:14; Joh 1:37-39; 2Ti 2:2.

Help for meditation

- Making disciples is not only bring and baptize people. What is necessary to do with them after baptize them? How that works?
- What do we understand in the texts of Mar 3:24 and Joh 1:38-39 about the Jesus' discipleship with His disciples? Imagine and describe a little about this relationship.
- Comment the text of 2Ti 2:2, observing the several "generations" of disciples.

Memorization

What is the discipler's role?

To teach the disciple to obey to obey everything Jesus commanded.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Mat 28:18-20)

Understanding More

Joints and ligaments of discipleship (part 1)

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Mat 28:18-20)

The joints and ligaments of discipleship are a continuation of the ministry of witnessing. After baptism, we have to shape the life of the people that convert, the building up of a new disciple. It's necessary to teach him to obey all the things that Jesus commanded.

Forming Is More Than Informing

Once a brother spoke on the theme "Light of the World" and said, "Light is not heard, but seen". Jesus, that has presented himself as the light of the world, knew that He could not transmit this light only by preaching. He was not the sound of the world. No matter how much he spoke, Jesus would not have managed to transmit all of His glory. His words were Spirit and life (Joh 6:63), but the life that was in Him was the light of men (John 1:4). He knew that this light should be seen and observed closely. The sermons are necessary and even indispensable, however the most that they do is encourage and inform. They never promote formation. The information is important but it is a small part of the work. So what did Jesus do?



Jesus did not give sermons only. He gave Himself.

Making Disciples Is Not a Discipleship Meeting

When He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach. (Mar 3:14)

Let's observe the calling of the twelve. He didn't call them for a Bible or a discipleship study. He also didn't call them for to Bible school. According to Mark 3:14, He called them to be with him and afterwards to send them to preach. The sentence "to be with him" defines Jesus' basic strategy. He was establishing the first ligaments of the body, between Him and His

disciples. He wanted establish a close relationship with the disciples in order to transmit his life to them by example. Jesus was not a man of the pulpit. He wasn't a man of elaborate messages, nor enthusiastic sermons. Jesus was a man of relationships. His disciples learned everything by seeing.

The disciples saw how Jesus related to the poor, what He said to the rich, how He treated the sick, how He responded to hypocrites, how He cast out demons, what He did when He was tired, how He reacted to storms, how He treated prostitutes. They saw how He reacted to lies and false accusations, how He loved Israel, how He prayed to the Father, when He laughed, when He cried, when He angrily knocked over tables, when He was arrested, and even how He died.



Discipleship is not
meeting,
it is relationship.

What an amazing experience! John says "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life" (1Jo 1:1). Oh, how great that is! If Jesus had not had this close relationship with His disciples, the multitudes that came to hear Him certainly would not have lasted many years in His teachings after His death.

What did the 12 understand?

When Jesus commanded the twelve to make disciples, was not hard to them understand what He was commanding to be done. They never had seen a meeting room or a pulpit or seats or musical groups. They understood that their task would consist in do to the other what Jesus had done to them throughout three years. The same thing must happen to us. We must observe how Jesus disciplined the twelve and then to do the same to the ones we intend to form as disciples. Jesus' commission included preaching to as many as He did. But, essentially, it refers to the relationships of discipleship.

This is not just another method. It is Jesus' practice. It's what sustains, builds up, and joins together to the body the one who is converted. This bond naturally appears when, after preaching to someone and baptizing him, the one who brought him feels responsible for his life. Therefore, he takes care of, teaches, watches out for, protects, suffers, and carries the burden for him. In this way, no one is alone. Every "newborn" has a spiritual "father" or "mother" that is going to take care of and feed him. This is vital for the church. That is why we should be constantly reviewing and being watchful for the functioning of these relationships.

We also need to understand that these relations are not just for taking care of new disciples. In 2Ti 2:2 we see that Paul speaks of several generations of new disciples. This text shows how these relations proceed to forming several levels of ministries. It is in this development that will emerge disciplers, leaders' assistants, leaders and even pastors.



Discipleship is not just another method.

It is Jesus' practice.

Joint and ligaments of discipleship (part 2)

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Mat 28:18-20;
- 1Co 16:16; Eph 5:21; Mat 11:29; Pro 12:15; 1Sm 15:23; Heb 13:17.

Help for meditation

- Considering the texts above, what are the necessary characteristics for someone to be discipled?

Memorization

What is necessary to be discipled?
To be meek, humble, and
submissive.

Submitting to one another in the fear
of God. (Eph 5:21)

Understanding More

Joints and ligaments of discipleship (part 2)

The formation of all the areas in life

When one is in the world, his whole life is structured around and based on human standards. In 1Pe 1:18 says that we were “ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers”. In another translation (MKJV) says that we were “redeemed from your vain manner of life”. Every area of man's life was affected by sin. When the God's Kingdom takes place, is necessary to order life by the Kingdom's demanding standards, until we become like Jesus. This transformation must reach from our minds (Rom 12:2) to even the minimal details of our behavior (Eph 4:22 to 6:18). Every area of our life (relationship with God, family relationships, work, school, preparation for marriage, leisure, holiness with the body, use of the tongue, etc...) must be ordered by God's standard. In truth, we indeed go through a process of reeducation as said in Titus 2:12.

What is necessary to be discipled?

How will God order our lives? How will he advise us? All of the brothers and sisters need to understand that God will not send an angel to our room to give us directions. That makes part of the discipleship, this is why the relationships in the body exist.

For that reason, to someone be discipled is necessary to be:

- Meek and humble - Mat 11:29;
- Subject to the brothers and sisters - 1Co 16:6; Eph 5:21;
- Submissive to leaders - Heb 13:7;
- Someone who gave up rebellion and stubbornness - 1Sa 15:23;
- Someone who listen to advice - Pro 12:15.

Nobody can be built up by the others if maintains an attitude of independence, pride or self-sufficiency. The idea of “I am only submissive to the Lord” is a “spiritual” way to justify rebellion. This is a characteristic of someone that is in darkness. Stubbornness (presumption) is the worst of sins (1Sam 15:23). Someone who is correct in his own eyes cannot be taught or corrected (Prov 12:15).

There are some that are constantly advised, but close their ears and follow their own advice. Others, when corrected and admonished, justify themselves with many arguments. People like these reap the fruit of their behavior but, even so, they do not perceive it. They never learn because they are stubborn and prideful. A disciple is not like that.



It is impossible to
build up someone
who does not
submit.

A disciple is like a sheep and not like a goat. He accepts rebuke and loves correction. Disciples should seek teaching and advice; they should listen and practice. We are members of the body of Christ, we are guards to one another. We have a mutual commitment to build up one another. God wants to bless us through our brothers and sisters.

Dangers of discipleship

Exist a great danger in this ministry: the abuse of authority. The discipler needs to understand that he is the servant of the disciple, not the owner. He should teach the disciple the counsel of God and not his personal preferences and tastes. He must preserve the disciple's initiative and personal qualifications.

We must have in mind God's vision of authority. In the world, authority is a sign of superior position and dominion. In the kingdom of God, it's the opposite. Jesus taught that our authority is confirmed to the extent that we serve (Mar 10:43). He was our example. He was the one who humbled himself and served the most. That's why the Father gave Him all authority (Php 2:5-11)

In order to achieve complete balance, we should distinguish three authority levels.

- **The Word of God.** To this, the disciple must have absolute submission. When we give him the word of God and he doesn't receive it, he is being rebellious. In that case, we must follow the instruction given by Jesus in Mat 18:15-20. Everybody in the body of Christ, and not the discipler only, have authority to correct and rebuke a brother and/or sister within the teaching of the Word. (Before that, you must observe the teaching of Gal 6:1 e Mat 7:1-5)
- **Our advices.** Submission here is relative. For example, when we say to a disciple that he cannot marry an unbeliever, we are giving the

word of the Lord and that is absolute, but when we say that it's not good for him to marry with such and such sister, we are giving an advice. It is possible that the advice we give is based on the knowledge we have of God's word, but, even so, it is no more than advice. It is relative. If the disciple rejects the advice, he is not necessarily a rebel. However, someone who never accepts advice is prideful and self-sufficient. He cannot be built up.

- **Our opinions.** Submission to personal opinions and tastes of the discipler is not necessary.

What the discipler must give to the disciple?

Finally, we should understand that the disciplers must give three essential things to the disciple:

- **Give himself.** Jesus did not conduct meetings and preach sermons; he gave himself. (Joh 1:38,39; Mar 2:15). Giving of yourself is to give your time, your interests, your friendship. Let yourself become involved, be burdened, to foster, pray. We have to give our houses, our love, and our lives.
- **Give example:** Jesus was example. (Joh 13:15). He said, "Come and see". We also must say, "Come and see". We should be able to say, "Be my imitators as I am of Christ". This is not pretentious. Jesus was not pretentious and neither was Paul. God is the one who makes of us example by the life of Christ in us.
- **Give the Word of God.** Jesus instructed with the word (Joh 15:3). He was constantly showing us the will of the Father. He taught and directed everywhere, all the time. At the temple, at home, on the road in the boat (Mar 10:1), Jesus gave teachings for every area of life. We have to teach the disciples to obey everything Jesus commanded.

Lesson 13

|

Joints and ligaments
of companionship (part 1)

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Mar 6:7-12; Ecc 4:9-12.
- Eph 5:21; Jam 5:16; Joh 13:34; Rom 12:10; Col 3:12-14.

Help for meditation

- Why Jesus always sent the disciples in pairs?
- According to the texts above which are the main attitudes that should be present in the relationship of companionship?
- What kind of commitment there must be in this relationship?

Memorization

Why are discipleship and companionship so important? <i>Because they unite the body with joints and ligaments.</i>	A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (Joh 13:34)
What are the main attitudes in companionship? <i>Love, submission, transparency, and forgiveness.</i>	

Understanding More

Joints and ligaments of companionship (part 1)

And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. (Mar 6:7)

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. (...) Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken. (Ecc 4:9-10,12)

Jesus did not only established strong bonds between himself and his disciples. He also related the disciples to each other. Several times Jesus sent the disciples out two by two. They went out without the Master. Certainly they had to develop a profound relationship among themselves. The Holy Spirit worked in them while they were together in this relationship through the prayer, advises, patience, forgiveness, caution with the spirit of dispute, and in many other ways.

The relationship between Jesus and the disciples was a relation of discipleship, something vertical. This other specific relationship, is a horizontal one, which we call it companionship. In the discipleship, someone who is mature watches over someone younger. In the companionship, the two are mutually responsible to build each other up.

The companionship will only work if there is a mutual pact before the Lord. Without this commitment, there will be no effective working of each part for the building up of the other. It means that this relationship must be specific and distinct. Hence, each one knows which is his responsibility. On the contrary, everybody think that they are responsible for all (which is true), but no one takes responsibility for anyone.

How Should Be this Relationship?

- . Submission



In companionship there is a commitment to building up and mutual care.

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Eph 5:21)

The greatest proof of humility is to submit to a companion, since many times it is easier to submit to the discipler who is someone we consider more mature.

- Transparency

Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (Jas 5:16)

To confess sins to one another produces healing. We must hide nothing. Learning to put life before the other without barriers. It is necessary to expose yourself and lose individualism.

- Love

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (Joh 13:34)

This love begins with friendship. When God created man, he saw something that was not good: loneliness (Gen 2:18). That is why he created a helpmate. The relationship is not just for the shaping of character; serves



to the purpose of bringing complete satisfaction of each one, in a way that we might have pleasure and joy in one another.

In the companionship
there must be loyalty,
care and protection.

Love is also loyalty and faithfulness. Upon making a covenant, it is not only for joyful moments, but also a commitment for trials. And is exactly in these times that the commitment will be tested and challenged.

Love also involves care and protection. We must be responsible for the well being of our companion and his family.

- Honor

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (Rom 12:10)

Seek always the other's interests, even when involving losses. Always be ready to give the first place to the other, remaining in the position of a servant.

. Patience and forgiveness

Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. (Col 3:12-13)

In this relationship, many areas of life will be revealed and receive treatment. At this time, companionship will work deeply. When faced with the character deficiencies of the other, we should not become discouraged, but learn to forgive and support each other. In this moment Christ's character is being shaped in us, because we have to forgive and support to each other.



The character deficiencies of the other must
not discourage us, but instead teach us to
forgive and love.

Lesson 14

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Joints and ligaments
of companionship (part 2)

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Luk 10:1; At 13:2-3.
- Col 3:16; Mat 18:19-20; Mar 6:7-12; Gal 5:13; Heb 10:24.

Help for meditation

- What must happen in a relationship of companionship that works?
- Why is important to pray together? For what have to pray for?
- Why a disciple must do the work together with the companion? What sort of work must be done together?

Memorization

What are the main activities in the companionship?	Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
<i>Pray, advise, serve, and make disciples.</i>	(Col 3:16)
What is the fruit of all that?	
<i>The building up of the body in love.</i>	

Understanding More

Joints and ligaments of companionship (part 2)

What should they do when they are together? What the companions have to do when they are together?

- a) Build each other up with the Word

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Col 3:16)

Reviewing ministered texts and teaching, advising each other, encouraging each other, comforting each other, etc.

- b) Pray together

Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them. (Mat 18:19-20)

Would be good to have a prayer list.

- c) Go out to preach to unbelievers

And He called the twelve to *Himself*, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. (Mar 6:7)

They have to visit contacts together.

- d) Take care of disciples together.

- e) Serve each other

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Gal 5:13)

- f) Stimulate one another to love and good works

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. (Heb 10:24)

How To Begin This Relationship?

- It is not necessary to look for affinity. Nor idealize a relationship without problems.
- It is not necessary a long period of observation. It is not a marriage.
- It can be people of different ages.
- It could be a relationship of three people.
- It can be someone younger (or older) in the faith.
- It have to be functional, hence they should live as close as possible.
- It is necessary that they are of the same sex.
- Pray and seek advice before the beginning of the relationship.

Dangers that destroy companionship

a) Selfishness

The selfishness is a cancer to any relationship. Anyone who has strong tendencies to manipulate and exploit others, must be monitored and corrected closely by the discipler and leaders.

b) Personality differences

We will never find identical people, there would be no advantage in that. It is natural that disciples have some difficulties to adjust themselves. The blessing of this relationship is the possibility of growth throughout the differences. Therefore, the companions have the opportunity to biblically deal with the differences, with the possibility to apply principles that, otherwise, would be only theory (Pv 27:17).

c) Attacks from the devil

The devil will rise up against any commitment for the building up amongst the brothers and sisters. Will use lies, misunderstandings, discouragement and false suspicions, trying to put one against the other. The companions must conquer together in prayer, as well as always clarifying all the questions that might emerge.

d) Gossips

A relationship for the building up will not admit harmful comments regarding the other disciples' lives, not even in the pretense of "pray for the brother". Gossips and contends amongst the brothers and sisters are the most terrible weapons of the devil to destroy the body unity (Pro 6:16-19)

e) Judge motivations

To judge the intentions and motivations of the others and act based on these impressions without expose to the other your suspects destroys any relationship (Lev 19:17; Pro 27:5-6).

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Joh 15:1-8,16; Mat 13:23; 21:18-20; 25:14-30.
- Gal 5:22-23.

Help for meditation

- What Jesus says in Joh 15 regarding the fruit that the branch must bear?
- What is this fruit that Jesus is talking about it?
- Compare this fruit of which Jesus is talking about in Joh 15:16, with the fruit that Paul is referring to in Gal 5:22-23. Is it the same?
- Which is one of the characteristics of a disciple (Joh 15:8)?

Memorization

What does the gardener demand from the branch?

Every branch must bear fruit.

What is the fruit that the branch should bear?

The multiplication of Christ's life.

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (Joh 15:16)

Understanding More

The need to bear fruit

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. (...) You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (Joh 15:1-8,16).

What amazing words from Jesus! What a warning! To bear fruit is not an option. It is an inevitable consequence when someone remains in Christ. But what is this fruit that we should bear? Certainly it's not the fruit of the Spirit that we see in Gal 5:22-23. In order to prove that, let us look at these three considerations:

1. The language. There is a clear distinction: In John 15, Jesus talks about fruit of the disciple, and in Galatians Paul speaks of the fruit of the spirit.
2. If we verify the parable of the talents (Mat 25:14-30), we note that the Lord is not coming to look for what he gave to the servant, but rather the profit that the servant obtained investing what he received from the Lord. Well, the fruit of the Spirit is what the Lord gave us through the life of Christ in us, love, joy, peace, etc. They are the talents that God put in our life. He is not looking for what he gave (the fruit of the Spirit). He is looking for the profit (the fruit of the disciple).

But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands *it*, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (Mat 13:23)

3. Mat 13:23 is clear and definitive. Here it says that being fruitful is to reproduce, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. So being fruitful has to do with reproduction.

Therefore, in conclusion, the fruit that Jesus talks about in Joh 15 is the reproduction and multiplication of his life. And how the disciple bears fruit? When the disciple remains in Christ, walking in Christ and manifesting his life, the people that are around him are influenced. Some of them get converted to Christ. Others that are already in Christ are built up and grow. Thus, Christ's life is reproduced through the disciple. This is his fruit.

When we understand that, we then understand the importance of the



The fruit of a disciple is the multiplication of the
life of Christ in other lives.

ministry of the saints. It is through the development of the common ministries that each disciple will be fruitful for the Lord. Relating to one another in the joints and ligaments of the body, building up the companion, giving testimony and building up disciples, each one will multiply the Lord's grace in his life. This is being fruitful.

Seeking Revelation

Biblical Reading

- Act 2:46; 5:42.
- Rom 16:5,10,11,14,15; 1Co 16:15,19; Php 4:22; Col 4:15.

Help for meditation

- Where the earlier church used to meet?
- Why the Holy Spirit guided the church to meet up this way? Would it be for lack of other places?
- Which is the objective of the church working in the houses? For what reason each disciple goes to the meeting in a house?

Memorization

What is the reason for the home group meeting?

The home group's function is to develop the saints' works of service.

Understanding More

The Work in the Houses

The early church was not “templist”. The only mention of a temple in the New Testament refers to the temple of Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, all of the brothers and sisters were Jews used to attending the temple. That is why they continued going there as a church, as a matter of custom, and also to be among the people (as we have already seen in the third topic). But already in Jerusalem, the church began to meet in houses (Act 2:46, 5:42). With the numeric growth, this practice became all the more indispensable.

The churches that came out from the gentile world only met in houses. The whole structure of the church was established upon the homes. (Rom 16:5,10,11,14,15; 1Co 16:15,19; Php 4:22; Col 4:15). There is no mention of temples. The only reference to a meeting hall is the school of Tiranus used by Paul for only two years.

Why did the Holy Spirit direct the church in this way? It seems obvious. Everything the Lord had revealed about the correct ordering of the saints, the development of works of service, the joints and ligaments, etc., cannot be practiced in large meetings with lots of people. It's only possible in small groups.

Thus, it's very important that each disciple understands well the objective of the church in the homes. Each brother and sister should understand that we are not intending to have a meeting. It is not a “bunch of people” that come to learn or hear speeches. Everyone is a soldier of Christ that comes for training and to clean his weapons. They are workers that meet to evaluate the work that they are doing to the Lord, and receive new direction to continue their work. The church that meets in the home is a team of workers, not just needy little sheep. May Jesus give us victory.



All the disciples are soldiers of Christ that go to the meeting in a home for training and cleaning their weapons.



Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast,
immovable, always abounding in the work of
the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain
in the Lord. (1Co 15:58)