

*D*ISCIPLING
*T*HE
*N*ATIONS

**Keys to Equip, Motivate, and Challenge God's People to
Accomplish His Plan for Their Lives**

By

Russ Tatro

Living Word Missions, Inc.
Tulsa, OK

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DISCIPLING THE NATIONS

I. **DISCIPLING THE NATIONS BEGINS WITH FULFILLING THE DIRECTIONS AND MANDATES OF GOD**

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel (Josh. 1:1–2).

Trust God

Joshua was fulfilling the direction of God, the mandate of God. He was on assignment from the Lord. The story is a familiar one. God had delivered the children of Israel from Egypt through the hands of Moses. However, they had never made it into the Promised Land. The wilderness experience of the children of Israel was a direct effect of their lack of trust and faith in their God. If you look at the account of the twelve men who were sent into Canaan to spy out the land and the effect their report had, you will see how their lack of trust in the Lord caused them to wander in the wilderness for forty years (Num.13). That generation never made it into the land that God had promised them; they died in the wilderness (except for Joshua and Caleb).

The reason is simple: they didn't trust God. The cause of their rebellion and disobedience was their lack of faith in God. They didn't believe that what God said, He would do. God said that He would take them in, but they didn't believe that. Their disbelief manifested in rebellion. Because of their lack of faith and because of their lack of trust and confidence in God doing what He said, He let them die in the wilderness. The same thing is true today.

God will allow people to die in the wilderness if they do not trust Him and do not do things His way. For example, the Lord will allow the Muslims to die if they will not accept Jesus. That does not mean that He wants it, but He will allow it. He has given man free choice. We are free moral agents who may choose to accept Christ or reject Christ. Have you ever thought "Why has God made it this

way? Why would God allow millions of people to go to hell?” That must have crossed your mind.

God Desires One Thing from His Creation: Love

What is it that God wants from His children? Our love. God doesn't need your money. The church needs your money, but God does not. God does not need your talent nor your ability. God wants your love. Many of you have children, and you know that there is only one thing that we parents want: love.

Sometimes when we go on trips, our older daughter who is very conscientious and disciplined will give me a dollar for gasoline out of her allowance or savings. Do I need her dollar? I am well taken care of financially; I do not need my daughter's dollar. What is the one thing that I do want from my daughter? For her to go to the college I would like her to attend? For her to become a doctor? Is this my desire for her? No! My one desire is that she love me of her own free will. As a parent, I want my children to come running to meet me after a hard day of work, hugging me and jumping into my lap. I do not need their money or their talents. All I want is their love. And that is all God wants from His creation.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23–24).

John Chapter Four tells us that God is a Spirit and is seeking people to worship Him. He is seeking people to give their love and affection to Him. That is His desire. That is what He wants from His creation. There is only one way you can get true love in life. It's by choice. There must be choice. If I told my children “Love me, love me, love me” and if they, just like puppets, said, “We love you, Daddy...we love you, Daddy...we love you, Daddy,” at some point they would have the right to turn around and say, “Daddy, we really didn't love you. You forced us to love you.”

II. GOD CREATED MAN WITH THE FREEDOM OF CHOICE

God wants one thing from mankind. He wants love from His creation. He wants us to love Him, and the only way you can have true love is if there is freedom of choice. There must be a choice to love and a choice not to love. If there is not a choice, there can not be true love.

People Have the Right to Accept or Reject Christ

So, God had to create man with that freedom to choose in order that He might be able to get what He wanted: true love. Therefore, people have the right to accept or reject Christ. Otherwise, there would not be true love; it would be connived and manipulated. This comes back full circle in explaining the children of Israel's plight in the wilderness. Because God had established man as free moral agents, the children of Israel died in the wilderness due to their choice not to trust God and believe in Him.

People Are Given the Free Will to Choose to Believe God's Word or Not

Look back at Joshua 1. Joshua is getting ready to lead the children of Israel, the next generation, into the Promised Land after forty years in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb had been a part of the team of spies which had been given the assignment to go in and evaluate the land and any potential enemies. All of the spies brought back the same report, but they made different choices concerning that report (Num.13). The spies came back and gave their report; it wasn't an evil report. It was their lack of faith in the God they served that made it evil. To acknowledge an adverse or difficult situation is okay. Many people today will not admit that there is a problem; they deny the situation they are dealing with. "Oh, I'm healed; I'm healed. Cancer is not attacking my body. Cancer is not attacking my body." It is attacking you; denying the existence of a problem will not make it go away. It is all right to acknowledge the situation you are in.

Joshua and Caleb gave the same report as the others; yet, they decided to choose to believe God in the midst of it. That was the difference between them and the other spies. "Cancer is attacking me, but it is not mine. Yes, it is attacking me, and I am fighting the fight of faith against it. I am not taking hold

of it, but it is something that I am having to deal with.” Do you see the difference? Acknowledge the situation, and then use your faith. The ten spies, they acknowledged the situation, but they didn’t use any faith with it.

Caleb: Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it (Num.13:30b).

Ten spies: We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight (13:31–33).

[The children of Israel cried and wept all night]

Children of Israel: Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God that we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return to Egypt? Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt (14:2–4).

[Moses, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua rent their clothes]

Joshua and Caleb: The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the Lord; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not (14:7–9).

The ten spies had given up before the fight had even begun: “Woe is us! We are grasshoppers in their eyes.” In reality, the people were afraid of them because they had heard the stories of what God had done: bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea. Joshua and Caleb told the congregation that their enemies had no strength, no defense. However, the children of Israel chose not to believe God; they looked only at the natural circumstances and decided not to trust Him. They paid a great price for their disobedience, and the price is reflected in their journey through the wilderness.

The Israelites wouldn’t even circumcise their children in the wilderness. And that was a covenant that God had established with Abraham (Gen.17:10–14). Their refusal to fulfill the covenant guidelines shows us today how hardened of heart they had become, how rebellious they had gotten to be, and how much they wouldn’t trust God. It’s the same thing today. People have gotten so far away from God, becoming rebellious and hard-hearted. They become anti-God, many times not even realizing what they are doing. It is a costly mistake.

III. BE LED BY THE SPIRIT

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14).

Did Moses go into the Promised Land? No. Why? He disobeyed what God told him to do. God told him to speak to the rock at Meribah in order to get water (Num.20). He struck the rock instead. Had he ever struck a rock to get water for the children of Israel? Yes. In Exodus 17 you can read the account of his striking the rock as God instructed. He had also struck other things at God's command: the Red Sea in order to cross it and the Nile River, turning it into blood during the time of the plagues. At God's direction, he had used his rod for a number of different things.

Here's a valuable lesson. Just because it worked one way yesterday, doesn't mean that it is God's way today. Don't be attached to programs or routines because they were once working for you. God requires us to hear from Him on a daily basis. You must be led by His Spirit, allowing Him to guide your every step.

You Have to Commune with God

If there's one thing you can learn that will enable you to be an effective and successful member of the Body of Christ, it is how to be led by the Spirit of God. And to be led by Him, you must commune with Him. Remember our text for this section: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom.8:14). You will be successful if you allow the Holy Spirit to bear witness with your spirit, allowing Him to guide and direct you each step of the way.

I was told in Bible school that if there were anything that we could learn out of two years in school, it should be how to be led by the Spirit of God. If we learned that, then we would succeed because we would be led by the Spirit of God, not by any particular person or ministry.

IV. THE GREAT COMMISSION: THE NEW COVENANT ASSIGNMENT

Let's go back to Joshua. Remember, he received his assignment to take the children of Israel into the Promised Land. You might say, however, that Joshua was on an Old Testament, Old Covenant assignment and what does he have to do with me today. Mark 16 holds some answers. We, as believers today, have also been given an assignment, a New Covenant assignment.

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (16:15–18).

Two Missions

What is this called? The Great Commission. It is very important that you as New Covenant missionaries understand your assignment. What are you supposed to do as missionaries going to other countries on assignment from God? Get people saved? Of course! Mark 16 confirms this for us. However, we've been given the Great Commission. If I were to say **co-pilot**, how many pilots are there? **Two**. So, if we have a **commission**, how many missions do we have? Let's look at the other half of the Great Commission.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. (Mat. 28:18–20).

In the King James Version it says to **teach** all nations, but in Greek that same word is translated **disciple**. We are then supposed to “**make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (28:19). Therefore, we need to **get people saved** and then **disciple** them.

These together must be your mission. **This is your objective, your goal.** This is what you are all about. Your assignment is to get people saved and make disciples. Get them born again and grown up, and they will then go out and get others born again and grown up. That's the way we will win the world to Jesus. Everyone, when confronted with this scriptural mandate, agrees. However, this is probably the biggest failure in modern missions today. Many missionaries are only working to fulfill half of the Commission. They are getting people saved, but they are neglecting Matthew 28:18, the making of disciples. Training others, investing yourself into them, giving them the tools that you have all lead to the making of disciples.

A Disciple is a Disciplined Follower of Jesus.

A disciple is just not a believer yet is a believer; a disciple is not a convert yet is a convert. He is not just a follower of Jesus. A disciple is a disciplined one, a disciplined follower of Jesus.

I know many people who are born again but who are not followers of Jesus. I also know a lot of people who are followers but are not **disciplined followers**.

Believers Are Born, But Disciples Are Made

A disciplined follower must be "made." Matthew 28 tells us to **make** disciples. Converts are born; disciples made. So, our objective, our goal, is to get people saved (born again) and to have them become disciplined followers of Jesus. But how?

V. MAKING DISCIPLES

Making disciples involves a number of different things. However, when you get a new believer to the place where his mind is renewed and his actions demonstrate it no matter where he lives or what he is called to do then you can say you have made a disciple.

Your Main Goal As a Missionary Is to Work Yourself Out of a Job

As a New Testament missionary you should be working yourself out of a job, going to the next assignment, working yourself out of a job, going to the next assignment, and so forth. You will not be able to do this unless you make disciples, unless you train someone to take your place.

The Apostle Paul is a good example that we have from the New Testament. He went from city to city, preaching the gospel and training people. He worked himself out of a “job” many times over. You must grasp this way of ministering. It must be more than just a good idea to you; it must be your top priority.

It will be very apparent to all if you are successful. If your goal were to paint all the trash cans in Tulsa purple, I would only have to check the streets of Tulsa to see if you were successful. The same is true in the area of making disciples. And your criteria for success (getting people saved and making disciples) will always remain the same. Anyone can come and check up on your work.

If we were to come to your country after you’ve been there for a couple of years, we could simply look at your staff in order to check your success. Who’s in charge? Missionaries or national staff. Who’s in leadership? Who’s running the programs? Who’s running the sound equipment? Who’s doing the teaching? Have you trained disciples and are you investing yourself into others? Have you worked yourself out of the way?

The ministry in Liberia stands as a good example. It is a large one with 1,700 students in the Bible school and 35,000 children being taught religious education in the public schools each week. The entire ministry is run by Liberians, including the senior leadership and the teaching staff. They have their

own vehicles and equipment. They are self-sufficient. I no longer send money into Liberia. I assist them with textbooks for their Bible school because they do not have access to these. However, they pay their own salaries, transport, and all costs in country. They run the ministry; they make the decisions.

A second example is that of Sierra Leone. There is a Bible school of 1800 adults and a second Bible school with six hundred children. In addition, they have an extensive religious education program like that of Liberia. Everyone on staff is an African national. They pay all of their own bills and are self-sufficient financially. I only assist them with books.

You Must Invest Yourself into Others

This is our goal in all of the countries where we work. We want to train people, give them the needed tools, equip them properly, and put the Word into them. If you will invest yourself into the people of that nation, you will see them grow and develop. It doesn't, however, happen overnight. It will take discipline on your part to see that this happens.

Jesus Was the Greatest Missionary of Them All. **We Are to Follow His Pattern.**

Jesus invested himself into His disciples. After three and a half years what did he say to them? "Boys, it's time for me to leave." They protested, saying "Ah! You can't go Jesus. You're the miracle worker. You open the blind eyes. You raise the dead. We're looking to you." In spite of their protests, He continued to tell them that it was better for Him to go away.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father (John 14:12).

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you (John 16:7)

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16:13-14).

Jesus was the greatest missionary of them all. And we should follow His pattern. His pattern was to go and train people. To equip, motivate, inspire, challenge, and give people the ability to accomplish God's plan and then get out of the way so that they can do it: this is the pattern, the goal.

So, how are we going to know if you are successful? Remember the purple trash cans? All we'll have to do is come and look. We'll look to see if you have been training people and then turning over the power and authority to those you have trained. We'll see if you have been giving them opportunities to run with the vision.

The ministry in Liberia is larger right now than when I was living in Liberia. The same thing is true in Sierra Leone. Do you know what that means? God was looking down from heaven, saying "Man, if I could just get Russ out of the way, this thing would really take off." It would be easy to get caught in the trap of thinking that they can't get along without me. But that is foolishness! Don't ever allow yourself to think that the people can not make it without you. According to the Bible, our goal and objective as New Covenant missionaries is the Great Commission: get them saved and trained **so that they can run with the vision.**

They (the nationals) need to run with the vision! Why? Let's look at it this way. Who is going to win America to Jesus? Do you think America will be won by Chinese missionaries who do not speak English? No, the majority of Americans will be won by Americans. The same is true in every other country in the world. Oh, there is still a place for cross-cultural missionaries, but we must realize our place and function in the Body of Christ.

VI. THE ROLE OF A MISSIONARY

India is going to be won by Indians and Nigeria by Nigerians. Yes, we as cross-cultural missionaries do have a place and a role to fill in the nations to which we have been called. However, unless you realize the true goal and objectives of the Great Commission you will end up doing what many missionaries do. You will go and establish a ministry for yourself. You will set up your own boundaries, acting as if you are going to be there for the rest of your life. You will put down roots so deep that you will never leave.

When you put roots down like that, you want to protect what you have built. You want to protect and control it. I have been with American missionaries in other parts of the world who have said to me, “ We will never turn this over to Nationals. We have seen so much abuse with this denomination and with this seminary and with this ministry. When they turned their ministries over to the Nationals, the thing collapsed. We’ll never turn it over. Yes, we’ll let them be involved but never at a senior level, never at the top. We’ll never turn this ministry over to them.” Are they successful? Have they fulfilled the Great Commission? No!

God Sends Missionaries As Catalysts

Well, if a New Testament missionary is not to put down deep roots or build a ministry for himself, what is he to do? God sends missionaries as catalysts. A catalyst is one “who precipitates a process or event,” or as in chemistry, “a substance that alters and especially increases the rate at which a chemical reaction takes place.” Missionaries are catalysts with tools, skills, abilities, and the gracing of God to cause things to happen.

A missionary’s job is to train, equip, and give tools to people, pulling them up to a new level.

As a catalyst you need to come in and train the people, causing a change to take place in the spiritual condition of a country. By training and equipping the Nationals, you will enable them to move up to a new level. For example, we recently hosted a team from the United States which traveled to Sierra Leone to hold some youth and children’s conferences. It was tremendous! We had planned for several days of evangelistic outreaches, and as part of those plans I told them

to train a small group of individuals. They did general training with the large group, then spent more time with the smaller one. I asked that they do one or two days of the outreach for the children but I then wanted the smaller group to take over. I asked them to leave their scripts, their costumes, and tools with the nationals when they came back to the United States.

They did just that, and today in Sierra Leone that small group is now making all of their own hand puppets and costumes. They are distributing them out amongst the churches and seeing a real revival, a breakthrough. The team which came chose to train rather than just come and do their thing. If they had not, they may have gone home thinking that they had been part of a successful missions trip when in reality, the opposite would have been true.

Possible Pitfalls

From the very beginning you must have your goal and objective right (correct) in your heart about what you are called to do. If you do not, your roots will become so deeply fixed that you will go about the business of building **your** ministry and **your** program to such a degree that you won't let go of it. So, right now in the beginning stages of ministry you must say, "I'm a missionary, a Great Commission missionary. That is my assignment. I must get them saved. I must make disciples in order for me to get out of the way."

This may seem to contradict the teaching that most missionaries receive which says that you must go as if you were going for a lifetime. Let's look at it from a different perspective. You do need to prepare your heart and mind for a lifetime call; however, that does not mean that you will only be in one place, fulfilling one specific role, for the rest of your life. Humans like things to be stable and settled. This could cause you to become content, not fulfilling the great Commission God has given to you.

As a missionary you can stay in the same country, even the same city, for the length and duration of your ministry. However, the same measuring stick will be used to judge your success. You must be willing to say: "My job, my role, my function is to train them, and if God wants me to move to another city/country or if He wants me to stay but move into a different function, I will do that." You just can not allow yourself to establish a ministry around you in which you are the key decision maker, the one calling all the shots. It's a colonialist attitude. That's very offensive in most foreign countries.

You must keep your heart right. Always do a “heart check” on a regular basis. Remind yourself that the true and rightful role of a Great Commission missionary rests upon the two principles outlined in Mark 16 and Matthew 28. You will avoid the pitfalls and be a success in the process if you carry out this mandate in its entirety.

VII. YOU CAN'T GIVE WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE

Discipling rests upon the investing of yourself into others. As discussed earlier, Jesus is our best example to follow. He poured Himself into His disciples. And even with that, he lost one of the twelve.

You must have tools; you must have the Word; you must have graces placed in you. Our job is to equip others. You can't do that if you don't have anything to give. So that means you can't disciple others, unless what? You yourself have to be a disciple, one who is disciplined.

For example, I was an athlete, a coach, and a teacher. I also studied management and administration. It was my job to be an enabler, an equipper. I learned things from these natural experiences that developed skills in me, skills which the Lord has used for His Kingdom and His glory. My job as a coach rested on my ability to pull people together, getting them to work as a team, in unity. The Lord will use your background. He'll use the training He has given to you. Before you can teach others, you yourself have to have knowledge in that area: you can't give what you don't have. Therefore, you must be prepared.

You Must Be Prepared

- 1) You must have the Word.**
- 2) You must have the tools.**
- 3) You must have things (graces) placed inside of you.**

You Must Be Disciplined

- 1) You must have the attitude and objectives of God.**

Regardless of the type of missions work that you have been called into, the guidelines for success are still the same. If you do not keep the objectives of the Lord (Great Commission) close to your heart, you will have difficulties. It doesn't matter whether you are working with children, running a hospital, holding evangelistic crusades, or opening Bible schools. The criteria for success never changes. Constantly remind your self of this fact.

2) You yourself must model the appropriate lifestyle and behavior to those you are discipling.

You will lose your effectiveness if you yourself do not live by the standards you preach and teach. You must live a disciplined life. Don't be caught saying, "Do as I say, not as I do."

VIII. WHY SOME MISSIONARIES FAIL

More missionaries are failing and leaving the field than there are succeeding. Therefore, it is important to understand some of the reasons why missionaries fail. The first is the need for **keeping God's objectives at the center of your ministry** as we have just discussed. The second reason for failure rests upon the fact that **numerous missionaries have been "burned" by others**. They have trusted people and then have had the proverbial rug pulled out from under them.

"I was training a guy, and now he has backstabbed me. He's now against me. He's trying to sabotage the ministry. I trusted this brother, I worked with him, and now he has a problem with me. We've got a mess!"

This type of comment is not uncommon. It happens in America as well as overseas. However, when you add a different language and cultural barriers to the picture the possibilities for misunderstandings increase. This is very true in Africa. Most of the wars that occur there are due in part to language barriers. If you look at any nation where language barriers exist, problems and conflicts arise. Therefore, as a missionary you must be aware of the potential problems which can and will arise in cross-cultural settings.

It's hard enough to get along with folks when you understand the same language, let alone getting along with folks who are speaking a different language. It sounds like gibberish to you, and the look on his face leads you to this assumption: "I don't know what he's saying, but he's got a problem!" The devil walks right into that open door. He will try to cause a conflict where, in reality, there is no problem. Once again, being aware is one of your best defenses against this particular type of attack from the enemy.

So many in missions have been burned and have lost. They failed in that cross-cultural process and have since decided to take the stand of never turning the ministry over to Nationals. No matter what you have seen as a missionary (i.e. corruption, problems, disunity), it is not an acceptable excuse for not fulfilling the Great Commission.

They Have Not Learned the Culture Nor the Language.
They Have Never Identified Themselves with the Culture.

Just as language and culture play a part in the onset of disagreements and problems, they can also cause missionaries to be “shut out” by the Nationals. Without even realizing that it has happened, you can be cut off from the people to whom you have been sent. You will have lost your platform to speak into their lives and nation without knowing the reasons or that it has even happened. How would you react if you were introduced to someone from Poland or perhaps Thailand who had lived in the United States for ten or fifteen years and could only speak in broken English? You would probably be tempted to ask why they even came to the United States and why didn't they go back home.

This same thing happens when missionaries go to other nations and never truly attempt to learn the language or adjust to the culture. That is an affront to the people. This speaks louder than the words these men and women speak. If you have been sent to a people, you can show your earnestness and your love for them by doing these two things. When they see that you care enough to learn their **language** and **customs**, you will gain respect in their eyes. You will gain a platform to speak into their lives.

They Have Selected the Wrong People —
Those They Train and Those with Whom They Work

One of the failures that happens in ministry or missions is that we begin selecting the people we're going to train or work with based upon the world's view. I know the world's view. I've worked in and with the corporate world in America; I was the manager of an engineering company. The corporate procedure goes like this: look at the resumes, find out who is the most qualified and has the most experience, and then settle on that one. That's not how it should happen in the kingdom of God. If we were to use the corporate model, don't you think that is what Jesus would have done? Would he have chosen tax collectors, fishermen, farmers, the illiterate, the uneducated? According to the world's model he was picking the wrong people!

Jesus knew exactly what he was doing. He chose people who hooked up with the heavenly vision. The same thing was true for Joshua. If you will look back to Joshua 1:3-5, you will see the vision given by God. Joshua then had to

take that vision and impart it to the children of Israel. They had to hook up with that which the Lord had given if they were to successfully take the land.

You must find people who are hooked up to **something**, not you. **You will fail if they are hooked up to your provision, your relief projects, your hospitals, or anything else other than the heavenly vision.** The people have to buy into it. They have to join their hearts to it. The only thing in the Kingdom of God that folks will genuinely hook up and stick with is heavenly vision, not man's vision.

IX. HOW DO YOU DISCIPLE THE NATIONS?

You Must Have a Heavenly Vision

In Acts 26:19 the Apostle Paul finishes his interview with King Agrippa by telling him that he, Paul, has not been “disobedient unto the heavenly vision.” A heavenly vision? Plain and simple it is a vision from God, one that he has ordained. A heavenly vision is direction from God and what He has ordained, not your plan or what you want to do.

I am a missionary because God has directed me to do this. I say it this way about long term missions: “If you don’t know, don’t go!” Yes, that is exactly what I said. If you don’t have it settled in your heart that you have a missions call, don’t go and try to serve as a long term missionary.

On the other hand, a call to the missionfield does not mean that you will know and understand everything in your head. Absolutely not! But I knew that I knew that I was called as a missionary to West Africa. I didn’t have to have someone tell me that. I didn’t have to have someone give me a personal word of prophecy. For you see, God had spoken to my heart, and I knew that I knew that I knew. I didn’t understand everything in my mind; I didn’t have it all figured out. And I definitely didn’t know how it was all going to end up. I just knew that I knew that I knew that I knew that God had placed it on the inside of me to be a missionary.

Jesus lives on the inside of you and has ordained certain things in your life. If this is true, He can certainly give you confirmation in your heart. If you don’t know in your heart, don’t go to the field as a long term missionary. If you don’t know, don’t go! Go and make short trips. Get involved with some ministries. However, do not go and try to live on the foreign field. There is a difference between the **burden for missions** and the **call to missions**. You will become a burden to everyone if you do not have a call. People who solely have a burden for missions and yet end up on the mission field become a problem and a pain. They actually may do more damage than good. They can cause harm to the Kingdom of God. If you don’t know, don’t go.

Direction needs to come from the Lord. When I was in Bible school I began praying about what I was supposed to do. One day, after hours of praying

in the Holy Ghost, the Lord spoke to my heart: “Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia.” That’s all I knew, and that’s all I needed to know. We were in Bible school at the time. I told my wife about it, and it bore witness with her. We knew that we knew “Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia.” We went to Bible school for two years, and people would constantly ask, “What are you going to do when you graduate?” We would always answer: “Liberia. We’re going to Liberia.” The conversations were always the same. They would ask where and what we were going to do. I didn’t know, but I knew that I was going. I’d say, “I don’t know what we’re going to be doing, but our missions call is to go to Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia. That’s our place.” We set our faces and our eyes on it; it became our focus.

People then began to have confidence in us; they began to trust us. They started to believe that we really did hear from God. So, after we graduated from Bible school we took the first step: we went to Guatemala, Central America for a year of training. Upon completing the year we moved to Monrovia, Liberia.

Don’t Add to the Heavenly Vision You’ve Been Given

When God gives you heavenly vision and direction, don’t add to it. Make sure you understand that. This is something you should underline and highlight; never forget it! Don’t add to the vision from the soulish realm: “I’m going to go and build a 10,000 member church” or “I’m going to build hospitals...” You are setting yourself up for failure if you add to the vision.

As I said before, we made the move to Liberia. I got off the plane in Liberia on May 21, 1987 with no one to pick me up at the airport. No place to stay. All by myself. Do you know what that made me do? Pray. That’s a good place to be. We all have a tendency to get comfortable; we want everything figured out, everything just perfect. The problem is that when we have it “all figured out” we tend to forget about letting the Holy Spirit lead us day by day by day.

God told me to walk day by day. And as I did it that way, it caused me to stay over in the spirit. The Holy Spirit told me, “Start a Bible Training Center.” I said, “Oh no! I can’t do that. Everyone knows that the local church is everything. That’s the only way God works: through the local church. If I don’t start out with a local church, I’m going to be in big trouble. I have to start with a local church.” I fought with this for months. “Start a local church. I’ve got to start a local church. I come from a local church. My pastor will cut me off if I don’t start a

local church...” These are the arguments and the reasons I used. In today’s Christian world, we keep such a focus on the local church. Yes, there’s the universal church (the Body of Christ) which works through a local body, but there are different graces that God uses in the Body of Christ, different graces used to reach the nations. It isn’t always done just through one local church. I didn’t understand that at the time. I had to dig it out for myself spiritually.

We started an interdenominational Bible training center which was independent from a local church. The Lord did not tell us to start churches; He told us to open Bible training centers. That’s what we’ve done. Because of that, we have thousands of people who are now coming to the school from hundreds of local churches. No one feels threatened by the school since it is independent of a local church as well as being interdenominational. The churches send their people to the school.

The Lord gave me direction, and I stuck with it. He told me not to advertise or promote the school in the newspaper, on television, or on the radio. He told me to keep it low-keyed, so I did. God gave us our whole curriculum. Term by term he would show us the classes we were supposed to have. He gave us direction for the entire thing, including who was to teach and how we were to organize the entire school. You must stay out in the place where you continually hear from God., continually walk in faith, continually stay sensitive to the Holy Ghost.

You do not have to have the whole thing figured out in your head before you go to the field. You just need to know that God told you to do it and know His timing. You need to remind yourself on a daily basis: “No, I don’t know it all, but I don’t need to know it all. I am going to walk by faith. God, I’m going to go with you; I’m going to walk with you. I’m going to keep walking with you and flowing with you. If you tell me to go, I will. If you tell me to move, I’ll move. If you tell me to stop, I’ll stop.”

You don’t just start out that way. You must continue in that way. God expects it of us. Do you know why He doesn’t tell us everything up-front, everything that lies ahead? We wouldn’t be able to handle it. If I had known when I was finishing Bible school that my wife and children would battle malaria, that we would go through a war and then lose everything we owned (vehicles, clothes, baby books, wedding albums...), including one of our staff being killed, I would not have been able to handle it. My faith wasn’t large enough or strong enough at the time. Praise God He didn’t tell me!

I have several college degrees, and I thank God that they didn't pile up all the books I would have to read over the years when I started first grade. If they had done that, I would have probably quit before I had even gotten started. Aren't you glad that God doesn't show you everything? As you walk step by step in faith, your faith grows to a place where you can deal with each situation as it comes your way. You come to the place where you can handle more and can believe God for more.

That's why you must stay in tune with God. Listen, Ishmaels are expensive. You pay for them for a long time. Don't kid yourself. You get in ministry for a little while and then all of your aspirations are thrown out the window. In Bible school many people get stars in their eyes, wishing they could be like this particular big-name minister or that one. The pressure at that level of ministry is enormous. Just look at the ministers who have had problems in the last ten years; just ask them. Don't get yourself caught up in selfish aspiration. The attack that comes at those levels of ministry is phenomenal. Stick with the heavenly vision you've been given.

Get People Hooked Up to the Heavenly Vision.
Select the Right People Based Upon God's Point of View, Not the World's.

You must get people to hook up to the heavenly vision that you have been given. However, be careful whom you choose. The biggest mistake comes when we select the wrong people in our discipling process. If you have chosen the wrong people, you will sabotage the ministry. You get "burned" and then you don't want to trust anyone. Many come to the place where they try to do it all themselves. Why? Each time they hand out responsibilities, things get messed up. You then try to do it all by yourself because it seems to be the easiest thing to do. That approach may be the easiest, but it is not always the best.

Training people is the best! I was the manager of an engineering company. We had 20–25 men and women in the sales department. One winter we had major difficulties: 1) a number of them got drunk, 2) there was a lot of snow, and 3) some of them got lazy. We lost \$100,000 that month. The President of the company came to me and said, "You lost money this month." I answered, "I know. We had a snow storm, and a group of these guys got drunk. We also lost a number of salesmen due to some foolishness." He said to me, "It was your fault."

“My fault?!! It wasn’t my fault. These are the re...” He interrupted what I thought were logical explanations, saying “It is your fault. You have the finances. You should have offered more bonuses, given more incentives, and hired more people. You should have done whatever it took to make the thing work.” I had to agree with him. As the manager, maybe it wasn’t my fault, but it was my responsibility.

Well, my first thought was that I had been a salesman and had set records for the company, making good money. I would just do it myself; I would go out and sell the stuff. That was impossible though. I couldn’t accomplish by myself what 20 or 25 people could do together even if I were an achiever and a go-getter. I realized that I must go back to the basics: training them, equipping them, encouraging them, motivating them, inspiring them, and challenging them to be a success. I had to give them the tools to succeed. I realized that when they were successful it would mean that I was a success, accomplishing that which I had set out to do. That’s not easy. That’s not fun. The easy thing is to do it yourself. The same is true in discipling — you will be successful when your disciples succeed in that which they’ve been trained.

As I began to share the vision that the Lord had given to me, I had some friends who came and spoke to me. They told me that the vision bore witness in their heart and that the Lord had told them to “lift up my hands” and join in the vision. Before I knew it, we had four missionaries working with us. Then as we got established in Liberia we had national ministers coming to us and hooking up with the vision as well. As time has gone on the Lord has expanded the vision He first gave but the necessity for people to hook up hasn’t changed. The Lord spoke to my heart, saying “I want you to help take the Word of Faith into all of West Africa.” We have seen the ministry grow since that time to include other West African nations besides Liberia. After moving back to the United States from Sierra Leone, the Lord then told me to be a “missionary to missionaries.” He keeps expanding it. He keeps giving me promotions.

Let me just take a side journey here for a moment. Many of you who are reading this want more promotions, don’t you? However, do you know what that actually means? The definition of a Biblical promotion can be summed up in two words: **more responsibility. Promotion means more responsibility.**

How many of you have a child? Well, what about two? Two children are twice as much work as one child. I was raised in a family with seven children; my wife was raised in a family with eight. I know what it’s like to be in a big family.

Work!! There were four of us boys. Can you imagine what it was like to have a 14 year old along with a 12 year old, an 11 year old, and a 10 year old (all boys)? I don't know how my Mom did it. Promotion is responsibility.

You can get caught up in the excitement of who you are and what you want to have without realizing that it just means more work. Be prepared for the promotion but don't try to create your own by adding to the vision.

Simply present the vision and then let people get hooked up to that vision (not to you). **Don't go out and seek the best talent.** Yes, that's what I said. **Take note:** don't go out looking for talent. When you go to a third world country don't think that the first person who comes up to you and wants to be your friend is the man. In most third world countries this is not culturally acceptable. It is not proper to push your way into a friendship with someone. It's just not acceptable. You are to be polite and respectable.

Well then, who are the ones who push their way into friendship with people? They are con-artists — guys who are going to rip you off at the airport, rip you off at the hotel, and the guys who want to take you on tour. These people are out for money. They are the ones who push you around. Remember, it is not acceptable to push your way into a friendship in most third world nations. Actually, the ones who are sitting back and being quiet and respectful are those who will most likely move into the things of God. They are the ones who will hook up to the heavenly vision, not to you and not for what they think you can do for them.

If you don't know this, you may fall into the trap of looking for “anybody who's willing.” You think to yourself: “I've got to have a following. I must have disciples and a church. I must have a Bible school...” If you has this attitude, you will take the first ones you see. You'll make a mistake if you do that. Don't pursue people based upon their abilities or qualifications. Present the heavenly vision and then you look for those to move up to the heavenly vision. You may ask, “But how?” Let me tell you my own story.

I went to Liberia and started sharing in small fellowships about the Bible school we were going to open. We then opened the school and had 200 students. By graduation, we were down to 150 students at the Monrovia Bible Training Center. Now, what I am about to tell you comes from my experience. I did make mistakes as I went along.

During the second year of the school we added a 2nd year curriculum. We had 100 second year students and 300 first year students. In a session with the 2nd year students I began to share the heavenly vision that God had spoken to my heart. I told them plainly and simply that it was not my vision, it was a heavenly vision.

Don't get caught in the temptation to say it is your vision. "I want to tell you my vision..." It is not your vision. Do you think that Joshua was fulfilling Joshua's vision? Was it his vision? Where did it come from? God had given the same vision to Abraham. It was the same vision that God had given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob ... and Moses. It was just passed down the line. "Bless God, I've got my vision!" Foolishness! It is not your vision. Jesus is the Head of the Church. It is not your church either. It is His church. **We are stewards**; we are just taking responsibility. People can get caught up in their own vision and their own ministry and what they're supposed to do. Instead of that, **present the heavenly vision.**

Back to the story at hand. I shared with the 2nd year students what God had spoken to my heart about taking the Word of Faith to Liberia by way of interdenominational Bible training centers. I told them that the plan was to open up Bible training centers in the different counties and provinces, using the Monrovia Bible Training Center as a pattern. I asked that they pray about it and then told them of a meeting the following week for all those who were interested. Out of 100 students, 20 showed up.

Remember, I was looking to train the right people. I began with the 20 who expressed interest. I gave them requirements two and three times a week. I had regular meetings with them, and as the time went by the number dwindled from 20 to 10. Guess what? Those were the ones I was supposed to train and invest myself into. I didn't give time to just everybody who wanted it. I didn't give it to everybody who was just looking for a meeting or looking to be a friend. I gave it to those who were pressing in. Those who were pressing into the heavenly vision.

Your Goal is to Make Disciples.

Where does most of the failure come from? Selecting the wrong people. How do I find the right people? Get them hooked up with me, right? NO!! Get them hooked up to the heavenly vision. The heavenly vision for me was "Liberia, Monrovia, Liberia" and "Help take the Word of Faith into Liberia through

interdenominational Bible training centers.” That’s what I communicated with them. In the beginning days I didn’t know these things, and I selected guys based upon what I thought. For example, perhaps I saw someone with an obvious call of God on his life, and I asked him would he like to teach in our Bible school. I had a problem with him within a short time. This really happened! I had to ask myself what the problem was. These folks were called of God, Spirit-filled, and graduates of a Bible school. You find yourself asking, “But he’s a Bible school graduate? How could this happen?” Just because someone has been to school and has a call of God on his life does not mean that he’s got it all together and the proverbial “lights are on.”

You don’t learn character in Bible school — you learn the Word. Character is something that you live out and experience. Jesus didn’t lock His disciples up for three years in a seminary. He taught them, yes, but He had them out doing. “Boys, go row the boat to the other shore. Set up the crusade. Feed the people. Come on.” Jesus became aggravated with His disciples, asking them, “How long do I have to be with you?” Isn’t that what He said? “Where’s your faith?” and even “Get thee behind me Satan” were comments and questions put to the disciples by Jesus. Today, in most circles, if you were to speak to someone in that manner, they would be gone. Jesus was tough on them. He molded and shaped them for what was coming ahead, and the process was not an easy one. Yes, He did sit down and teach them, but for the most part they were getting what they needed through hands-on experience; they were learning by doing.

Get people to hook up with the heavenly vision. They won’t be able to hook up with the heavenly vision unless you are communicating the heavenly vision. And you’re not going to communicate the heavenly vision unless you know you have something in your heart. I like what Nehemiah said of the heavenly vision. He said that he went and did that which God had put in his heart (Neh.2:12).

That’s what heavenly vision is. It doesn’t have to be an open vision. Praise God! I would like to have one of those some day, but I never have. Neither does it have to be an audible voice, nor do you have to be prophesied over. You need to say, “I must do what God has placed in my heart.” That’s your heavenly vision. It’s that simple.

You may be in a place where you can’t tell someone what is on your heart. Well, then you need to pray a bit more in order to get something in your heart from God. Perhaps you shouldn’t be going. **If you don’t know, don’t go.**

However, you may find yourself in a place of hooking up with someone else's heavenly vision. It then becomes yours. Right? Take a baseball team, for instance. They win the World Series, and the coach gets up and says, "It's because of me that we won the World Series." Foolishness. The second baseman had a part, as well as the pitcher, the coach.... Everyone had an important part to play. That's the way it is with the heavenly vision. When people join in from the heart, they share in the vision; it becomes their own as they serve the Lord, doing their work as unto Him.

Everyone has different responsibilities, as in the baseball team. Different responsibilities, but they are all important and essential to success. It's just that someone has to be the captain. Everyone can not be the captain of the team. Or perhaps you need to think of it in terms of a ship: one captain with many who run the engines and clean the ship, keeping it in shape. Everyone has a part, but all should have the same vision motivating them. Each person is important, not just the top man. However, today we see men who are going around saying, "My ministry, my vision, my church,..." That is foolishness!

Don't allow yourself to think that you are the only one that God has ever told to start a church. Well, you're not the only one this has happened to. Don't fall into the trap of acting like you're the special chosen one. God has a lot of people start churches. God has a lot of people start Bible schools, evangelism, hospitals. The list goes on. Remember that anything you hear from God, He has already told someone else to do a similar thing. Just like with Joshua.

However, you do need to find out God's plan for your specific situation. Formulas won't work, and copying someone else's successful methods is not the way to go. Go and get His strategy for you.

Seek God's Plan for Fulfilling the Vision He Has Given You

He has a strategy for you and for your situation. Ours happens to be interdenominational Bible training centers where we have classes on Saturdays. I've had people say, "That can't be a real Bible school with classes only on Saturdays." We have classroom instruction for six hours on Saturdays with a two year Bible curriculum and then a full-time third year leadership program. We have developed and implemented a very strong discipleship program Monday through Friday. That, by the way, is how we are teaching Religious Education to

a 100,000 children per week in both private and public schools in four different nations in Africa.

By using the Bible school students, we're getting them out teaching the Bible in the schools. We have evangelism teams out in the streets almost every single day. Multiple teams are out preaching the Word in all of the countries in which we are working. Aside from teaching in the public schools and evangelism, there are also training programs in administration, the ministry of helps, and praise and worship. We still hear people say, "**He** can't do it that way." Well, **I** am not doing it. **God is doing it that way.** I think the fruit and results speak for themselves. The Bible school in Banjul, Gambia has 325 students in this 1994–95 school year (after being there for only two years). Some may ask why this is so remarkable. Gambia's population is over 95% Muslim according to the last survey reported in *Operation World*. The Mandingo, Fula and Wolof peoples (three of the largest people groups found there) are very hard Muslims. You can't tell me that the strategy the Lord gave to us is not working. Jesus didn't lock up His disciples in school for years before they went out. He demonstrated God's Word, and then they went out and duplicated what they had seen and heard.

What am I saying? You need to get God's strategy for **you**. Just as you must wait upon Him for the heavenly vision, so you must wait for His strategy. Prayer is the key. Spend time with Him. He'll give you the way. You can pattern the principle but you must develop your own strategies. The strategies come from the Holy Ghost.

Let's go back and look once again at some basic points. You must, first of all, have a heavenly vision in your heart. And then you must present and impart that to others. You will see others move toward it. Remember that it is of the utmost importance whom you choose. Use God's measuring stick and not the world's. Give them requirements to meet in order to see who is really serious and who isn't. Don't be lax on the requirements either. If only three show up, that's who you work with. Continue to have them fulfill requirements over an extended period of time. Don't jump ahead and make decisions based upon feelings or upon supposed qualifications.

Now, I've told you of some of the discipling procedures we followed in Liberia. However, let me share with you some of the experiences we had in Sierra Leone. We started a Bible school there in January 1991. We began with 400 students. In September of 1991, we moved into the second year and had 800

students. In January 1992, one year after starting, God told me, “Prepare to move.” My reaction, of course, was one of surprise: “God, we’ve only had this school open one year. What you’re saying doesn’t seem possible.” With 800 students it was explosive; it was taking off.

I then began a Leadership Training Program in January 1992, and I knew that in May of that same year I would be transferring. God was transferring me. And not only me, but the whole staff was hearing “change, change, change.” Bert and Caroline Farias transferred to Gambia, and Hal and Martha Rahman transferred to Cameroon. Bert and Caroline have approximately 300 students in their main Bible school as well as another school with 25 students located in the border area of Gambia and Senegal among some unreached people groups. We’re seeing a tremendous impact. The school in Cameroon under the leadership of Hal Rahman has seen 225 students graduate and is now in its third year with 400 plus students.

“Change, change, change” is what they heard. Listen, change in God is good. Don’t be afraid of change. We sometimes put our roots down so deep that we get wrapped up in the natural things of this world. Be on the move! Don’t get stuck! For example, I’m now on the road traveling six months out of the year. That’s hard, but God’s grace is there. Don’t feel sorry for me. God’s grace is there for me and my family. Change is good. Abraham lived in a tent. Why? He couldn’t put his roots too deep. He needed to be ready to move. Change in God is good. It is not always easy. Make sure you make a note of that. **Change in God is good but not always easy.** We often equate success with being easy, but this is simply not true. The things of God are free but not cheap.

People also equate success with money, even in God’s kingdom. “We got our victory! We got our building. We got five million dollars.” I was talking to a pastor recently, and he was showing me his building. He said, “I’m believing for a million dollars to finish off this property and build all of these buildings.” I didn’t even think; it just came out: “Praise God, I’m believing for a million souls.” Where’s the priority? Does the Bible say to “seek the millions of dollars and then the kingdom of God will come. No, of course not. If we will truly seek after His kingdom, all of those things will be added (money included). Instead, we often get caught up talking about the money. It can begin to consume you until all that you are pursuing is money.

That’s why many television preachers have failed. In the beginning days they would talk about offerings for five minutes at the end of an hour long

program. Then, it became ten minutes for offerings and fifty minutes for preaching. From there it went to twenty minutes on offerings and forty for preaching. Before long you would see forty-five minutes spent talking about money, and then telethon, telethon, telethon. All they begin to talk about is money; they become money-minded. When the only thing you deal with is money, you will lose the anointing. People who are car-minded talk about what? People who are sports-minded talk about what? People who are money-minded talk about what? People who are God-minded talk about what? They talk about God, souls, and changing the world. That's what should consume you as a missionary. That's what it is all about. Seek first His kingdom!

NOTE OF CAUTION: be careful when it comes to raising your finances and support. It can be a deceptive tool. Make up your mind that you are not going to be ruled and directed by money, but that it will only be a means to an end. Yes, you do need money to support the vision that God has given you. However, don't ever allow it to dictate what the vision is.

Let me continue the story of the changes which took place in Sierra Leone. It will help you to see what I have been talking about so far.

As I said, we were in Sierra Leone when the staff began to sense a change for us all. I was still thinking: "We've only been here one year. It's too short!" However, I said okay and began a leadership program in January of 1992. About 50–60 people began coming on a regular basis and then as time went by we ended up with a group of about 40 who had met all of the requirements. One day I had a person come up to me and say, "Bro. Russ, do you know that in the leadership group that not everyone in there has right motives? That not all of those people are there to be a blessing to the ministry? There are people in the group to just see what they can get from you."

I said, "It's all right."

"Bro. Russ, don't you..."

I said, "Yes, I know that. I've been working in missions long enough to know that."

"Aren't you concerned?"

"It's all right. Just leave it alone."

What he didn't realize or understand was that if he started dealing with it like he wanted, it would cause confusion. Accusations would be made, and problems would be the result. So, I told him that I was going to leave it alone and that God would take care of it. And that's exactly what happened.

I worked with those people from January to May, for five months. It came down to the second or third week in May when, all of a sudden, the Lord said, "Okay, now is the time." On that particular day I went to the leadership group and began handing out their new assignments and positions. I didn't announce it ahead of time. I had been listening to their teaching tapes and reading through the outlines they had made of classes they would like to teach. I got all of the information from them and then began to pray over it. That is when the Lord spoke to my heart to go ahead.

I appointed 20–25 people that day, including all of the teachers, the administrator, and the director for the Bible school. That same fellow who had come to me with the story about not everyone being straight kept saying, "I can't believe it! You picked exactly the right people. You chose the ones whose hearts are really pure. How did you know?" Listen, if you are hooked up with God and walking with Him, you will know what God is telling you to do and who you should select. Remember, you are investing into these people, rubbing shoulders with them on a daily basis and getting to know them. The Spirit who dwells inside of you will tell you. Jesus did the same thing. He went up to the mountain and prayed, and when He came back He chose the disciples: "You're with me. You're with me. You're with me." You can and will make the right decisions if you listen to the Holy Ghost.

Today, that ministry is much larger than when I was there. The same director still runs the school, and much of the same teaching staff remains. There are always times of change when people move on, but the majority of the staff is still there. And few have left with a problem.

Make a note of this. This is one of the keys in discipling that you need to have. **Most people fail by selecting the wrong people.** If you find yourself in a position where you are saying, "I know I have to pick someone, but the last one has almost destroyed the ministry. He's running around the town bad mouthing; he's writing articles against me; he's on the radio speaking against me...", you chose the wrong people. It is so very important to remain spiritual when making decisions in this area.

As a leader you must impart the heavenly vision to those around you. Communicate what God has told you to do, and then watch to see who moves toward it. Don't tell them that you are watching them to see who is hooked up with the heavenly vision because then the people may try to deceive you. You just keep doing what you're doing, applying the principles that we've laid out thus far. Watch! Through natural attrition, the serious and sincere ones with whom you should work will be there.

Don't become concerned if only a handful of people show up. It isn't the numbers! You want the people who are called to the heavenly vision. If only three show up, work with those three. It doesn't matter whether it is medical missions, teen missions,... No matter what kind of missions you are involved in, the principle is still the same. You work with the ones that God brings; don't seek anyone out. Present the heavenly vision, and let them move up to what God has ordained.

I can not stress enough how important and absolutely necessary it is to get your own strategy. It is not an option to consider. We have told each country director the same thing: "Get your own strategy! You can pattern the principles, but you yourself must find out God's plan in your particular situation." Every country we work in is different. For example, Mali. Mali is 86.3% Muslim, a very hard country. Do you know what we did when we went there? We flew into Mali with no one to pick us up at the airport. No one in the country knew we were coming. Guess what that made us do? **PRAY**. We use that strategy in every country we go to. That's what we tell the leaders we train.

Stay on the Spiritual Cutting Edge

Most of us who go out to the field want everything settled up front. Many want a vehicle and lots of money when they go in. However, **I tell missionaries all the time that it is not best to have a lot of money in the beginning**. Take note of that, and underline it twice. Most folks don't want to hear that, but it's true. I teach this to the missionaries in our Missionary Training School in Africa. Having a lot of money in the beginning is just not the best. It's amazing how you kind of coast when you get a lot of money. You find yourself kicking back.

How many of us have had to use our faith to get through Bible school? How many of us have had to use our faith for money? I remember going to Bible school and eating fried potatoes, boiled potatoes, baked potatoes, mashed

potatoes. That's all we would eat for days. Potatoes with salt on them. Potatoes with pepper on them. Potatoes with ketchup. How many of you know they can go a long way. We were believing God, and our faith was stretched to the point of seeing through it. Yet, we praise God for that trying of our faith, the stretching, testing, and growing of it. Too much money in the beginning can muddy the water so that you don't press in to hear from the Holy Spirit. The just shall live by faith (Hab.2:4). He wants you to stay out on the cutting edge of faith. I know it's hard to believe, and I know that you don't want to hear it, and you're waiting for someone to give you a million dollars, but it's the truth. You need to be on the cutting edge of faith. God wants your faith to grow.

How many of you have muscles? How many of you are using your muscles? You have them, yes. But are you developing them? Those are two different things entirely. It's the same thing with your faith. We've all been given the measure of faith (Rom.12:3), but we must develop it. You think there's pressure now for \$1000 per month? Wait until it's \$100,000 per month! Could you handle that? Exactly. Just exercise what you have in the present. It will keep growing and growing and growing. Thank God.

What happens to the guy who used to do push-ups but stopped? He regrets it; he pays for it. Faith is the same. God wants to keep you out there using your faith. That's why men of God have to go from project to project to project. God is keeping them out there, and their faith just keeps producing more and more. Of course, we most often think of faith in relation to finances, but that is foolish. Finances play a part, but you must use your faith for souls. Use your faith to advance the Kingdom. Use your faith for whatever He has called you to do.

I'm now dealing with millions of dollars on a regular basis. Just the other day I got a phone call for twenty truckloads of seed which has been specifically designed for the tropical countries of West Africa. Twenty truckloads free — ten of corn, five of peas, and five of various other vegetables. Just this year we have begun an economic development program to help the countries we work in. We've already flown in rabbits which have been bred for tropical countries. 170 million seeds (onions, carrots, and lettuce) have also been sent to West Africa during the last year. The agricultural program and the rabbit project are being presented right now in conferences throughout West Africa. I didn't even ask for these things. Seek first His kingdom and ... things will happen.

This, however, has happened over a period of time. God wants me and you to stay in faith. Once again, it is not best to have too much money in the

beginning days. Novices will mess up when they get too much money. It is best to stay on the cutting edge of faith and grow gradually.

Both the Spiritual and Practical Sides are Essential

Let us go back and take another look at Joshua in light of what we have been sharing. Joshua had been selected to lead the people of Israel into the Promised Land. He had the vision from the Lord to take them in, but the people had to be convinced. They had already spent forty years in the wilderness due to their unbelief. God had imparted the vision to Joshua; it was his job to convey it to the others and then lead them on to its fulfillment. Joshua's success as a leader depended on his ability to communicate the vision.

In the first chapter of Joshua, verses one to nine are on the spiritual side and the second nine verses are the practical application. You need both.

Where there is no vision, the people perish ... (Prov. 29:18).

Vision is essential. You won't get anywhere without it. People die when they have no vision. The children of Israel did not catch the vision of the Promised Land the first time around. They perished in the wilderness due to their lack of vision. Let's bring it down to today. If the church does not have vision, sinners die. It's that plain and simple. If the Body of Christ does not have vision, the world perishes. Keep the heavenly vision before you, not allowing yourself to fall into the trap of soulish aspiration.

Your main objective is the Great Commission. However, you must meet that objective by making disciples. We will be able to come and see if you have worked yourself out of a job. In order to choose the right people you must have the heavenly vision before you. If you choose them solely based upon their appearance and talents, you will fail. When you choose the right ones, you must then pour yourself into them. Remember that you will not be able to give what you yourself do not have. You must model and demonstrate the principles you are teaching and living. That's the way they will learn. In order to do this properly you must rub shoulders with them, allowing them to have access to you. Jesus did just that with His disciples.

Too many leaders distance themselves from those they are discipling and training. You need to spend time with them in order to see their weaknesses and

strengths and in order for them to see yours as well. It is true that leaders will not be able to open themselves up to large crowds, but that is not what we are talking about. You must have a group into which you are investing yourself. This is true whether you are a pastor, teacher, missionary ... whatever capacity you fill, **you must continue to invest in order to see a return.**

X. CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION

The Apostle Paul said that he was all things to all men that he might by all means save some. He went on to say that he did this for the Gospel's sake (1Cor.9:19–23). You must have this same attitude and carry out these same actions if you want to be successful. Paul is simply talking about cultural identification, identifying with someone in order to be able to minister to them.

Speak Their Language

You must culturally identify with the people and the place to which you've been called. This is very, very important. I learned this quickly in my missions calling. As part of my preparation to go to Africa my wife and I moved to Guatemala, Central America. I was a new missionary, excited to finally be on the field. I went out into the streets and learned Spanish. Everyone else went to classes or had a tutor. I got my instruction on the streets. Have you ever heard of Language Acquisition Made Practical (LAMP). Within a few weeks I was casting out devils, laying hands on the sick, and leading people to Jesus all in fluent Spanish. I couldn't tell you how to ask for the toilet, and I couldn't go shopping. But I didn't care about those things. I was just out of Bible school and called to missions.

I had a "Let me at 'em! Devil, get out of my way!" mentality. In three months, I was excelling in my Spanish. Before the year was finished I was preaching in Spanish without interpreters. Other people were in class learning about kitchens and bathrooms: things which I considered totally irrelevant to me at the time because I was hungry for ministry.

If you are going to live in a culture that has a different language, you are foolish to think that you are going to impact it if you don't know the language. Don't go if you are not willing to learn the language. You'll be wasting your time if you do. Language and culture go hand in hand. On top of that, it will take you three to five years before you really start to understand how the culture works. I don't mean the superficial side of it; I mean what is really going on. It takes time to develop in cross-cultural missions. There has to be identification between you and the people.

Be One of Them

In May of 1987 I was in the United States in order to get ready to move to Africa. I was packing trunks, suitcases and boxes. I was getting everything ready when the Holy Spirit told me that I was supposed to go over to RHEMA Bible Training Center and listen to Lester Sumrall. He was there doing a conference, and I was supposed to go to the day session. I didn't want to hear any more teaching. I felt like I had been in Bible School long enough. I had heard so many messages and so much teaching. I was ready to get out there and do it!

However, I decided to go. So, I went and slipped in at the back of the auditorium. Dr. Sumrall said many things that day, but I only heard one. He said this: "When I was in China, I called myself a Chinaman. I told them that I was more Chinese than they were. They were born Chinese and had no choice in the matter, but I was born an American and then chose to become Chinese. I told them that if they ever called me anything other than that, I would leave."

When I went to Liberia I told the people the same thing. I would say in meetings, "I'm a Liberian." They would laugh. I would go on to say that I was even more Liberian than they were because they were Liberians by birth, but I was a Liberian by choice. I said, "The point being that it is not big me and little you, not black against white. It's one in Jesus Christ. I want to join arms with people who have the same heart to reach this nation with the gospel of Jesus Christ, sharing the love of God with people. If you have that same heart, then we are in this thing together. There's no difference between us." Many times the congregation would start clapping when I shared this.

They had been used to missionaries with a colonialist attitude. One which says, "We're better than you; we're superior to you." Now, listen. You can carry a colonialist attitude over race, education, money, your sex, etc. All of this is foolishness. If you carry an attitude, the people see it. They know it; don't think they don't. You must lay down those attitudes if you wish to effectively minister. The Apostle Paul said, "I am crucified in Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal.2:20). My opinion no longer matters. I need to be all things to all men (whatever it takes for the gospel's sake.) Lester Sumrall shared those few words, and they penetrated my heart and greatly affected my missionary career.

You have to identify with the people, not as black or white and not as male or female. You should only see someone in light of their standing in the body of Christ: whether they are saved or not. You must see those who are saved as fellow believers in Christ, men and women who are working to accomplish the same objective as yourself. Don't distinguish between people. Don't elevate one and put down another. I've seen white racism and black racism. I've met whites who are prejudiced and blacks who are prejudiced. There is no difference. Racism affects everyone. Keep your heart right. Love the people, and reach out to those you are called to. If you do that which the Apostle Paul said, people will see your heart.

Once, I sat down with an American missionary in Africa. He was probably 55 years old and raised in the South (USA). What does that tell you? Considering his age and where he was raised, there's a good chance that he will have some prejudices. A black African pastor and myself sat down with him. He said, "I want to talk with you boys. I hear you're preaching some stuff that I don't know about. I don't like it." He insulted me a few times during the conversation, and then he went on to say that there had been a "black man came from America trying to teach this stuff once." In my mind I'm saying, "Man, this guy is insulting the very people he thinks he is called to." As we left I apologized to my pastor friend, giving the man's age and probable background as an explanation for his behavior. That man had simply not had his mind renewed in these areas. No true cultural identification had been made.

The war came. That missionary didn't come back. His organization's national church disowned him. They said, "They weren't real. They really didn't care about us. They just wanted to have their program and their ministry. They really didn't care." Yet, we have taken food and clothing into this same group of people, and they treat us like heroes. We hold a conference there, and they pack out the auditorium. We hold meetings there, and they just flock to them. The people love us, and we love them. The difference between the man and our organization is that we identified with the people. We did not place them in one category and ourselves in another. You must come to a place where there is a cultural identification in Christ.

You must have an identification with the people, and it must come from your heart. The things I'm talking about are not just ideas. They have to be realities in your heart and life. The Lord began preparing me early on in life. I grew up in rural Minnesota. I had no **racial bias**. From there He placed me in the inner city in Cleveland, Ohio. I worked in the black culture. This removed any

cultural bias. I didn't see in black and white. From the United States I moved to Guatemala and then to Africa. You must identify culturally without a racial bias.

Eat What is Set Before You

Perhaps this story will illustrate what I am saying to you. I was teaching at a leadership conference recently, and one of our Bible school directors was there with me. I was teaching on leadership and cultural identification when Lionel Betts, Director of the Freetown Bible Training Center, Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa, asked if he could make a comment. He said, "I would like to share with you what impressed me the most about Bro. Russ Tatro, the missionary in West Africa. I would like to tell you what caused me to hook up with him." I thought, "Praise God! He's going to say I was preaching like Kenneth Copeland or something in that regard." Lionel continued, "One time when I was very very sick, Bro. Russ found my house on his own initiative and came to see me and pray for me. That impressed me."

I had thought that he was going to talk about all of the Bibles and materials I had brought in or about the Bible schools and how big they are. How wrong I was. Lionel Betts also said, "The second thing that impressed me happened when we were making a trip up country together. It was about a five hour drive. After two or three hours we stopped just to stretch a little bit and to get something to drink. Bro. Russ said, "Lionel, come on. Let's get some fry-fry to eat."

Let me stop here a minute and explain to you what fry-fry is. The girls cook it on the streets. It's a broth with some sort of oil in it along with some fish or fish heads and different things floating in it. It's a soup. Then you take a piece of bread and split it open. You put some of the gravy in there along with some of the contents of the soup, and you eat it like a sandwich.

Lionel told the congregation of this incident, saying, "In Sierra Leone, I never eat this kind of food. I had to use all of the faith I had just to keep it down, so I didn't throw up. I said to myself, 'My God! If this man loves our people this much so that he'll come and eat our food with the common people in the streets, this is somebody who's following in the steps of Jesus. This is someone I want to follow.'"

It wasn't my preaching ability. It wasn't my teaching ability. It wasn't our resources. It was the fact that when he was sick I went to find him in order to

pray for him. Secondly, it was the fact that I was willing to culturally identify with the people. These two things caused him to decide to hook up with the ministry.

A missionary friend of mine came back from a scouting trip to India recently. He had guides and interpreters who took him to a village and introduced him to the people there. They brought him to a hut with some people in there. It was time to eat. They sat him down and gave him a banana leaf with food in it. So, he just ate everything on the banana leaf they had set before him. They didn't talk a whole lot. At the end of the meal they left.

That night at the service, many people from that village came to the service. More than twenty of the people who were born again came from that particular village. He later found out that those he had met in the village were so impressed that a white man would come, sit down with them, and eat with them out of a banana leaf (something which so many others avoided). They had said, "If this man loves us this much or is willing to humble himself this much, the least we can do is to go and hear him speak tonight." He didn't even preach to them in the village. He just demonstrated something there. They came to the service, heard the message, and were born again.

Cultural identification: it's very important. How can you identify culturally if you don't speak the language? For example, what would you think of someone who had lived in the United States for twenty-four years and still couldn't speak English? If he still had someone who had to interpret for him? You would probably think that he should be back in his home country. Wouldn't you? That's what people think about American missionaries who go and do the same thing. They've been there for years, yet still do not speak the language. "He should be back in America" is the response you will get. If God has called you, you'd better get into the thing — spirit, soul, and body.

I was in Guatemala in 1985 and was doing what I was told to do. I was eating at the mission compound. I was avoiding food on the streets because I had been told that it wasn't clean. I was riding in mission vehicles, and most of my time was spent with missionaries. One day, as I was praying, the Holy Spirit arrested me and said, "How long are you going to isolate your stomach from this culture?" I saw what He was saying. I was eating in a protected environment. So, I changed my attitude. No, I don't eat cockroaches. You don't have to be ridiculous. However, I'm not afraid to eat the food (whether in Africa or any other place). My body has made the necessary adjustments because I purposed in

my heart to eat Liberian or Sierra Leonian food and to partake of their environment.

I've had food poisoning twice in my life. Have you ever had food poisoning? You feel like you're going to die, and you wish you were dead. It's almost that bad. Do you know where it was? Once in Minnesota and once in Oklahoma. I've never had that happen in Africa.

Cultural identification is important! It is the same whether you are working in the inner city of Los Angeles or Cleveland, in rural Minnesota, in China, or in India. You need to learn the language. You must identify with the particular culture in which you are working. Lastly, there will be a price to pay in order to get you to this place. But you must remember that you will not be effective without first paying the price.

Colonialism and the Price of Isolation

Don't allow yourself to get caught up in colonialism. It takes a few years of living outside of North America before you begin to see what the rest of the world is really like. Our God is not an American God! No! He loves America, but He loves everyone the same. You have to be careful when you go into a culture that you don't carry a cultural bias, a cultural egotism, a cultural pride based upon your perspective of what's important in life (education, finances, and influence to name a few). Those aren't necessarily the most important things in the Kingdom of God. You can see this quite easily by looking to see how Jesus chose His own disciples. Did He only choose the educated and wealthy as disciples? No!

You can go somewhere and offend the people you are called to. You will end up cutting yourself off from them. The people you are trying to reach will separate themselves from you. Let me give you an example. In most third world nations you can get a Bible school or church of about 20–50 people without much effort. If this is true, why can I tell you of Bible school after Bible school which only has 12 students, 18 students, 25 students? What has happened? These men and women who are running these ministries have been separated from the culture, and they don't even realize it. We in the Body of Christ do this to other groups such as the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses. We tell others to stay away from them. We isolate them; we cut them off.

The same thing can happen to you if you are not sensitive to the people and their culture. You will spiritually self-destruct. You will shoot yourself in the foot; you will blow up your own ministry. I have seen that very thing happen with missionary after missionary after missionary.

The Importance of Self-Control

If you can't control your temper now, if you can't control your soulish area, if you can't keep yourself under control, you'll really mess up on the field. I could tell you stories.

One time, one of our young missionaries who was still learning about these areas got into a slight car accident. The national who was driving the other car said, "You ran into me..." The missionary said, "No, no. It was your fault. The other driver continued to disagree: "You're the one who did this." The missionary said, "I refuse to talk to a fool." That man happened to be a police officer — the missionary sat in jail for a while. Fortunately, one of our Bible school students was a police officer and said, "This is my instructor. What's going on?" He then got him out.

Another time, I was with some missionaries on the beach on a Sunday afternoon. There were probably 8–10 missionaries as well as some of our national staff. We were relaxing on the beach when a group of devil dancers came onto the beach. In the West African culture there are secret societies (Poro Society and the Sandy Bush Society). In these societies there are devil dancers. Most foreigners think that this is just culture, but it is far more than that. There are spiritual connotations.

On this particular day the dancers began to do their stuff and then began taunting one of the missionaries who was lying on the beach. The missionary said, "Get away from me!" This made the taunt him even more. Finally, the missionary jumped up and kicked one of these guys. By the time he did this there were hundreds of people in a riot on the beach. They wanted to string this missionary up. Then another missionary jumped in to help him, making accusations. There's a riot on the beach and I'm sitting there thinking, "I can't believe this! I'm responsible for these guys."

Note: if you can't control your temper now, you'll cause a mess over there. You'll say or do something stupid that will cost you your ministry.

What did I do? I had some guys move the women and the children, taking them away from there. I said, “Get them out of here. Just move them out of the way.” I got up in order to try and stop the situation from getting any worse. They were just screaming and hollering. Finally, God gave me the wisdom I needed. I isolated the boy who was involved in the argument, along with his father. I said, “Listen, I’m the leader of this group. I’ll take responsibility.”

I took our car and went to the Police Headquarters. There was a small group of about eight of us. I sent the missionary who had been involved home, and then I began to reason with the people. They said, “Well, we’ll need some compensation so we can have this boy checked by a doctor.” The boy, of course, was not hurt. It was just an antagonism thing. I asked, “What will be the cost?” They said, “5,000 leones.” I told them that I would pay that, “no problem.” Ten dollars. That’s what it cost us.

Ten dollars was nothing in comparison to the ministry we had labored over. We had paid such a great price to lay the foundation. Was I willing to have all of that destroyed by an incident on the beach. It could have been destroyed by some newspaper man or photographer who got a picture and slapped it in the paper with the caption reading: Missionary Loses Temper on the Beach, a Riot. To lose a ministry over something foolish like that. This is why cultural identification is so important.

I can tell you story after story of how we’ve had to deal with these kinds of situations. Many of the problems stem from the competitive spirit that has been ingrained in us. We’ve got to be number one. The American system is so competitive. You go to high school in order to go to college, and you go to college in order to get the job.

That’s what life is all about here in the United States. It’s about climbing up the ranks and doing whatever it takes to get what you want (i.e., the right job). It’s an aggressive society in that regard. This causes all sorts of things to happen, among them pride. If you carry these attitudes as a minister, you will self-destruct.

Let me explain it in another way. You go into a country. You want to hold a leadership conference. You want to hold a crusade. You want to hold a seminar. So, you get some church leaders together from a particular village or city. You sit them down and say, “We want to hold a conference here. We want to do a leadership conference. We want to bring in a team and show you guys

how to really get your churches going...” You’ve insulted them. You are basically saying that they aren’t doing anything. Perhaps not intentionally. The words weren’t wrong, but you insulted them by the underlying meaning of what you were saying. I’ve seen it so many times. It is based on pride and the wrong attitudes and motives.

Listen, when you are called of God to go into missions, you must go with humility. You are simply called of God to go and fulfill a function in that country and in that place. You are not the Lone Ranger. You are not Superman. You are not the Superstar. You’re not going to save those people. You’re not the one that God’s relying upon to get the job done. You must simply see yourself as a servant of God and as a servant of the people. Remind yourself that it is your function to serve. If God chooses your work to be a Bible school or church of 1,000, so be it. However, you must realize that that will not happen just because you project it or will it to happen. Walk in humility, and work within the cultural values of the people whom you are serving.

Don’t go in with the attitude that you are going to straighten them all out. God is simply transferring you from one place in the Body of Christ to another. **The smartest thing you can do when you are transferred is to 1) find out what God is doing there, 2) find out where you’re place is, and 3) then just serve in it.** If God chooses to promote you, if He chooses to exalt you, so be it. But let God do it. If you don’t understand that, you’ll make some of these mistakes that I am talking about. Well intended, honest, and sincere missionaries ask themselves, “Why do we only have 18 students in the school?” They have been cut off from the culture. Word has gotten out.

That’s exactly what happens. The word goes around to “stay away from those guys. They are just full of pride. They’re just American colonialists.” I’m talking about this going on in the church. You will get cut off; you will become isolated from the culture and from the people.

In the Bible schools that we establish, they don’t carry our mission identity. It’s the local identity (i.e., Freetown Bible Training Center) that they carry. I represent a mission called Living Word Missions. In West Africa, it’s called Living Water Ministries. If I were to go to a conference in any one of a number of these countries and they were to introduce me as Russ Tatro of Living Word Missions, the response would be minimal. However, if they were to introduce me as the founder of the Freetown Bible Training Center, everyone

would begin clapping. Why? It's their school. They identify with the school. It's not my school; it's theirs.

I tell them all the time: "This is not my school. This is your school. It's yours. It's for you." It's the Freetown Bible Training Center. It's the Monrovia Bible Training Center. They then identify with the school and hook up with it accordingly. They know I have a part in it, but it is their school. That's identification: not coming in and putting our standard and our name on it.

Don't self-destruct! Don't self-destruct on the mission field! It's not necessary. Cultural faux pas and mistakes will sink your ship. Have a ministry of integrity in which the fruit of the Spirit is demonstrated to and seen by the people. Blend into the culture. Learn the language. Take one step at a time; be patient, and don't become anxious over things.

Don't become nervous about anything. I recently had a physical exam. The nurse was taking my pulse and she said, "I can't get your pulse! This is tremendous. You must really do a lot of exercise." I said, "I do exercise, but I really should be doing much more than I am." She then asked why I had such a low heart rate. My answer was simple: "I don't get nervous about too much." That's contrary to our American culture, but I've been out of it long enough that I just don't get nervous. So, don't get nervous in His service. Take each day and each lesson one at a time.

Ask Questions

I spoke at the 1993 Monrovia Bible Training Center's graduation. There were 7,000–8,000 people in the stadium. God had me preach on Gideon. I talked about how Gideon was moved into faith. An angel of the Lord simply vowed: "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour" (Jud.6:12). Gideon answered by saying, "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (v.15) The Lord once again told Gideon that He would be with him. God got him into faith. Once Gideon was in faith, what was the result? The deliverance of the children of Israel (Jud.8:28). Restoration occurred: things started going in the right direction again. What happened between the time Gideon got in faith and Israel's final deliverance from the Midianites? Gideon went and tore down the altars of Baal that his father had built with wood.

I then began to talk about tearing down the altars that had been built in the nation of Liberia. I gave them specific examples of religious leaders sleeping with choir members, of juju (witchcraft) being performed in the church, among other things. At the end of the service we had a tremendous move of the Spirit. We began singing the song “Lord, Heal Our Nation.” The Spirit was moving, and thousands were crying. I was crying; I couldn’t help it. It was what the Spirit of God was doing. You must realize that the country had been in war for three years. This was very moving.

Over 500 people were born again in that service. That September, the people rushed to the Bible school. They had to stop enrollment at 1800 students; they couldn’t take any more. The people said, “This white man knows our people. That had to be God. He couldn’t have known all of those things. That had to be God speaking to us. There’s no way this outsider could know the intricacies of the secret societies. He couldn’t possibly know of their practices. How did he know these things? This is the kind of thing we want. We want people to speak right to us by the Spirit of God.” They rushed to the Bible school, and as I told you, they had to stop enrollment because the buildings weren’t big enough.

When I lived in West Africa, I asked questions. I’d find out about the culture. I know what’s going on with their juju and witchcraft. I find out about things even to the deepest levels. Why do I ask questions? So I know what’s going on. So I can culturally identify with the people. If I know what they are going through, then I will be able to help them. The story above is an example of my doing just that. Because I have asked questions and have learned about the culture, I can teach on the Blood Covenant and secret societies. Within these societies they take children and enter them into a covenant with the devil. Knowing this, I have been able to teach them how to break those covenants, how to get out of them.

Ask questions. If you go in humility, asking questions, the Lord will be able to use you more effectively.

Don’t Isolate Yourself

In the Missionary Training School we have in Africa, no one’s allowed to have a car. For the nine month school we don’t allow any of them to have a vehicle. They ride taxis and buses. They learn the culture that way. I rode taxis

and buses for the first year of my mission career and found that it was the best thing I could have ever done.

I find many missionaries who are raised up in the mission compound and who only ride in air-conditioned vehicles are afraid to get out among the people. They are afraid to ride in a taxi; they are afraid to shop in the market. All in all, they are afraid to get into the culture.

In addition to riding in the taxis and buses, the Missionary Training School students live with nationals. I'm not saying that they live in a hut, but we have them living with nationals. That's how the students learn. That's how they get to know the people and their culture. Isolation can cause fear and misunderstanding. Will they be able to fulfill that which God has given them if they are in fear or if they don't understand? No!

You yourself will not be able to minister to the people if you are afraid of them and their culture. Stay in the culture; don't isolate yourself from it. Vehicles are okay. They do help you with your time, it's true. However, I take the time to walk on the streets, to eat on the streets. I'm down with the people, and they know that. They appreciate it. They see the love. Guess who did that in the Bible? Jesus. It's amazing the example that He set, isn't it? He stayed with the people; He identified with the people. He didn't isolate himself from those He came to set free. Follow His example!

Make Friends

In your missionary career, make some friends. I'm not speaking of you making friends with fellow missionaries. That will just happen. Missionaries flock together, just like pastors flock together at a conference. Missionaries are like manure. It's good if you spread it out. But if you pile it up in one place, it starts to stink. You need to be spread out. Missionaries, you need to be spread out. Don't get piled up in one city or in one place.

I'm talking about having national friends. I have very good friends in Liberia who are Liberian. I have very good friends in Sierra Leone who are Sierra Leonians. I have the same type of relationship with them as I do with my American friends. You must develop friendships with the people.

Cultural note: don't call the people "natives." Be culturally sensitive to terminology. There are terms which are culturally offensive in every place you go. Therefore, you need to learn what is right and what isn't. In most third world countries the term "native" means one who is unlearned and ignorant and who is probably not wearing clothes. This term would be offensive to people in general, would it not? The friends you make within the culture will be the ones you can ask questions of. Be sensitive. Be willing to learn from them. They will be sources of much information.

XI. YOUR FUNCTION IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

A new movement has become very strong in the last few years in regard to foreign missions. A lot of teaching has been done on the rise of the national church, the indigenous church. The most extreme version of this teaching makes a stand against foreign missionaries and encourages all monies to be sent directly to national ministers. You, as missionaries who have been called by God to go to a foreign field, must therefore know your place in the Body of Christ. If you know your place, you will then be better prepared to stand up against the opposition you may face.

I was in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1986 at a conference when I had my first encounter with this type of teaching. I was in a day session with a very well known African speaker. There were probably a thousand ministers in this conference. One of his statements was “We don’t need white missionaries in Africa anymore. We don’t want white missionaries in Africa anymore. This is the day for the African!”

I sat there thinking, “Oh God, I’m a white missionary, and I’m getting ready to move to Africa. This is great.” I struggled with that. I then went into prayer. I’ve not had many visions, but this one time I did. I saw a table and on it were vessels or pitchers. There was a white one, a black one, a yellow one, and a brown one. A black man walked up to the table and an arm reached out from behind the table. It picked up the white pitcher and knocked the man in the head with it. The man, of course, staggered back. He then stepped up to the table a second time. The hand reached out and struck him once again with the white pitcher. He staggered backward. This happened three or four times. The man started getting mad and began to curse the white pitcher because it was hurting him.

The Holy Spirit said to me, “That’s what has been happening in South Africa. The devil has been using a white vessel to beat the black man over the head. But he needs to be smart enough to realize that it isn’t the pitcher’s fault. It’s the power behind it. That’s what the devil does. He abuses my creation. He may do it through racism, poverty, disease, war, or famine. There are many ways he does it. You must realize what the power is that’s doing it. Don’t get angry at the pitcher. Get angry at the power that’s causing the abuse.”

The Holy Spirit then said to me, “In the Kingdom of God, the gifts and callings of God do not have color. He said, “My gifts and callings do not have color. They are not based on a color issue.” Guess what? God, therefore, does not evaluate you based upon color, nationality, or sex. **There’s only one thing that God evaluates you upon. Your function.**

He doesn’t evaluate you based upon who you are or what you do. Each of you has been given a grace, a gifting, an ability. Are you doing what God has called you to do? If you’re a hand, are you doing the function of a hand? If you’re an arm, are you doing the function of an arm? If you’re a foot, are you doing the function of a foot? Are you functioning in the Body of Christ with what God has given you and where God has placed you? That’s how God evaluates you. He could care less if you are black, white, Indian, American, or African. That’s foolishness. That’s the way the world sees us, not God.

God sees us by our function. He sees how we fit into the Body of Christ and whether or not we are doing that which we are called to do. In Africa, I’ve had to deal with this. I’ve had to fight the anti-colonialist attitude. Colonialists dominated Africa for such a long time that there has been a backlash of rebellion. Africans feel like they are tossing off the reigns of colonialism. Much of it has gotten into the church. “We’re a Vv church. We’re a Bassa church. We’re a Kissi church.” The churches have been drawn up along tribal lines.

Do you know that it is easier for me as a white American to be effective in Africa as a missionary than it is for a Nigerian to go to Sierra Leone and be effective? Black Nigerian to black Sierra Leonian. It is easier for me to be effective. Why? Tribalism: the curse of Africa. For example, much of the fighting and destruction in South Africa today is the result of the Zulus against the Inkartas. It’s not even white and black anymore. It is black on black. It’s tribalism. So, it is harder for a Nigerian to go to Sierra Leone because some Sierra Leonians have a prejudice against Nigerians.

Let’s go back to the story I was telling you. This prominent African speaker tells this conference that Africans don’t want white missionaries. We understand that there have been hurts, but the answer is not to take away the white vessel. Let me give you a personal example of how this anti-colonialist attitude prevails in West Africa. My second daughter Elisabeth was born in Liberia although she is not a Liberian citizen. She’s not allowed to be a citizen of Liberia. If you are white, even if you are born there, you cannot be a citizen.

That's a direct result of colonialism. It's wrong, but it happens. Because people have been hurt by colonialist attitudes, this has been their response.

We don't make an issue of it. We understand that there are hurts. However, the answer is not to take the other ditch and cause more hurt. You must have the love of God and the right attitudes shown in the Word of God. Even though people have been abused or taken advantage of, that does not mean that God's gifts or callings are based on color. They are not! You may be one of those missionaries who can change that way of thinking and the attitudes which come from it.

Listen. Take note of what I am about to say. As a missionary, you do not go into a country at the even mark, at what we could term "zero." You go in at a distinct disadvantage; you go in at negative. When I went into Liberia I thought, "These guys are going to love me. These guys are all going to be glad that a missionary is here. Hi! My name's Russ Tatro, and I'm a missionary." I thought that they would all be glad.

I had missionaries who would turn their back to me. There were missionaries who were from a Spirit-filled denomination but who wouldn't have anything to do with us because they didn't like faith guys. They wouldn't have anything to do with us. They isolated us. We didn't go in at zero or even; we went in at negative.

First of all, people may not like your message. Secondly, there will be some who do not like missionaries because of their past experiences. If you go to India, China, or Africa, you will find people who will say, "We've had bad experiences with missionaries. You're just like all of the other missionaries. You're just going to come here and get pictures and videos for your ministry so that you can raise your support. You're going to live like a king and not do anything for us." They will have all kinds of perceptions. Some true; some untrue. Some warranted; some unwarranted. You, however, will pay the price for their preconceived ideas. Therefore, **a low profile and a low key approach is the best.**

Don't announce your coming. There are a whole lot more enemies out there than there are allies. Be careful! This doesn't stop us, but we do need to have and use some wisdom. We, as missionaries, need to have some discernment and some understanding of the true situation that is facing us.

I could tell you of country after country where cultural pride and racism are coming into the church. “We don’t want missionaries. We don’t need missionaries. We don’t want you. Just send us the money. Just give us what we want.” Listen, everyone must do what God has called them to do. What are we supposed to do? Are we supposed to eliminate the apostolic gracing and the missions gracing altogether? No! What if God were to send someone from Korea with an apostolic grace to help the Body of Christ in Nigeria in order to help with home cell groups? “We don’t want him because he’s a Korean.” You’re just a racist! He should have a place — he has a call and a function to fulfill.

Note: numerous problems have arisen because people come in with cultural pride. They say things that are abrasive. They come in aggressively with the wrong attitude. Remember that Jesus came as a humble servant. He didn’t come in pride and arrogance, saying how He was going to straighten everyone out. You must remember this.

Let’s review some of that which we’ve discussed. Cultural identification is such a major part as to whether the people reject or accept you. Your success or failure rests upon this. Your success will not be based upon whether or not you are a great preacher. That isn’t the biggest issue. You will begin to grow and develop when you start ministering to them and demonstrating the love of God to them. Oh, and you’ll have plenty of opportunities to fail. Plenty of them.

Let me tell you a story. I went through a war in Liberia and a coup in Sierra Leone. I cannot describe what this is like. You just can’t fathom it. Shooting goes on constantly. No vehicles are moving. Guns, people and soldiers just come and take whatever they want, people being killed — you just can’t imagine. I’ve been around floods and tornadoes, and war is much worse than that.

A military coup took place in Sierra Leone, and within two days it had settled down a little bit so that you could move around. The U.S. Embassy called all Americans in. They said, “We’re bringing in aircraft from Germany. We’ll have them at the airport tomorrow morning. You can come and get on the airplane with one bag that weighs ten pounds, and that’s it. This may be your last window of escape from the country. We’ve had word that there is going to be a counter-coup. If you stay, we will not take responsibility for you.” What are you going to do? Now, it is one thing to discuss what you would do in a quiet classroom. It is another thing to have gone through days of shooting and to have

seen the raping and pillaging that go on in a war. The fear is so thick. Almost everyone left, but we prayed about it and felt like God told us to stay. So, we did.

Several days later, I was driving down the street and met up with the national leader of a ministers' fellowship group. I stopped and said, "Hi."

He looked at me and said, "What are you doing here?"

I asked, "What do you mean?"

"You left!"

I said, "No, I didn't leave. I'm right here."

"All Americans left. Everybody is gone!"

"Well, I'm still here."

He still questioned, "How can it be?"

I explained, "The embassy didn't send me to Sierra Leone, and the embassy will not be the one to tell us when it's time to go. God sent me here, and God will tell me when it's time to go. I prayed, and God told me to stay."

He continued, "Well, we're having a meeting with all of our national pastors to discuss you missionaries. About how you pack up and leave us, thinking that it's business. You're just like businessmen who close down and leave because you're afraid. And we have to stay here. We don't like that."

I said, "All the missionaries didn't leave."

He said, "Yes, they did!"

"I'm still here. Don't you see me?"

"Yeah, but, uh..."

I went on and taught him from the Word of God about how wrong it is to judge your brother who is doing something for conscience sake. I told him about

some Sierra Leonian pastors I knew who left also. I got his thinking straightened out.

You see, there's an attitude that rises up on both sides: one of spiritual pride, superiority, and dominance. Many have an attitude of "We know how to straighten these people up." When that happens, there's a backlash that is felt. A nationalistic attitude says, "We don't want you. Your skin's wrong. Just send us the money." It becomes spiritual prostitution. Prostitution is just a money exchange with no relationship. That's wrong on both sides. You, as missionaries, will have to deal with these attitudes and practices.

This is a very real problem in many countries. However, some of you who will be serving in a non-English speaking country will not even know of this for years. You won't understand the language well enough to know what's going on.. Some will be open and overt about their negative feelings while others will be quiet and subtle. You may not know their true feelings for years. However, you can be sure that although nothing may be said, their attitudes will be demonstrated.

Back to the story. We decided to stay in Sierra Leone, but one of the largest missionary groups there decided to leave. In fact, almost all of the large groups left. This particular evangelical group had invested millions of missions dollars into Sierra Leone over the course of many years. They had tremendous facilities in the country. When they were leaving very hurriedly due to the embassy recommendation, they turned over the ministry to the national staff. "Here, you're in charge of this ... you're in charge of this ... you're in charge of this," and they left. They came back six months later, and all of their vehicles were gone. The ministry was kaput, wiped out.

Do you know what happened to their vehicles? Their leaders sold them. The national leaders. These missionaries were furious: "How could they do this to us? We can't believe they did this! We trusted them! We've been working together for years. We gave them all of this stuff when we left, and they've gone and sold it all. They've destroyed the ministry!" They got so angry that they packed up and left the country, leaving nothing. Did they succeed or fail?

They failed. The saddest part though is that they don't even know why they failed. They're blaming it on the nationals. Do you know what that means? It means that if they go and set up somewhere else, they'll fail in the next attempt too. They'll fail again, and they won't even know why.

So, here it is. This group is angry at the nationals. They pack up and leave, asking “How could they [the nationals] do this?” That particular group had been working in Sierra Leone for about 20 years. Some of their missionaries had died in the country. They failed. The sad thing is that they don’t know why they failed and will, therefore, make the same mistake again somewhere else. They blame it on everyone else. **The problem is that they didn’t go in with the right objective in the beginning: to make disciples. They didn’t go in with the aim of training people.**

They didn’t go in with the aim of turning the ministry over to nationals they had trained and discipled. They didn’t go in with an understanding of how to communicate the heavenly vision to the people. They selected the wrong people with the wrong criteria. When you do that, they will pull out the rug from underneath you. This particular group failed, and they don’t know why. Many, many missions organizations are failing and are doomed to continued failure because they are not adhering to the strict principles of the Word. They are not carrying out its mandate with the right perspective which God gave us and Jesus demonstrated for us. This is why much of the world has a sour taste in its mouth about missionaries.

It’s sad. It doesn’t have to be that way though. Hopefully, you who are reading this book will be some of those who will change that. We’re seeing a change. You wouldn’t see these kinds of numbers in the Bible schools unless the people were being loved. The people are responding to the love they see. They are responding to the heart, the attitude, and the spirit of missions that I’ve been telling you about. If you don’t get hold of this, you will go in the wrong spirit. You may be called; you may be sincere; you may be dedicated; you may even pay a price. But God forbid that you would work on the missions field for years and then **whoosh** — gone!

I have seen missionaries lay down their lives on the field. To see someone pay a price and then watch nothing come out of it saddens me. It’s a waste! It is very important that you go in with the right spirit, doing that which God has called you to do. **The call is not sufficient.** Being a good preacher is not enough. **You must take these principles we’ve discussed and apply them.** If you were to take a farm boy from Minnesota and throw him into the Bronx, into the inner city of New York, what would happen? He’d get chewed up. Same thing in missions. If you don’t understand these things and if you don’t get the right spirit and attitude about what you are called to do, the same thing will happen to you. You will get chewed up!

More missionaries fail than succeed. The failure rate is very high. Not because they don't know the Word. They fail in dealing with some of the things we've discussed. They fail in identifying culturally.

XII. YOU MUST BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE

Let's go back to Joshua for a moment. The Lord tells Joshua to be strong and courageous three times (vv.6,7,9). It must have been important then. God is trying to get a point across, wouldn't you say?

The opposite of strength is weakness. You will not succeed in missions if you are weak. I'm not talking about physical weakness, but rather spiritual weakness. What's the opposite of courage? Fear. **You will not be effective in missions if you operate in fear.** Why would God tell Joshua that he needed to "be strong and of a good courage?" He knew that giants lay ahead. He knew there were battles ahead. He knew there were challenges and conflicts ahead. In order to triumph over these, Joshua was going to have to be strong and of good courage.

How are we strong? We are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Eph.6:10). Your strength is in the Lord. What does that mean? You must stay pressed into God. You must keep your eyes on Him. You must keep yourself prayed up and stirred up. You must keep yourself in tune. You are strong in the Lord (who you are in Christ). That's where your strength comes from. It's one thing to know it, but it's an entirely different thing to operate in it.

We must have courage. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of what? Power, love, and a sound mind. You know the scripture (2 Tim.1:7). God does not want you operating in fear. There are a whole lot of ministers who operate in fear. Don't you operate in fear. We need to be operating in faith. We need to be operating in courage. Be strong and of good courage! Why? Courage inspires courage in others. It's contagious. I can get in the pulpit with courage and come across strong. You'd be amazed at what that does for people.

Fear and timidity can be seen and felt. Animals even know that. They can tell when you are afraid. I look at dogs sometimes and rebuke them in the name of Jesus. They just turn around and leave. I remember one time when I was walking with my wife. We were getting ready to go to Guatemala and were walking on a country road in West Virginia. We were walking one morning when this dog came running toward us. This dog was barking and coming straight toward us. I turned around, looked, and said, "In the name of Jesus, I rebuke you." The dog literally did a U-turn and went all the way back to the yard. We

have authority over animals, but you must use it. This is just one example of how you must take control of the fear that would try to overwhelm you.

Always remember that strength and courage are important keys to your success. You will have a lot of opportunities in cross-cultural missions to experience fear and anxiety. Opportunities for fear. Opportunities to not have courage. Keep yourself stirred up, meditating on God's word.

XIII. DISCIPLING THE NATIONS: MUST BE BASED UPON THE WORD

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make they way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Josh. 1:8).

Discipling can not take place without the Word as the center. It is the Word of God that brings light. When the Word is alive in you and when you bring it out with fire and conviction and with power and authority, it will impact people's lives. Then they take off with the same power, fire, and authority in their lives, reaching others with the Gospel. It is not contingent upon buildings, sound equipment, generators, or fans. It's the Word of God that causes it to happen, and that's where your victory comes. You've got to get it alive in you.

You can't give what you yourself don't have. You have to press in. You have to dig it out. You must have the Word alive in you. I'm going to say something blunt that a lot of my minister friends don't like, but it's true. If there's not revival in the church, it's because there's not revival in the pastor. If there's not revival in the pews, it's because there's not revival in the pulpit. If there's fire in the pulpit, there will be fire in the pews. If there's commitment in the pulpit, there will be commitment in the pews. If there's outreach in the pulpit, there will be outreach in the pews.

People respond to the pulpit. All of us do not like to look in the mirror that James talks about, but it's true. Look at your heart. You're not going to give people your religion. You're not going to give people your buildings. You're going over to give them the Word of God that changed you in order to change them. If you succeed in changing them, it will impact the nation. Guaranteed.

However, it must be more than a book to you. It's got to be. It has to be revelation in your own life. You have to be getting the Word out in whatever area you are in. Keep that thing hot in the realm of the spirit. Let me give you a little formula that we came up with: 1) study yourself full, 2) think yourself clear, and 3) pray yourself hot. If you follow this, you will have an impact from the pulpit which will in turn impact the nation.

The Word changes people. Stay in the Word. Stay hooked up with the Word. Keep it alive in you. This will “make your way prosperous and lead you into good success (v.8).

XIV. SPIRITUAL FOCUS VS. NATURAL FOCUS

You must have and maintain more of a spiritual focus than a natural focus. Remember that. Write it down so that you will read it often. It is easy to say, but hard to do. I am convinced that you must have more of a spiritual focus in the beginning and that if there's a natural side to what you are doing, it will come later. It's easier to get ten people to volunteer to dig a ditch for five hours or to get them to stuff envelopes for five hours or even to paint a building for five hours than it is to get them to come and pray for five hours.

People are works oriented, not spiritually oriented. You've got to press on. We, as ministers, are spiritual doctors. That's what a minister is. My job as a spiritual doctor is to do whatever it takes to get you over in the spirit. When you speak to a group of people it will be your job to speak by the Spirit into the hearts of the people, causing them to respond spiritually to whatever God wants them to do. If there are four or five sleeping, then you're probably not succeeding.

As a spiritual doctor, my job and your job is not to put on a show for the people. My job is not to perform. My job is to move people into the spirit, to get them into the arena of faith. That's what a pastor does. It may be through preaching the Word. It may be through praise and worship. It may be by praying for the sick. **But** it is to move people over into faith, to get them to interact with God spiritually. That's what we are to do as spiritual physicians. It's my job to assess the patients and see what it takes to move them over there, and hopefully, I can do that accurately by the Holy Spirit (not just out of my own ability).

Guess what? This won't happen if ministers are not walking in the Spirit. So, keep a spiritual focus. Keep yourself prayed up. Keep yourself in the Word. Keep that as a priority. We're here to change the nations. We'll build buildings. Yes, that will be a part of it. However, the fire of God, the commitment of God, and the zeal of God must be placed in the forefront. They must be the priority. That's what's important. The buildings and all the other natural things will fall in place. It [the natural] will happen if you keep things in the right perspective, with a spiritual focus as your number one priority.

XV. DIFFERENT STANDARDS OF OPERATING

I want to share something with you concerning the standards of how you operate. This is important to know and understand in regard to impacting and disciplining a nation. The standard you use and operate in will not necessarily be the people's standard in the country to which you are called. For example, we have visitors who come to Africa on a regular basis. One time, we had a group in, and we went up to our national office. We had turned the ministry over to the national staff in 1992. This particular group of visitors came into the country in 1993. As we were going up to the office that day, we noticed that the steps were dirty, not well swept. When we got up there, this fellow said to me, "Bro. Russ, do you think it would be all right if I helped them out with an electronic typewriter?"

I answered, "No, don't"

"But they are using this old, rickety typewriter. I can't believe they are using that."

I said, "Look on the shelf over there. There's a new electronic typewriter on the shelf."

He then asked, "Why aren't they using it?"

I said, "I don't think they have any ribbons, and there's no electricity" (There was no electricity that day).

He thought that he had a solution, but he wasn't aware of the whole story. So, I told him how we had run the ministry: how the steps had been swept and how there had been computers, electronic typewriters, and generators. I explained, "That's the way we operated, but now it's at a level that they can handle. They can sustain and maintain the ministry at this level. That's where they are right now. They're using the manual typewriter instead of the electric, but that's okay. If they were forced to do things a certain way, then three or six months down the road the equipment would be broken or they wouldn't have the money for the ribbons. They've got to find their place and the level at which they can operate and then build from there."

Do not impose your standards upon those you place in leadership. Yes, show them by your example when you are teaching and discipling them, but allow them to begin at a level which is attainable for them. It's a growth process. Remember that these things (floors swept and manual vs. electronic typewriters) are not the majors. Whether a letter has zero mistakes or three and whether or not it was typed on a manual or electronic typewriter, those things are not major. Those are the minors. The doctrine in the Bible schools is what is major.

Keep your major focus on what's important. Are they getting hold of the Spirit of God and the Word of God? Are the teachers bringing out the fire? Are they bringing out the light? Those are the important questions to ask yourself. If your teachers aren't prepared for class, then you have a problem.

So, don't find yourself majoring on the minors and minoring on the majors. Evangelistic outreach, discipling, training, getting the Word in: those are the majors. I've seen missionaries lose their tempers over things like dusty steps. "I told you to sweep this!!" What does it matter? Over the course of eternity who cares? Big deal. "We've got rules to follow!!" Right. You're going to follow some stupid rule while your attitude and your spirit toward the people is worse than them not following your rule.

You have to keep the right spirit in it. Don't get over into a legalistic attitude. **When you train people, you've got to let them walk the thing out.** One day I received a phone call from Sierra Leone. One of our Missionary Training School students said, "Bro. Russ, they blew up the sound system in the evangelistic crusade. They blew out all of the speakers. I can't believe it! A 1200 watt amp. Bro. Russ, they need a sound system."

I told him, "Well, we'll pray with them, and keep our faith with them."

"Can't you bring something in?"

"They've got to walk and swim this thing out for themselves. If they blow a few out and pay for them, they'll stop blowing them out."

If a kid loses a bicycle a few times, he'll stop throwing it down, kicking the tires, jumping on the spokes, and abusing it. If he pays for it a few times, he'll quit doing that. Isn't that how life works? It's the same thing here.

Just remember to place the importance on those things which really matter in the long run. Ask yourself if the success of the ministry rests upon your standards of operation before you get upset about them. Allow the national staff to grow in the natural things. If they are taking care of the spiritual side of the ministry, the natural increase will come.

XVI. LEADERSHIP TRAINING: THE IMPARTATION OF ONE’S SELF, AFFECTING THOSE YOU TRAIN

In the process of discipling, you are training and impacting leaders. You are affecting leaders. Leaders must have a right attitude about what they are called to do. The attitude that they have will be a reflection of you. Look back at Joshua 1: “Now after the death of Moses, the **servant** of the Lord...” The what of the Lord? The **servant**. Take note of that word. The verse continues, “it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ **minister**.” Moses’ what? His **minister**. The words “servant” and “minister” here represent the same idea of work and servanthood. Thus, Joshua was a **servant** to Moses.

Three times in the first two verses the word “servant” comes up. That tells me it is important. As you train leaders, the attitude and spirit you carry will affect them. Moses was obviously affected by the Lord and his walk with the Lord, and Joshua, in turn, was affected by Moses. **The spirit in which you operate will be imparted to others.** I’m not talking about the Holy Spirit. I’m talking about your personal spirit. I’m talking about the essence of how you carry yourself. Your ethos: that is, the totality of your character, your system of values, and your attitudes. The Kennedy family, for example, have a well-known ethos. You only have to say the name, and it conjures up a particular feeling and specific ideas. Your ethos, the way you carry yourself (what you do and say), emanates from you, affecting those around you. Obviously, Moses’ attitudes, beliefs, and character impacted Joshua.

Leaders have a spirit about them. I know leaders who have a controlling spirit. I know leaders who have a domineering spirit. Others have a legalistic and harsh spirit. Then there are those who have a gentle or humble spirit, those who have a servant’s heart. Your call is a part of that. Some have a pastor’s heart while others have an evangelistic spirit. That’s not just the Holy Ghost. **It’s the essence of who you are and what you’re about. The kind of spirit you carry is what will be transferred to others around you.**

What kind of spirit are you carrying?

XVII. THE GRACE: DON'T FRUSTRATE IT

Let's look at Galatians Chapter Two. In verse 21 the Apostle Paul says, "I do not frustrate the grace of God...." The word "grace" there is not salvation grace. If you look at 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and Romans chapter 12, you will see many references to the Biblical graces that are given in the Body of Christ. Paul says, "I speak by the grace given unto me." What grace was given unto Paul? The apostolic grace.

Each person has been given a grace or an endowment. Everyone has been given at least one gift. We know of the five fold ministry gifts: apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. Yet, there are other gifts such as administration, helps, giving, and mercy. Everyone has been given at least one of these gifts. It is that endowed grace that causes you to be successful in life.

God's grace enables you to fulfill His plan for your life. When God gives you that grace and ability it does more than just please you and even more than simply enable you to fulfill His plan. It is much more than that. His grace causes blessing to go out to others. I get up and preach and signs and wonders happen. Did I, in and of my own self, cause that to happen? No. The grace, the gift, and the Holy Spirit within me caused that to happen. I can't make the miracles happen. The Holy Spirit does, based upon the gifting and gracing He has placed in me. His provisional grace. God's provision for the people. I am happy and fulfilled when I am operating in that grace and when I'm accomplishing what God wants me to do in life. The people are blessed in the midst of it. They are blessed, I am blessed, and God is happy.

The grace causes it to happen. I shared with you about the truckloads of corn seed for West Africa. I also had a fellow give me half a million textbooks for public schools. I didn't write a letter. I had the International Bible Society give me 20,000 Bibles. I didn't write a letter. I just made a phone call and talked to someone. Lester Sumrall has sent his ship over to Africa twice. What caused that? God's grace, His provisional grace, operating through me to touch you. I get up to speak and someone gives me \$25,000 for the ministry. What caused that? That grace in my life reaching out and speaking to his heart. For whose benefit? Not mine. For the people of West Africa. That's why the grace has been given to me — to reach out and help those people.

I want to tell you another story. I called an agency once about some gospel tracts. A lady answered the phone, and I proceeded to tell her that I was a missionary and that I needed some gospel tracts. She said, “Oh, you can come to our office and pick up a couple of bags.” I said, “Well, I need a couple of million.”

She was quiet on the other end. “I can’t authorize that.”

“Is there someone who can?”

“Well, all of our senior guys are gone right now. But, let me think. There’s somebody in the press room.”

She puts me on hold for a bit. All of a sudden the phone gets picked up by some guy. I can hear the press in the background. “Hey!” He hollers into the phone as the press is going.

I holler back, “I need some gospel tracts.”

“How many do you need?”

“Two million.” And it is quiet.

He says, “Okay. Pick them up tomorrow.”

They gave us two million gospel tracts with one telephone call. Just like that. God’s grace reached out and touched that man’s heart. It wasn’t for me. It was for the people of West Africa. That’s the way it’s supposed to work.

Don’t frustrate the grace! You can choke the very anointing that you are wanting to operate in. There are people all over the world who are frustrating and cutting off God’s provisional grace for them. Not only spiritually, but financially (naturally) as well. They don’t receive favor. Relationships don’t happen. Churches don’t support them. It doesn’t click. They are always struggling. You do not want to frustrate the grace.

How do you frustrate it? By not being obedient to verse 20 of Galatians 2. Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ: **nevertheless I live; yet not I**, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” There’s an “I” problem today in much of the

Body of Christ and its leadership. **My** ministry. What **I**'m doing for God. This is **my** church. This is **my** thing. Paul says that you are to be "crucified with Christ." It is not your church; it's His church. You are a shepherd. How many shepherds are out in the field tending the sheep that they own. Shepherds don't own sheep. The guy in the air-conditioned office owns them. The shepherd boy just takes care of them.

We, as ministers, oftentimes start taking possession. We start taking control. **My** building. **My** church. **My** ministry. A controlling spirit begins to dominate people's lives. They get fearful and feel as if they have to protect their turf. Protect their investment. Protect that which they've put their life into. I walked away from the ministry in Liberia and said, "This isn't my ministry anyhow. This isn't **my** thing. I can't take credit for it."

If you begin to take credit for all that happens in the place which God has called you, you will open yourself up for a great fall. One of the most neglected characteristics of people who are in the ministry is humility. Humility. **There must be a true work of humility in your heart, or you will frustrate God's grace** in the ministry to which He has called you.

A true work of humility must be accomplished in your heart by the Spirit in order to not frustrate the grace. Just knowing about humility is not enough. Head knowledge will not get you through. I would like to share with you how God did some of that in my life. Let me begin by telling you about the end result, the fruit.

I was speaking in a conference a few years ago. There were 5,000–6,000 in attendance, and I had been given 15–20 minutes to share about what was happening in Liberia. So, I got up and made the statement: "I just want to give God all the praise and glory and all the honor for what He is doing over there in West Africa." I then shared my testimony. One person came up to me afterwards and commented, "Russ, that was real good what you shared, but you don't have to try and be so humble." I walked away thinking, "I wasn't trying to be anything. I wasn't trying to be humble."

Humility should be a natural reflection of leaders in the Body of Christ. The rich young ruler came to Jesus and called Him "Good Teacher." Jesus asked, "Why are you calling me good? There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark 10:17–18). You can just imagine the disciples saying, "Come on Jesus, you're the Son of God. We all know that, so why do you have to be so humble?"

What was Jesus really saying? He was trying to get them to see that even what they saw Him do came from above. Jesus wouldn't take the credit. Jesus also set the example when He washed His disciples' feet, saying "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (John 13:14–16). Footwashing is a humbling experience for both parties involved, maybe even more so for the one whose feet are being washed. That evening, Jesus used the common act of footwashing to teach His disciples how they should follow Him in humility. Oh, that today's church leadership would learn from Christ's example.

I was in Africa and had just been in the ministry for a short time when the Holy Spirit spoke to me. He said, "Russ, is there anything in your life that would embarrass you if I were to expose it publicly?" I had to check up on myself. I could honestly say that there wasn't any knowledgeable sin. However, it would be embarrassing for people to know when I lost my temper with my wife or got upset with another driver or... You see, there's a hidden side of our lives that nobody knows about except God. Your husband doesn't know; your wife doesn't know. There's a hidden side that no one knows about except you and God. He said to me, "Is there anything in your life that would embarrass you if I were to expose it publicly? If I were to put it on a big screen in front of all these thousands of Bible school students, do you think that some of them would be disappointed in you and actually turn away?" I said, "Yes, I believe so." He said, "Then what's the difference between you and any one of the ministers who has fallen into gross, public sin, causing people to become disappointed and turn away? The only difference is that their sin was revealed and yours has not been."

That was a very humbling experience for me. It helped bring me to the place where I could say: "I just want to give God all the praise and glory and all the honor for what He is doing over there in West Africa." I realize that if it weren't for His grace, none of us (that includes me) would be doing anything. Who are we to say, "**I, me, mine.**" Don't ever forget that without His grace you wouldn't be able to do anything for the Kingdom of God. Don't ever get puffed up in thinking that you're somebody big or some superstar. If it weren't for His forgiving grace on a daily basis, we'd be nothing. Some have forgotten that. You can hear it in people's talk: "**I, me, mine, and what I'm doing.**" Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ." Dead men don't brag. Dead men don't boast.

Ephesians 4 talks about the ministry gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. Those words are verbs, not nouns. They are what you do, not who you are. "I'm an evangelist!" Foolishness. You evangelize. "I'm a pastor." No, you pastor. It isn't who you are; it's what you do. It is your function. Nothing to be in pride about. Nothing to get puffed up about. Nothing to get you thinking that you're a superstar. You are who you are in Christ, not in and of your own self.

Let me give you another Biblical example. Who wrote most of the New Testament? Paul, and he says, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death" (Rom.7:24, NIV)? Earlier in the chapter Paul even says that he does what he doesn't want to do and doesn't do those things he should (7:19). He speaks of the flesh waging war against his mind (v.23). All of these comments show us that even the Apostle Paul had to deal with his flesh wanting its own way. If he, a man with so much revelation who wrote the majority of the New Testament, had to do this, what makes any of us think that we won't have to do the same. Unless you can admit that you are a "wretched man" without God, in and of your own self, pride and all kinds of other junk will get in. You must strive for an attitude of true humility.

If we had a dead body in a casket and someone from the back of the room came up and spit on the body and said, "I never did like you!", do you think the dead man would get offended? Do you think he would spit back? Then, someone else comes in and walks up to the casket and says, "Oh, I love you! You were the world's greatest preacher. I just love you." Do you think that he would get puffed up in pride? It wouldn't affect him, would it? That's how God wants us to be. Crucified in Christ. Dead. We shouldn't take the praise, we shouldn't take the honor, and we shouldn't take the acknowledgments. Pride should have no place in our lives. On the other hand, we shouldn't get caught up in criticism. Neither should affect us.

Let me give you a second example of not being crucified with Christ. Ministering out of your hurts. You see, love takes no offense according to I Corinthians 13. Love doesn't get offended. It can be very tempting to minister out of a hurt. You need to walk in the God-kind of love. "But you don't know what he did! You don't know how bad he was to me." Love takes no offense. "Yeah, but I've got a right. I've got a good reason to be hurt." Love takes no offense. Not the God-kind of love. Think about Jesus on the cross. Did he say, "Father, get even with them"? Now, these were the ones who drove the spikes in his hands and feet. Didn't he have a right? His love took no offense, and instead

of asking for His Father to get even with them, He asked for Him to forgive them. I like what one of my friends says: “You can’t hurt me. I love you. Spit on me. You can’t hurt me. I love you. I’ll just forgive you. Abuse me. I’ll just forgive you.” Crucified in Christ. That’s where we have to walk.

You must die for Him. He doesn’t want you to die physically. He wants you to die to self, to your own aspirations, to your own desires. I wanted to be a United States senator, and I was going that way. I had to die to that. I had to come to the place where I said, “If God wants me as a missionary, then that’s what I want.” You have to die to your own aspirations, your own desires. He does expect you to die.

If you live by the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, you will overcome your flesh. That includes the pride and the hurt (taking offense) which would try to dominate your life. You will not be effective if you walk in the flesh. You will short circuit the anointing in your life; you will cut off His grace and His provision to you and for you. Protect the anointing which is on your life! Your success depends upon it.

XVIII. LEADERSHIP KEY: DEMONSTRATION IS NECESSARY

So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: “Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own’” (Josh. 1:10–11, NIV).

Then they answered Joshua, “Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever you may command them, will be put to death! Only be strong and courageous!” (1:16–18, NIV)

How did Joshua get this many people in unity? The officers to whom he was speaking in verse ten were the leaders of several million people. It’s hard enough to get the elders of the church to decide on new curtains or choir robes. How could he get the level of loyalty and unity needed for them to say that they would put those to death who rebelled? How did Joshua get them to follow him?

The last part of verse eighteen gives us some insight into the answer. Their one condition to follow Joshua was that the Lord be with him as He was with Moses. We, as ministers and leaders, have a responsibility to demonstrate to the people that God is with us. If you are telling the people that you are a pastor or a leader, then they have the right to expect you to demonstrate it, to show them that God is with you. Talk is just not sufficient. Telling them who you are and what you are is not sufficient. You have to demonstrate it.

In the last section we discussed the grace that the Lord gives to accomplish the vision. Your demonstrating that grace is of the utmost importance. How will that be done? Through signs and wonders, yes. But there are many other things which will demonstrate or prove that God’s hand is upon you to minister: favor, wisdom, knowledge, creativity, strategies, and hearing from God accurately.

The children of Israel were asking Joshua to demonstrate or prove his leadership to them. They were willing to follow, but only if they knew that they could trust him. If you want the people to follow you, you must give them a reason for their loyalty.

If you’re in leadership, you need to be praying on a regular basis with those you are leading. I’m speaking of those who are on a discipleship level,

those you are pouring yourself into. You need to be praying with them and demonstrating the reality of God to them. I could give you many examples, but one in particular comes to mind right now.

In the countries in which we are working, the staff members meet for an hour of prayer every morning. Everyone is required to come. It is not an option. If you have someone who is not willing to pray for the ministry, then they are really not hooked up from the heart. People need to find the place where they can hook up. You need to find a place where you can hook up.

We were in Sierra Leone having prayer one day, and the Bible school was just getting ready to be opened in a few days. I was concerned that it was going to rain. September falls at the end of the rainy season in West Africa. It rains every day during the rainy season. Everyday it rains, and this stops people from coming and registering for the Bible school. Most of the people walk or ride in taxis, so the weather greatly affects travel.

I was pondering this in my mind, and I thought to myself, “I hope it doesn’t rain.” All of a sudden the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, “If you decree it, it will be so.” Right there in the staff meeting I said, “It will not rain for the next three days.” They all looked at me and said, “Bro. Russ, it’s rainy season. It rains every day.” I didn’t say anything. We finished the staff meeting and went on with the day. That day and that night it didn’t rain.

The next day we met for prayer, and I said, “It will not rain for the next two days.” “It’s rainy season, Bro. Russ. It always rains.” It didn’t rain that day nor that night. Registration started, and the next day we opened the Bible school. In prayer I said, “It will not rain today.” And it didn’t rain that day. It went three days and nights without raining during the rainy season in Sierra Leone.

What did that do? The staff and team saw it demonstrated to them that “Bro. Russ hears from God and walks with God.” **We need to be able to demonstrate to the people that we’re walking with God.** Especially to those we are leading. It’s expensive to say one thing and be wrong. It’s expensive to be one way today and another way tomorrow. “Try this. Try that.” No, it’s not “eenie, meenie, minie, mo.” It’s not “Let’s Make a Deal” where you try door number one, door number two, or door number three. It’s not that I have failed so many other ways and there’s only one way left to do it. It has to be you being led by the Spirit of God because a “double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (Jas.1:8). You will lose people. They won’t have confidence in you. “He says this

one day, and then he says something else another. He tried this, and it didn't work. When is he gonna get lucky and get the right answer?" Do you want these comments to be said of you?

They that are the sons and daughters of God are led by eenie, meenie, minie, mo? No! They that are His children are led by His Spirit. It's plan number one when the Holy Ghost says it. That's all there is to it. It's not option A, B, or C. It's not even a case of an emergency option. If He says it, that's it. You have to develop the ability to not only be led but to dig it out from the Spirit of God and to walk it out in the spirit if you're going to be an effective leader.

I remember another example which demonstrates being led by the Holy Ghost as well as giving the people a reason to believe that God is with you. How do you think we got the Bible in the public schools in these countries" God told us to do it and then gave us the strategy.

In Liberia, in a time of prayer, God said, "Go to the Ministry of Education. Present a proposal to them for teaching the Bible in the public schools." The schools already had a religious education class but no teachers. They didn't have Bibles. They didn't even implement the program due to a lack of finances. So, we gave them a proposal. They said, "Hey, we like it. You guys are inter-denominational. If you'll supply us with curriculum, with teachers, with Bibles, and you'll do it all for free, we'll give you the authority. We like it. Go for it!"

I didn't have Bibles. I didn't have teachers. I didn't have curriculum. But God was telling me to do it. We had gotten the okay from the Ministry of Education, but I told God that He was going to have to come up with the rest. Soon after, I happened to be speaking in a conference in the United States that Willie George was attending. After he heard me share about the ministry, Pastor George stopped me as I walked past him: "I liked some of the things that you shared. I appreciate it." I thanked him and then told him that we had taken two boxes of his materials into the country with us. He asked, "Do you want some more?" I told him that that would be a great blessing. Pastor George then told me to come to his office and that he would see what they could do to help us out. I went over to the office on Monday of that week. We went into the warehouse, and he proceeded to give me pallet after pallet after pallet of materials.

Pastor George now sends containers full of children's materials to West Africa. He supplies the materials for us to teach the Bible in the public schools. In addition, Pastor Billy Joe Daugherty just gave us 80,000 "This New Life"

books. This is about the 5th year he has done that. We are now using his book for the junior and senior levels of the religious education program. This also came about that same summer I first spoke to Pastor George.

I had the materials, but I was still lacking the Bibles. I was impressed to call a Bible society. I spoke to the vice president. We're talking on the phone, and he says "It's interesting that you would call me right now. We just had a staff meeting this morning, and we were just talking about how we need to get Bibles into this part of West Africa. Now you call us, and you're from this part of Africa. We didn't know how we were going to get them in." He sent us a container of 12,000–15,000 Bibles. He paid for all of them as well as the shipping costs to get them there.

It was now time for me to go back to Liberia. God had supernaturally provided the curriculum and the Bibles needed. We had 400 students in the Bible school at that time. I began to challenge the students with the assignment God had given. One hundred responded. We began to train them, planning that they would begin to go into the schools as volunteer teachers. Everything was coming together, so we went back to the Ministry of Education to tell them that we were ready.

The third man down from the top meets with us and says, "No. We don't want you." It turned out that he had been to a denominational seminary. They didn't like us, and someone had given him some bad information. They weren't exactly excited about us faith guys. It's true. Not everyone is excited about faith people coming around. So, he blocked us for one month, two months, three months. We were praying, reminding God of His promise in Joshua 1:5 that no man would be able to stand before us: "Lord, You've ordained this. This man is standing in front of us. He's hindering and holding back Your plan. Change him, or remove him! Transfer him. Do whatever it takes." It took a couple of months of us doing this and then I went back into his office. He said, "Bro. Russ, are you ready to start the program?" I said, "What?" He continued, "Yeah, when are you going to start putting the teachers in. Let's go!"

Praise the Lord! We started the program. However, I needed to know what had happened to this man to change him. He told me of his cousin Sadie who worked in the Education Department with him. He had known Sadie for years and told me that Sadie had been a drinker and a womanizer. Sadie had started going to the Bible school that September and had begun to carry his Bible to

work with him. The man said, “We call him ‘the preacher’ now. If it will change my cousin Sadie, I know that this is of God. I want this in all of the children.”

Today in that nation of Liberia, we teach the Bible in the public schools, and we oversee the entire program.

After we had begun teaching in the public schools, a particular group of missionaries went to him and said, “We are going to pull all of our support from you if you let these people teach.” He prayed about it. He then went back to them and said, “Fine. These people are in, and you’re out. These people aren’t playing religious politics with our children. They just want to help our children. They aren’t trying to get credit; they’re not trying to control the program. They just want to help the children.” And he threw them out of the program.

Our same staff went to the Ministry of Education in Sierra Leone and tried to use the same strategy that we had used in Liberia for the religious education program. They went straight to the top, to the Minister of Education. I didn’t tell them to do that. They did that on their own initiative. The top man was a Muslim. He said, “Get out of here. We don’t want your stinking Bibles!” God had not told us to do that; they had done it in the flesh. We prayed about it, and God said to go to the principals directly. Many of the principals are Christians. We are now teaching 25,000–30,000 kids a week in Sierra Leone. And this is in a country where the Minister of Education is Muslim.

When we hear from God and obey, the results will be there, demonstrating that God is with us. The results show the people that He is with us. You must do this in order to be an effective leader. **People won’t follow you if they don’t trust you and your decisions. Not only that, but they should see God’s hand of provision upon you.**

God spoke to my heart in Sierra Leone about going down to the local prison to start a Bible school there. I told the staff that God told me that. I then sent some of our staff to the prison to set up a meeting with the warden and to check it out. Right away the warden said, “No way! No religious groups or Bible schools in here.” They went back again. The same thing happened.

I asked our staff to get me an appointment with the warden. I went to see him and took an evangelist friend of mine along with me. When we got to the prison there were ten or twelve prison officials waiting for us. I carried in copies of *Maximized Manhood* by Ed Cole and *The Authority of the Believer* by

Kenneth E. Hagin. I like to give people books because they impact the lives of those who read them. So, I went around and said, “Here’s a gift. We just wanted to give you a book.” The warden looked at me and said, “No meeting. The chaplain isn’t here.” I explained to him that my meeting was with him and not the chaplain. “No meeting.” I said, “Fine!!” I reached out and jerked the book I had given him out of his hand. Then I went around to each official and took back the books I had brought. As I walked out the door I said, “If you don’t want our help, we’re out of here. We just came to help your people.”

My evangelist friend said to me, “I can’t believe you did that.” I had to admit that I was kind of surprised myself. I certainly didn’t plan it, and I wasn’t angry. It just happened. It was the Holy Spirit. I blame it on Him. You’ll say it’s okay to blame Him when I tell you the end result.

Two days later the warden calls and asks to see me. You would have thought that I was his best friend. He opened that prison to us. We took our evangelistic team and our musicians in for a whole week. I preached on Paul and Silas getting out of jail. I had a captive audience. We saw hundreds of prisoners come down and bow their knees to Jesus Christ. We saw prison guards leave their rifles, come down, and bow their knees to Jesus Christ. They then opened up all of the prisons in the entire country to us. We started a Bible school in that prison with over 100 students. The prison guards got jealous and demanded that we have one for them too.

Again, demonstrating that God is with us. That prison Bible school is still going on today. I just recently preached there. There were over 200 people in the chapel service, and 25 death row prisoners were born again. The staff had heard what I had said about the Lord wanting a Bible school to be started in the prison. What if nothing had ever come out of it? Would that have placed faith in their hearts that I heard from God and was walking with him? No! But the fruit has been a demonstration to them.

Obedience to the Spirit of God. Walking with Him. Demonstrating that He is with you. Knowing your God. When you carry that attitude of leadership, and when you demonstrate that spirit of leadership, people will want to follow you. Not eenie, meenie, minie, mo. Not door number one, two, or three. That’s the spirit of leadership that we must convey to others.

XIX. LEADERSHIP: NEED FOR SYSTEMATIC ORGANIZATION

Look to Joshua Chapter one again. Verses ten through eighteen recount the practical steps which were taken to move the children of Israel into the Promised Land. There will always be the practical as well as the spiritual to deal with. Look closely at those verses and you will see how Joshua delegated the responsibilities. Ministers must also learn to work with the practical as Joshua did.

Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, “Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.’”

And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, spake Joshua, saying, “Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, ‘The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land.’ Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this side of the Jordan, but ye shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and help them; Until the Lord have given your brethren rest, as he hath given you, and they also have possessed the land which the Lord your God hath given them. Then ye shall return unto the land of your possession and enjoy it, which Moses the Lord’s servant gave you on this side Jordan toward the sunrising.”

And they answered Joshua, saying, “All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so we will hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses. Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage” (1:10–17).

You can see that Joshua implemented systematic organization in order to fulfill the task the Lord had given to him. He took the larger picture and broke it down into pieces. The two and a half million Israelites were broken down into much more manageable groups in order to communicate with the people. You as ministers **must**, I repeat **must**, use systematic organization. You must break the big picture into smaller segments.

God spoke to my heart and said, “Help take the Word of Faith into West Africa.” The Lord told me to **help** do it. He didn’t tell me to do it all. Living Word Missions works with people in other countries. We’re not hung up on us being in charge of everything and having our name on everything. We work with a lot of other people. We just do our part. We are to **help** take the Word of Faith into West Africa, and God has told us to do it through the mechanism of Bible training centers. That’s how he directed us. That’s the strategy for us. Looking at it from a systematic organization viewpoint, the big picture is to help take the Word of Faith into West Africa and the tool we are using is inter-denominational Bible schools. We’ve taken the big picture and broken it into segments or different components. We have evangelism, children’s ministry (including a children’s Bible training center), administration, praise and worship, the ministry of helps, and religious education.

All of these components together make up the big picture. However, it is now more manageable. The work gets accomplished with much more ease and effectiveness. We have someone in charge of each area. In the ministry right now there are full-time, paid staff members who oversee these specific areas. Under them, there are Bible school students and graduates who volunteer. There are hundreds of students on the streets every week preaching the gospel with evangelistic teams. In addition, hundreds are teaching the Bible in the public schools through the Religious Education program. It doesn’t end there either.

For example, two graduates of the Freetown Bible Training Center run one of the leading medical facilities in the country of Sierra Leone. It was privately built by this man (a doctor) and his wife. She enrolled in the Bible school, got born again, Spirit-filled, and then persuaded her husband to enroll. These graduates are running a Spirit-filled hospital that is on fire. They pray for the sick. They have had multiple miracles take place right there in the hospital. People are coming from all over, having heard about what is going on. We’ve helped with supplies for the hospital and have given them the equipment for a dental clinic. It’s a Spirit-filled, on fire Christian hospital in Sierra Leone.

The work would not be effectively accomplished if it were not for this system of organization. You must learn how to delegate responsibilities, entrusting others with a piece of the picture.

XX. LEADERSHIP: A DEFINITION

To motivate, inspire, challenge, encourage, train, and equip: a definition of leadership. You as a leader are called to motivate, inspire, challenge, encourage, train, and equip believers to fulfill God's perfect plan for their lives. Oftentimes, I have heard teaching on leadership. Many wrongly place the blame when discussing leadership failure, stating that people don't have anyone to follow. They say that followers are lacking leaders. Those who are teaching these ideas propose that there are just not enough visionaries to follow. I disagree.

I disagree with this teaching because a leader's job is not to get people to follow him. A leader's job should be to get people hooked up with Jesus, following him. Followers need to be hooked up with the heavenly vision that we've already discussed. Many leaders give the impression that it is their job to motivate, inspire, challenge, encourage, train, and equip others to help them fulfill their vision. That's foolishness. Failure will undoubtedly occur when men are following other men and not God. Get them hooked up to God, a heavenly vision, and, yes, a visionary. Just keep them in the right order.

Leaders need to be aiding others, helping them to fulfill God's perfect plan for their lives, not the plan for the leader's life. If God's perfect plan for someone is for them to move to China, then who am I to stop them or discourage them because it doesn't fit **my** needs or **my** vision? Remember what we've already discussed about the "I" and the "me" syndrome. Leaders often feel threatened; they want to protect their ministry. There are those who try to keep everyone close around them. However, the best way to achieve success is to take your best people and to push them out. Get them out! Motivate them, inspire them, challenge them, train them, equip them to fulfill God's plan for their lives, going wherever and doing whatever it takes.

As a leader you have more than enough responsibility on your shoulders. You don't need to add controlling other people's lives to your list. I have enough trouble taking care of one wife, two children, and some goldfish. I don't need to take on more responsibility by trying to control others. You need to have a liberating attitude, not a controlling one. Free people; don't hold them down. They are not yours. They're His!

I was praying one time, and the Holy Spirit said, "Russ, **the best way to get people to follow you is by not trying to get people to follow you.**" Yes, I'm

called of God, and I have a vision. I am a leader, but Russ Tatro, the man, will fail you. Paul says, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” In other words, follow the Christ in the man. Men will fail you, but the Jesus in them won’t. So, what do you do? Don’t have people follow you; have them follow Christ in you. If you see something in me that draws you and you hook up to the same heavenly vision, so be it. But follow Christ!

As ministers you must keep people looking to Christ. Remember, you’re not some big superstar! You’re hooked up to Jesus, and your example will be a witness to them. If they are looking to Christ they won’t be flattened when you make a mistake or when you say something wrong.

Another thing that you must keep in mind is this: when it’s time for those you’ve trained to go, let them go. Don’t keep them held down or squelched (“I’m not going to let them preach too much or do too much because people might like them more. They seem to clap more for him.”). Give people a chance. Let them blossom like a flower. Give them opportunities.

Delegate Responsibilities

Delegate and entrust responsibilities to others. Give those who work with you responsibilities and the authority and accountability that goes with them. Give others a chance to succeed and a chance to fail. You don’t have to control the whole show. You don’t have to be in charge of everything. In fact, you will not be successful in the long run if you do.

We all make mistakes, so don’t let that hold you back from delegating responsibilities. Get the people into the prisons, out on the streets, and into the neighborhoods. Get them active. Give them a chance. There are generally only three chances to speak from a pulpit in a church in any given week, but the opportunities are enormous if you look out beyond that. The people you are discipling need the experience. How are they going to grow if you don’t allow them to try?

When I went to Guatemala we were told that we could not minister for a year. And I was going to be there for only one year. That was the worst news I had gotten. I had just graduated from Bible school and couldn’t wait to preach. I said, “If I can’t preach in the pulpit, I’ll preach in the streets or in the jails.” And that’s where I got my feet wet. Then, I went to Africa. I had only been out of

Bible school for two years when I arrived in Liberia. Thank God that I have had opportunities to preach multiple, multiple times over the years. This developed the gift within me. Therefore, I know how important it is to give others a chance to develop and prove themselves, to let them get out there and use what they've got. Delegate, and give people a chance.

Don't be fearful of giving the nationals you are training a chance. I got more preaching invitations than I could get to during my time in Africa. I always had a handful that I was able to give to young ministers I was training. I then watched them to see how they developed. That's how you train them. Watch them blossom and as they do you will be able to give them more and more responsibility until they themselves reach a place of leadership.

Personal Note

As a side note, I would like to share with you the only thing that will prevent me from working with someone. It's not if they make mistakes. People will make mistakes as I've already said. It's a part of the learning and growth process. I will not work with individuals who have an attitude problem that they won't correct. If a person will not correct a wrong attitude, there's not much I can do for them. The same thing happens in counseling. The worst thing that you can hear from someone is "Oh! I tried that, but it didn't work. That doesn't work for me." If you show them what the Word of God says about their particular situation and they still insist on their way, you have been given no room to help them. If they won't allow God Himself to speak to them, you're not going to make much of an impression. If a person becomes unteachable, there's nothing you can do.

If someone develops a bad attitude and is unwilling to change, you might as well let them go. If you hang on too long, they and their attitude can spoil the rest. A rotten apple in a basket can do a lot of damage if it is not removed quickly.

XXI. DON'T SUBSTITUTE BRASS FOR GOLD

Let's look at 2 Chronicles Chapter 12, and look at the account of King Rehoboam. The Lord had allowed King Shishak of Egypt to come up against Jerusalem because the King and all of Israel had transgressed against the Lord, forsaking His law. Shishak "came up against Jerusalem and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house...he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made" (v.9). Verse ten tells us that the King made shields of brass to replace the gold ones which had been stolen.

Brass is shiny like gold, and to the untrained eye it looks like it could be gold. However, Rehoboam substituted a less valuable item for one that was more valuable. Most people probably didn't even know the difference. The same thing happens in ministry. When you begin thinking that you have to perform, this can happen quite easily.

When you preach the Word and people's eyes are opened, that's success. Yes! That is true. When you are ministering and you are given words of knowledge or you lay hands on the sick and they recover, that's success. Yes! It certainly is. Is there real gold in all of these things? Yes! However, just as there is real gold in the gifts of the Holy Ghost and their ministration, there can be the temptation to substitute the real for the brass.

I was in a church service where the pastor gave out approximately twenty words of knowledge for healing during the communion service. After communion he said, "Okay. Any one of you that had one of those words of knowledge that we called out and got healed, I want you to stand up." Not one person stood up. He missed it twenty times in a single service.

Another time, my wife and I were at a convention. We thought she had a serious health condition in her body at the time, and I was believing God concerning a serious situation in my body. We knew that a particular minister would be speaking at the convention, and we said, "This is it. We know that you should just have faith in God on your own, but we're releasing our faith. When this man prays for us, we're going to get our healing." I even asked God for the preacher to share a couple of specific testimonies as confirmation. Sure enough, we were sitting in the front row, and he said some of the exact things that I had asked God to have him share.

He gave the altar call for healing, and we were the first two in the healing line. There were thousands of people, but we were number one and two. My wife was first, and I was second. The minister got to her. He put his hand on the back of her neck and pushed her head. She didn't fall down. The minister said, "Sister, you're not receiving. You're not receiving. The problem is you're not receiving." So, finally she just fell down. I was standing there thinking, "Okay. I'm just going to fall down. I'm going to receive. Just touch me bud, and I'll fall down. If that's what you want, I'll do it. I just want to get my healing." He touches me, I fall down because I know someone is back there to catch me (I didn't want him to push me or get anxious about my not receiving). I wasn't on the floor two seconds when somebody jerked me by the back of the arm and pulled me up (it was an usher telling me that I had to get out of the way). Do you think I got my healing? No way. Do you think that my wife got her healing? No way.

Everyone thought that the man was so spiritual because people were falling down. He was more concerned about the people falling down than about them genuinely being healed. Do you know what the sad thing is? This frequently happens in Charismatic Christianity. The brass is being substituted for the gold. It's the people perceiving that something is happening when it really isn't. The congregation thinks that the Spirit of God is falling, causing people to be slain in the Spirit when, in actual fact, they are being pushed down. If God is with you, you don't need to push anyone down. I've seen them fall in Africa where we don't use catchers. I've seen multiple ones fall on the concrete with no one behind them. I've seen people get within five feet of a minister, and it look like someone slugged them in the mouth. They've gone flying back, knocking people down in the process. The Spirit of God did that. You don't have to perform and try to do it **for** God. People can be healed without falling down.

Another Mistake

A second caution: just because the Lord did something a particular way one time, it doesn't mean that he will do it the same way time and time again. Let me tell you a personal experience to illustrate what I am saying.

During my second year of Bible school I was asked by my pastor to preach at the church. I preached on the subject of tithes and offerings. That's what they asked me to teach on. That's not what I wanted to preach about. Now, if they had said to talk about miracles or something, then I would have been excited. At the end of the sermon it was as if a literal coat fell on me. And when that happened,

these were the words that came out of my mouth: “If you’re here and you’ve been prayed for many times but haven’t received your healing, you come up here. You will get your healing.”

They came up, and I went to the first one. I put my hands by her head, and I started to pray. I touched her, and it was like she was gone. She was already on the floor. I came to the next person. He was a big man. He had an internal problem. When I laid my hands on him, it was like the fire of God went into him. He went and sat down, and the lady who was sitting in front of him said it was like sitting in front of an open fire. There was so much heat coming from him that she said it was burning her back. I went down the line and saw miracle after miracle happen.

I finally came to the last lady. She was in a wheelchair. I laid my hands on her and felt the power of God go into her. I took my hands off and said, “Ma’am, you have a nerve disorder.” She asked, “How did you know that?” “God told me.” She had some type of nerve disorder which was affecting her muscles. I laid my hands on her again and began to pray a second time. The power of God was going in her, but she didn’t walk.

After some time of my ministering to her and the church praying, I backed up and said, “Ma’am, how do you think I knew that you had a nerve disorder?” She replied that she didn’t know. I said, “God showed it to me so that you would know that it was God and not me.” For you see, she was looking at me as a man. She had to get her eyes off me and on God. “Oh,” she said (immediately, I could see a change in her eyes). “Yeah, you couldn’t have known that. So God told you. So this is God.” All of a sudden a thought came to me, and I asked what she wanted to do more than anything else.

She said, “I want to walk.” I said, “Then you need to do something.” So, she reached down and lifted up her footrests. She got up and walked, and then the power of God knocked her down. Someone saw her at the hospital the next day, walking down the hallway with her hands raised. She had just gotten a check-up. Everything was fine. She was leaving the hospital, walking all by herself (without any aid).

Now, listen. Afterwards, a young girl from the church came up to me and said, “Bro. Russ, that was wonderful. It was just like watching Jesus work and walk and move.” For months, you would have thought that I was Jesus Himself: “Bless God. I’m just like Jesus.”

Please take note of what I'm about to share with you. Remember that we are talking about substituting the brass for the gold. Remember how I have already warned you about the pressure of "success" and how it can affect your ministry.

It happened to me the next time I got a chance to preach. Time came for the altar call, and I said, "If you're here and you've been prayed for many times but haven't received your healing, come here. Come on down here. You're gonna get your healing."

It didn't work. They didn't get their healing.

You must always remember that it's not you, it's the Holy Ghost. We sometimes get to thinking that we've got it all figured out. Just because you've been used of God a few times, don't get to thinking that it was you or that you know exactly what's going to happen. **The Holy Ghost doesn't move the same way every time.** If you get to thinking that way, you'll begin to "perform" in order to meet the demands. That is very dangerous.

You can also fall into the trap of thinking that you don't have to prepare. **You must pray and be prepared.** Keep the message fresh. Make sure you stay stirred up. You can fall into the trap if you don't do these things. It can happen.

Don't substitute the brass for the gold. Don't be pushing people down. Don't get into gimmicks (i.e., water from the Jordan and wood from the Holy Land). Don't place conditions on God's anointing. His anointing and power are not for sale. You cannot buy answers from God. Be very careful!

I went to a convention once where a particular person was ministering. Well, the people were flying down. It was the most powerful anointing that I had ever seen. Another conference came around with the same speaker a while later. This time they called out for a Bible school student to come up to be prayed for. Well, that was me. Then I understood why people were flying down. They were being pushed so hard that they wouldn't have been able to have stopped themselves from falling down. That's sad! My wife and I didn't get anything in that meeting either. They were more concerned about appearances than about people truly being ministered to.

Everyone is not this way. However, there are many who are substituting the brass for the gold.

There's not a formula to learn or a series of actions to perform. You must be led by the Holy Ghost. Do not try to manipulate a situation! **Deception will creep in when you become more concerned about visible, outward signs of "success" than you are about the needs of the people.** That is a dangerous place to be in. Don't allow yourself to be tempted to substitute the brass for the gold. It's not worth it!

XXII. TIME MANAGEMENT

Will Rogers was known to have said that “it’s not so much what you do each day, but what you get done.” This is a very important aspect of effective leadership. If you are to be successful in your role as a discipler, you will need to prioritize your time and your tasks. Be organized enough to make “to do” lists, eliminating time wasters as you go.

The first step in prioritizing is finding out what the center of the target is for you. Your ministry goal is the center of the target. Ask yourself what you are called to do, and then work out from there. The temptation, especially when you first get started, is to want to do everything. You just can’t possibly do everything that might call for your attention. You just don’t want to hit the target; you want to hit the center of the target, the bull’s eye. You want the center of God’s will.

You’ll need to make decisions on which invitations to take, where you should be spending your time, how much should you spend in praise and worship unto God, and how much time for Bible study. And the list goes on. With so many things pulling on your time, it is very easy to get out on the fringe. They may even be good things, but not necessarily God things. They may be good ideas, but not God’s ideas for you. It may even be the case that you are just stretching yourself too thin. If you come home in the evening completely exhausted and grumpy, fussing with your husband or wife, and short tempered with your children, you probably need to get rid of some of the things that are stealing your time. You may not be able to handle all of them at this point in your life.

Decide on a schedule that you **and** your family can handle. Your priorities need to be well-defined. Don’t leave any room for questions. You want to hit the center of the target. It doesn’t do you any good to be in ministry, reaching out to people on a daily basis, if you and your spouse are fighting like cats and dogs at home. Or your roommate, for those of you who are single. That type of a lifestyle is not God’s best.

I had to make a decision of this type some time back. I was traveling so much, and my wife was taking our children to church Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, and Thursday night. For the longest time we couldn’t figure out why our children were so sick. They were fighting sickness all of the

time. They were in kindergarten and second grade at the time. They weren't getting to bed on church nights until 9:30 or 10:00 P.M. Young children usually need to be in bed about 8:00 or 8:30 P.M. Our children do. They need at least ten or eleven hours of sleep every night. I made a decision and told my wife, "Honey, you're not taking them to church Sunday night, Wednesday night, or Thursday night." Her first reaction was to say, "Honey, what will they think of me?" I told her that she was going for the wrong reason. She agreed, and the result was no more sickness.

There's a practical side which some forget. You must find a balance! That does not mean that everyone should only take their children to church on Sunday mornings. You must see where you are and how much you and your family are capable of at the present time. You will grow. You will be able to take on more, but every person is not at the same place. I'll tell you one thing: you can go out and save the world, but there's nothing more discouraging than to come home and have your wife be angry with you. You may be out there telling everyone how great things are when in reality it is like hell at home. Are you going to be successful in the long run? No!

So, eliminate the time wasters. Make "to do" lists. Get yourself organized. Remove things that are stealing your time. How many of you read the newspaper everyday? How many of you watch television? Are these sins? No! However, can everyone read the newspaper or watch television every day? The answer to that is "no" as well. If you can handle these things and if they are not stealing from your schedule, they are not a problem. If you are able to read your Bible, pray, and worship God — no problem. But don't just sit around and say, "I just don't have time to read my Bible..." when you are spending time reading the paper and watching television. It's not true! You do have enough time. You're just not using it wisely.

You need to be in charge of your time and your schedule, not your schedule in charge of you. The dog wags his tail; his tail doesn't wag him. You need to be in control. You hear some people say that "God just didn't put enough hours in the day." That is not true. God knew exactly what He was doing when He put 24 hours in a day, 7 days in a week, and 365 days in a year. There is enough time to get things done. **You just need to set your priorities.**

Check Those Closets

It might be a good idea to check out your closets. What do I mean by that? It has been said that you will be able to tell whether a minister will be successful by looking at his house or his yard. Check to see if it is clean and things are in the right place. If there is confusion at home, there's going to be confusion elsewhere. These are simply reflections of how organized and disciplined you are.

It would be better for you to pull back some. When you take on too much, you will not be doing your best. It would be better to have less and do it well. I am not trying to say that everything has to be perfect or that you should be a hygiene nut, allowing not even a speck of dust in your home. What I am saying is that things should be in order.

Promotion = More Responsibility

You must be able to handle what you have before God will be able to give you anything else. Do you think that He will give you more responsibility if you can't cut it with your spouse and your children. The Bible tells us that we need to have our personal house in order before we have charge of the house of the Lord. Don't overlook these practical issues that we've been discussing. They are like the foundation of a building. Strong foundation = strong building. Weak foundation = weak building.

Promotion in the Kingdom of God only means more responsibility. God will not give you more than you can handle. He will not heap more on you if you aren't able to properly take care of what you already have. You are a steward in the Kingdom. Be wise!

XXIII. DISCIPLING THE NATIONS : CONCLUSION

Discipling the Nations: this is what the Great Commission is all about. If you apply these principles in your life and to your ministry, hopefully you will not be shooting holes in your own boat. You do not want to be a minister who self-destructs. Many have blown up their own ministries. It doesn't have to happen to you.