

Learn to Disciple from Jesus, Part 3

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 9. We're actually going to get into more than just the implications of the text [in this sermon].

This year the elders are working through a book called *The Reformed Pastor*, written by Puritan Richard Baxter. Baxter lived in England from 1615 to 1691. He lived during the heart of what is called the Puritan Movement. The Puritans were a group of people who, in reaction to the [practices of the] Roman Catholic Church, decided that the right thing to do was to submit every area of their lives and every aspect of worship and preaching to the Word of God. Pretty novel, huh? We are very Puritan-like, if you didn't know that, [even though] Puritan is kind of a bad word today. [Baxter] was one of the Puritans—one of the people who were trying to say, "OK, listen. Let's just do what the Bible says." He was seeking a pure religion according to the Bible.

Richard Baxter was probably one of the greatest counselors and disciples of all time. He wrote [a] huge tome called *The Christian Directory*, which pretty much addresses every single counseling issue you could possibly think of. There are times when people come in [to my office] and want to know about something that I don't know, [but] it's in [*The Christian Directory*] somewhere—[the book] is huge and it's in fine print. Well, [the directory] was unique because up until that time, there was a real distinction, a real separation, between the clergy—the Roman Catholic priests,

and bishops, and cardinals, and the pope—and the people. But the Puritans were learning that it was important to be involved in people’s lives, and Baxter was the champion [of that way of thinking].

As a matter of fact, he entered into the town of Kitterminster, England, [which] was a debauched place full of vice and wickedness. [Baxter went] in there and started preaching, started doing discipleship, [and] he and a couple [of] assistants visited 800 [people in Kitterminster] a year—at least once, often twice a year—talking to them personally, giving them biblical counseling [and] biblical instruction. By the time [Baxter] left that place, the whole town was transformed. Someone said that even 50 or 100 years afterward, you could walk up and down the streets [of Kitterminster] and hear people singing psalms and hymns in almost every household. He totally transformed the place. What is amazing is [that] he did all [of this] during a time of great unrest, and persecution, and plagues, and all sorts of trials in his life.

But when you read [Baxter’s] works, something becomes very obvious. Though he was light-years ahead of the times in the area of shepherding, he didn’t really understand personal discipleship. He was coming out of the times when the priests and bishops were exalted and everybody appealed to them because they were seen as the representatives of God. The Roman Catholic Church had basically borrowed the Old Testament priestly office and transported it into the New Testament. In the Old Testament, when you wanted to offer a sacrifice or approach God, you had to go through a priest. [The priest] then would be your mediator between you and God. And so, [the Roman Catholics] brought that into the Church. The pope, cardinals, bishops, and priests were seen as these higher, elevated people that you had to go to [for access to God]. They were the ones who did the ministry while the Church sat by and observed them doing the ministry. [So] while Baxter made huge strides in the training and equipping of his people and [in] practicing one-on-one discipleship himself, he and many other Puritans erroneously [clung] to the notion that the preacher was *the minister*.

While Baxter and other Puritans [did] much for Christianity, sound doctrine, and holy living, their concept of preachers was that they were *the ministers*. This was nothing more than a subtle carryover from Roman Catholicism—a slight improvement, but a carryover nonetheless—[of] the whole idea that there are super-Christians in the Church. There are popes, and cardinals, and bishops, and *the ministers*. The Roman Catholics wanted people to understand that the priest did the ministry and [that] they needed that person. Though the Puritans returned to biblical preaching, sound doctrine, diligent evangelism, and shepherding, they still passed on the misnomer that the guy in the pulpit is *the minister*.

I think even today if somebody were to come up to you and [ask], “Hey, who’s the minister at your church?”

You would say, “Jack Hughes.” I’m sure most of you would say that, when you *should* say [that] everyone [in the church] is *the minister*. We are all called to do ministry in the local church, not just Jack Hughes. Help me out! I mean, come on! I like you, but I can’t do that much. I’m not *that* good. True, I am *a* minister, but I am [not] *the* minister. All of us who know and love Jesus Christ are ministers. We all have the Holy Spirit. We all have spiritual gifts. We are all called to engage in ministry, which makes us all ministers. We are all priests. We don’t need a priest because we have Jesus as our priest [see Hebrews 3:1, 4:14, 6:20]. We all have access to God through faith in Christ. We don’t need to observe somebody *doing* the ministry because *we* are to *do* the ministry.

This false thinking, of course, causes some to think that *I* should be doing their ministry, and that’s not the case. “After all,” they think to themselves, “I’m not a minister. I didn’t go to seminary. I don’t know the Bible well enough, so I’ll let the *preacher* do the ministry.” Someone gets sick in the hospital and the first thought is, “I need to call the minister.” *You* are the minister! You go to the hospital and you visit the person. Sure, call the office, that’s fine. I like to go visit people in the hospital when I can, but you need to do it, [too]. You don’t need seminary training to go visit somebody

in the hospital and offer encouragement. You can do that. “Hi, can I pray for you?”

“Sure.”

“How are you doing? Let me read you a Scripture.” That’s easy. You don’t need to call me to do your ministry. There’s no verse in the Bible that says, “If you’re a pastor, shepherd, [or] overseer of a church, only you should go do this.” That is *the ministry* of the Church. There is no more efficacy, no more spiritual power, no more blessing to be had from me ministering [to] or visiting somebody in the hospital [over] you doing it. We’re equal. But you know what? I know some of you right now are probably thinking to yourselves, “Hmm. I don’t know. I sure like it when *the minister* comes rather than just *that person*.” See? It just reveals our false thinking. That’s wrong! I’m not *the minister*. I don’t have any more spiritual “zap” than anybody else.

We need to make sure that we get this thinking straight in our minds. A lot of people have this idea that, “Well, Jack, you’re paid by the church to do the ministry. So, you do this. I mean, I’ve got a job!” Well, listen, you are to minister in your job, through your job, doing your job. I don’t care what you do [for a job], you are a minister all the time. The question is: Are you ministering or not? Whether you’re a teacher, the butcher, the baker, or the candlestick maker doesn’t matter. You are to be ministering, sharing the gospel, encouraging people, using your gifts.

The primary reason that I am freed up [to preach] is [that] the Scripture says [that] you need to free up those and pay “those who work hard at preaching and teaching” [1 Timothy 5:17; see also 1 Corinthians 9:3–14]. So I sit in my office all week long and study to preach and teach. Now, granted, I do other things besides that, but that is why I am freed up to do that task, because it takes so much time and effort. If I’m doing your ministry, I can’t do my ministry. That’s why the whole Church needs to realize we’re all a bunch of ministers here, we’re all gifted to do ministry, we’re empowered to do ministry, we *can* do ministry, we *should* do ministry, so let’s do ministry. I’m not paid to do your ministry, to fill your spot, to do

your evangelism, or your visitation, or your encouragement, or your exhortation, or your note writing. I am not *the minister*; *we* are the ministers.

Peter, speaking to the entire Church in 1 Peter 2:5 says you are “a holy priesthood.” In verse 9 he says you are “A royal PRIESTHOOD.” We’re all priests, we can all boldly approach the throne of grace [see Hebrews 4:16], we can all have access into the Holy of Holies through the blood of Christ who is our high priest [see Hebrews 9:8–28]. I’m not your spiritual access point to God. I’m just a guy who has certain gifts [who has] been called and freed up to study all the time so I can preach and teach. That’s all. I’m not the guy who does your ministry. Everybody has to do their own ministry in the Church, because we’re all ministers.

When you hear [that] someone [is in] the hospital, think to yourself, “*I* am the minister. *I* should minister to that person.” Don’t be thinking to yourself, “You know, I need to call somebody to minister to that person.” It’s OK if you call the office, and please do, but you think about *you* doing it.

Don’t think to yourself, “I know this person who needs to know the Lord [so] I will bring him to the church so that he can hear the gospel.” No, *you* tell him the gospel, *then* bring him to church. Do your ministry. Granted, there are times when you may want to see somebody discipled and you might not be able to [do it] for some reason, and you can bring [that person] to church, introduce him to people, [take him to] a Sunday school class or whatever [in order] to get them involved in training, but you know, if you *can* do it then you [should] do it.

That’s just a little background because we’re getting into a text here where we’re going to be talking about discipleship. I want to be very clear, so if you think I’m moving slowly, it’s because I’m moving slowly. I want to make sure we all understand this because a lot of people know about the term “discipleship,” and they know they need to be doing it, and maybe they even feel convicted that they should be doing it, but they aren’t quite sure how to go about it.

How do we go about doing discipleship? How does that work? Well, we are [studying] Luke 9:1–11. As most of you know, we spent one week looking at this text from the angle of the purpose of signs and wonders. We spent two weeks focusing on the fact that every believer is by definition a disciple, is gifted by the Holy Spirit, and is called to engage in ministry. [We] spent two weeks on the implications of what we read in verse 1 because before you are entrusted with greater ministry responsibilities, you have to first begin to engage in ministry at the lowest level. You have to be faithful with those little things. You have to start before you can be given greater ministry tasks. So we spent a couple [of] weeks on that.

This morning we're going to look at the text and start working through some of the principles that we can learn from Jesus as He prepares the Twelve to send them out for the first time on their own in sets of two to do ministry. Follow along in your Bibles as I read Luke 9:1–11.

And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. And He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see Him.

When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida. But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.

I've identified eight principles of discipleship from Jesus' ministry. They're practical, they're timeless, [and] all of us can apply [them] to our own discipleship ministries so that this body of believers can function like God wants it to function.

Remember [that] the disciples have been following Jesus for quite some time. The first principle we come to is: Train disciples through instruction and example. [The Twelve] have already watched Jesus. They've seen His example. They've already heard Him. They've seen Him teach, they've heard Him preach, they've had private discussions [with Him], they've watched Him live in the face of persecution, in the face of blessing, with sinners, [and] with religious opposition. They've seen Him do miracles. So they've already had tons of instruction and examples given to them even before [our] text [in Luke 9]. Look at verse 2, where it says: "And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing" [9:2]. This is talking about what He's going to do. But notice what He does in verse 3: "And He said to them," now He's giving them instruction:

Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them. [9:3–5]

So, He tells them to preach the kingdom of God, and to perform healing, and to take nothing with them, but to trust in God. He tells them to prepare

to receive persecution and rejection. We're going to get into [all of that] later, but the point you need to grasp is this: He prepared them. Jesus did everything He could to train and equip His disciples to succeed in ministry.

When I was in college, hoping to get married to this honey that I met—we did get married eventually—there was a lot of unemployment. I thought, “I’ve got to get a job. I can’t get married if I don’t even have a job.” It’s not that I hadn’t been working, but I was going to school full-time, and so I thought, “I need to get a job. What am I going to do?” Well, I had grown up doing construction and stuff, so I thought, “I’m just going to go to some of the construction supply places and see if I can get a job in that field.” So I went to an electrical [and] plumbing supply house—it was this place that sold electrical parts and plumbing parts. So I went in, filled out an [application], handed it in, and the manager hired me on the spot because he liked it that I [had been] a commercial fisherman. I was really qualified. The whole time, he didn’t want to know what I knew about *his* business, he just wanted to know about my fishing escapades. We got along really well in that respect.

This was a bad store manager. He was lazy. He made no effort to help his employees at all. He didn’t try to teach people anything that he knew. Instead, he saw all the employees of the company as knaves [who] were there to serve him and make his life easy. My first day of work, this is how he trained me: He showed me the time clock, gave me a time card, and said, “Punch in, and go for it.” That was it. He [said], “If you have any questions, ask the other guys.” I couldn’t believe it! I didn’t know anything. I didn’t know where anything was on the floor. I didn’t know where anything was in the warehouse. I didn’t know any [of the] procedures. I didn’t know how to fill out a sales ticket—I didn’t know where the sales tickets were. I didn’t know anything! I’m telling you, those first several weeks were very “stressy.” But I survived by the grace of God.

Not long after that, I came to work one morning, and that store manager, and the assistant manager, and all [of] their favorite employees had been fired by the owner of the company. A new manager was in place, and he was

a great manager. When someone new was hired, they were given thorough training instruction, [were] taken around the whole facility, [and] things were explained to them. Then they were assigned a mentor that they had to follow around for almost a whole week just to learn the process. Then they would begin to do things and their mentor would follow behind them until they could go on their own.

Well, often in the church, we set people up for failure because we don't train and equip them to do what we ask them to do. We have some ministry task, and we need them to do it, and so we say, "Hey. You want to do this?"

"Uh, OK." And then the guy has to spend several "stressy" weeks trying to figure out what he's doing.

"Hey, you want to teach this Bible study?" The guy doesn't have any training in studying the Bible. We don't know what his doctrine is. He's never been trained in doctrine. He's never been trained in teaching. We just say, "Here you go. Here's a task which is one of the most serious and important tasks of the whole church—a task which incurs 'stricter judgment' [James 3:1]—go for it!" This is a Herculean responsibility, and we just say, "Hey, do you want to do this? You're warm and you're breathing. Go for it." Then, when we ask him to do that and he fails, we often think to ourselves, "Too bad. That guy just doesn't cut it. He just doesn't have what it takes." Well, you know who doesn't have what it takes and who doesn't cut it? The person who failed him in not discipling him—that is the person who didn't cut it.

I was talking to Marv Bittick this week. (By the way he says "Hi," [and] he misses everybody. He's just getting too old to make the commute.) I was preparing this section of my sermon [when] he called. We were chatting, and he said, "Yeah, you know, I'd only been a Christian [for] seven months and they asked me to teach the junior highers."

I said, "Really? What training did they give you?"

He said, "They didn't give me any. I was a brand-new believer."

I said, "Really?"

He goes, “Yeah, and I taught them for *fifteen* years.” Well, God bless Marv Bittick. He told me [that] he’s still in contact with some of those junior highers [who] sat in his class over fifty years ago, and they’re still doing ministry.

When you assign a baby in the Lord to teach junior highers, what does that reveal about your knowledge of the Word of God, your respect [for] the Word of God, your care for God’s sheep, and the value of junior highers [to you]? [It’s] not good. What does it teach you about the importance of sound doctrine and accurately handling the word of truth? Granted, if you’re teaching young children, you can be new in the Lord and read a story, and say, “This is the story and here’s what it [means].” But I’m telling you [that] when you become a teacher, you need to know how to read the Bible, study the Bible, prepare a lesson, and to teach it. This is the task that incurs “stricter judgment” [James 3:1]. “Let not many of you become teachers,” James says [3:1]. [If] we take some guy who doesn’t know what he’s doing and say, “Hey, you want to teach?” we [have] set him up to fail because of [a] lack of training and insufficient discipleship. Jesus thoroughly equipped the Twelve before sending them out on their own for the first time. He set them up for success, not failure. All of us need to be like Jesus in this area. Don’t just tell someone, “Get out there and figure it out.” You hold their hand all along the way.

One of the things I love to do is to train other guys how to preach. That is just candy for me. The people I *really* like to train are lay people in the church. There’s some guy, he’s grown up in the church, he’s got good doctrine, he’s been a faithful teacher and servant for a long time, and he says, “You know, I think I might like to try preaching sometime.”

“OK. All right. I like that. I think that’s good.” We may have another Charles Spurgeon just sitting in the pew. We need to find that out. So what happens is that I say, “OK, well, I’ll help you through the process. Go pick a passage and we’ll talk about it.” And he does. Then I send him away, [saying], “Go outline it and then come back and we’ll talk about what you came up with.” And then he does and we talk about it. I say, “OK, go do

word studies, and background, and context, and come back and we'll talk about it." And he does and we do. I say, "OK, what I want you to do now is read as many commentaries as you can, put all the pertinent information in there you can, and then I want you to try working on application. Make sure it's got application." He goes away, he comes back, I look at it, we talk about, work through it. Then I say, "OK, now I want you to illustrate it, and I want you to synthesize it, and I want you to make your application clear and [make] everything run smoothly." He goes and synthesizes, and tries [to] make it logical and in order. Then he comes back and we talk about it.

Granted, part of the sermon is me, but a lot of it is him. Now he has a sermon manuscript to work from. But that's only half of it. He's like a guy with a loaded gun, but he doesn't know how to shoot. You can have a lot of teaching experience, but it's a lot different than preaching. You can sit out there and think, "Well, that doesn't look all that hard. *You* make it look easy. I mean, I know what kind of sermons I like. I'll just be like that. I like to listen to John MacArthur, [so] I'll preach like him." Good. Go for it. I wish *I* could preach like him. Then you [tell the guy you've been working with], "OK, it's time. Just focus on this, don't be too nervous. Don't speak too fast. Go slowly." You try to give him not too many things [or] give him task overload. Then all of a sudden you thrust him up there and he does his best, and he's thinking to himself, "You know, I think I did pretty [well]."

Then you say, "OK. I want you to listen to your sermon and then we'll get together." By the time he comes and meets with you he's suicidal. He's like, "I can't believe I did that! And all those people [sat] there and suffered through that!" What's cool is [that] a lot of times their heart is right, and even though they aren't all smooth and polished, people are blessed, and they [might] find out, "You know, I like that and I know I can do better." The next time they improve by 1,000 percent, and the next time [they improve by] 1,000 [percent]. I mean, at the beginning they just ramp up and really do well. Other ones go, "You know, preaching isn't my calling. I *never* want to do that again! Make me tenth string on the emergency chart [for back-up preachers]."

And you know what? That's what you've got to do. You've got to go through that process—that's what it means to train a disciple. You hold their hand. You do this in any ministry. You read the bulletin and you see [that the] technical/sound/lighting ministry needs help. You think to yourself, "I know how to use a computer and my car stereo. I could probably help out." So you wander on up there and see John Barnfather sitting there amongst all that stuff—blinking lights and gadgets. And you [say], "Yeah, John, I was thinking [that] maybe I could get involved in the technical ministries."

John says, "Great! Have a seat. OK, this is all you've got to do. All you've got to do is make sure everything is hooked up right, [and] all the mikes are in the right places. Make sure the sound levels are right. Make sure everything is mixed correctly. Keep the volume right. Get the Power-Point right. Make sure the lights go off and on at the right time. I want to make sure [the sermon is] recorded onto the computer, onto a CD, and onto DAT. Make sure everything runs smoothly. I'm going to Sunday school." Now that's pretty nightmar[ish]. That is a nightmare situation. If that happened, you would just be like, "Oh! Oh!" Well, I want you to know, you don't even incur a "stricter judgment" for failing in sound, but you do for teaching.

There are a lot of things in the church that we can't just dabble in. We can't just throw people into them. Some people [say], "I want to teach."

"Have you ever taken any classes on how to study the Bible?"

"Well, no."

"Have you taken any classes on doctrine?"

"No, but I want to be up front. I want to be in front of people." Well, then you just stay back because this is top-of-the-food-chain type stuff, and we want to make sure that when you get up there you're equipped. We'll train you, but don't think you just get to hatch out and then jump off the cliff. There [are] some processes that go along with that.

What would happen is, if you wanted to do the technical ministry, John would say, "OK, great! Do you want to start right now?"

You say, “Sure. OK.”

“Well, just get an extra chair, sit down here, and I’ll start showing you some of the stuff. This is the mixer, and this is what this does.” He starts showing you pieces. He starts [asking] you, “Do you understand this?” to find out where your level of understanding is. After a while—a couple of weeks of sitting there—you get to know more and more about all the pieces. He starts saying, “Yeah, turn that on. Turn that on. Turn that on. Plug that in. Switch this over here. Come back here. Take that end, put it here. Put it over here.” All of a sudden you start learning. “OK, we’re going to put the batteries in the little ear widgets.” And so you start learning to do some of the things. He’s probably telling you about things that have happened. What happens when all of a sudden [the mike drops out]. See? That’s a problem. Jack gets up there and right in the middle of the sermon, at the most important [point, the sound drops out]. Then you’re all wondering what happened.

You [say to John], “What do you do in a situation like that?” So he begins to prepare you. After a while—after he gives you enough instruction, and you start feeling comfortable—then he sits you in the chair and he watches you do it. “OK, do this, do this, do this.” And you’re doing it. Then, after you get comfortable doing that and he has to tell you less and less, then pretty soon he sits there but he sits ten feet away and keeps running over, “Don’t forget this. Turn up the volume. Turn down the volume. You need a reverb. You’ve got an RF over here, fix it.” He’s telling you stuff like that and eventually, after a while, you get trained and then he cuts you off. That is a complicated ministry, granted. That is a complex ministry.

Even though you have ministries like that, which are complex, most ministries aren’t. You don’t usually have to go to that degree to teach somebody how to fold bulletins or whatever. Usually training [would] be a lot less. [However], some ministries [that] you think are not very complicated actually take quite a bit of instruction. [For instance], we do baptisms up here, and I have to tell people, “Listen, when the screen comes down and it’s summer, and you open up both doors on both sides, it creates suction,

and it sucks the screen in there. One door has to be closed at all times, otherwise you get this suction thing, and it's a problem. OK?" You don't want to learn that from experience, you want to learn that from wisdom so that when all of a sudden there's a big gust of wind, the screen doesn't collapse and end up in the baptistry.

So, when you do ministry, whatever it is, no matter how simple, you get your disciple, you begin to train him or her, step by step, you give him or her wisdom. [With] some [ministries] you could teach somebody how to do it in a day. You know, you wanted to hand out bulletins as people came in, [and someone in that ministry says], "This is how you do it. Stand here, smile, and say, 'Hi! Welcome.' You got it?"

"Yeah."

"Let me watch you. All right you're doing [well]. See ya. I'm going to have some coffee." Whatever ministry it is, though, you try and set that person up so that they succeed and they don't fail. All of us need to be doing that.

The second thing we learn from Jesus [is] in the latter half of [Luke 9:1]. Luke, telling us about Jesus after gathering His disciples together, says, "and [He] gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases." Now, it would be nice to have this power, and it would be nice to be able to give this power, but we can't—only the Holy Spirit can do that. But, we do have power and we do have the authority given to us to train people and to give them opportunities to serve. That is our power and authority—to make disciples, then train them, teaching them to observe all Jesus commanded. So we have that freedom.

For instance, the elders have given me authority over the preaching schedule. They tell me what they want in general, and I work out all the details. When the elders approve a guest speaker, I have to get that person a spot. The elders [also] give me permission to rotate one of the other pastors into the pulpit about once every six weeks. Why is that? Well, I want that to happen because I want everybody else who is trained and gifted to preach to be able to preach so that they can become the best preachers they can be.

I want you to know, some people ask me, “Jack, you were here—you were sitting in the front pew—why weren’t you preaching?” [I wasn’t preaching] because the other person needs an opportunity to preach. I want you to know, I’m not sitting there because I don’t like preaching. I *love* preaching. I would preach way more than I do if I could study that much, but I just can’t fit any more study time in. I can’t go up [to the pulpit] unless I’m boned up. There are times when you are in the ministry and you have an opportunity to give somebody a chance to do ministry or not.

You know, I could cling to this pulpit, and say, “No one’s preaching here but me!” Every time I took a vacation, I’d leave on Monday and get back by Friday so I could get in the pulpit. If I couldn’t preach [or] I was sick, we’d cancel church. [I’d say], “We’re having prayer time, but no one’s preaching but me!” See, some pastors have that idea—they have these white knuckles, [and say], “I’m the only one who can do this. I’m the only qualified person.” I [could] rationalize that [thinking and say], “Hey, I’ve been called. That’s what they hired me for, I went to seminary for that, that’s my specialty, it’s my area of giftedness, so don’t touch [my pulpit].” A lot of people are like that in their ministry. [They say], “Listen, this is *my* ministry, so don’t touch it.”

But you know, what God wants you to do is He wants you to multiply yourself in your ministry. He wants you to say, “You. Come here. Feel this *nice* pulpit. Try [pounding on it]. Ha!” He wants me to train other people up in my area of ministry, and He wants you to train people up in *your* area of ministry because that’s how the Church grows. That’s how people mature in Christ. You may not have the ability to impart the gift of signs and wonders to people, but the principle we can take away [from the second half of Luke 9:1] is whatever abilities, whatever authorities, whatever privileges you have that you can pass on, you need to do that at times so that other people can grow.

But I want you to know, there’s something that has to die in order to do that: you have to die to your pride. There are some people who don’t want anybody else preaching because they don’t want other people to like

the other person who preaches. Or, they don't want this person doing their ministry because maybe [that person will] be a little better than them and so they're going to guard their [ministry]. That's pride. You have to stay humble, especially when the person you're training shows greater promise and giftedness than you [do]. In that case, you probably should step aside, and just admit, "Listen, compared to this person, I am dust."

Sometimes other people must increase and you must decrease [see John 3:30]—not because you don't like your ministry, not even because you're not good at your ministry. You may be good, but you're not anything like this person who is excellent [at it]. You have to remember why [you are] here—you're here to serve the Lord. You're here to bless the saints. You're here to get people equipped, worshipping, and evangelizing in the greatest possible way that you can. Sometimes that means saying, "Pal, I know you haven't been here very long, but I'm putting you into first string. I'm taking second string and being your backup guy."

Let's just say you have three lawnmowers at home. One is very old. It smokes, the wheels wobble, the engine is worn out—you have to go really slowly in the grass. It just doesn't work [very well]. It takes forever to start. It takes three arms. It's a three-arm lawnmower: the two you wear out, and then it finally starts on the third one. You have another, second lawnmower that's not quite as old, but it doesn't have a catcher, and the blade is dull, and it only runs well when it's over 100 degrees [outside]. Your third lawnmower is new. It's slick—self-propelled, sharp blade, no-dust catcher. It's nice. You barely [have to touch it and] it starts right up. It is great. Now, which one are you going to use to mow your lawn? The new one. You've got the broken-down car, [and] you've got the brand-new one. Which one are you going to drive? The new one.

You know what? You may find someone new in your ministry. Maybe they come in because they moved here from out of town, or whatever. They've been serving in their church, they're committed, they're faithful, they're godly, and they're gifted, and they're [more] experienced than you are. Sometimes, instead of saying, "Well, I know I smoke, and I know my

wheels wobble, and I know I'm hard to start, but I want my ministry!" you say, "Pal, you get in here [and] I'll back you up. What can I do to help you succeed?"

[Ministry] is about giving glory to God. It's not about holding on to your own turf. This isn't a government agency where it's all about seniority, and maintaining your position, and maintaining power. This is about giving glory to God and making sure [that] God is glorified in the maximum possible way and [that] people are blessed in the maximum possible way. So I want you to know, sometimes when you begin to empower people and give people opportunities, be ready to humble yourself.

I'm at seminary sometimes, and I'm training guys to preach, and some of those guys start out preaching better than I can. They are *good*. I just think, "Man, these guys are killer good."

They come up to me, "Uh, Pastor Hughes, did I do OK?" I just want to cry, you know.

"You were great, man! You were so great. Don't get swelled up about it, [but], man, you're *awesome!*" And they are! They're awesome. That is a good thing! That's not a bad thing. And so, when you're in your ministry, train others, give them an opportunity, empower them to serve, [and] try and make sure they succeed in whatever ways you can. Be humble.

Third, send your disciples out, teaching them to trust in God. Look at [Luke 9:2]-4: "And He sent them out. . . . And He said to them, 'Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city.'" What is Jesus teaching them? Trust God to provide for you when you minister. That's what He's teaching them.

Not everyone makes [a] living from the gospel ministry. I don't think we should make this a universal command that, "Listen, whenever you're ministering, never bring anything." This is a specific command to the apostles at a specific time, [for] a specific reason, [and] for a specific purpose. But there is a principle here, and the principle is this: You need to trust God

when you're serving. Everybody needs to learn to trust God when they're serving.

Turn to Romans 15, [where] Paul describes his ministry to the believers at Rome. I want you to notice how he does this. A lot of times, when you start ministering, it's kind of confusing because when you're ministering, you're thinking to yourself, "Well, you know, people talk about ministry, and they say things like, 'You need to trust in God,' or 'It's not you, but the Lord.'" And you're thinking, "Really? How does that work? It seems bipolar." You just think, "Well, is it me or is it Jesus?" [Have] you ever wondered about that?

"Good sermon, Jack."

"It wasn't me."

"I could have sworn that was you up there."

I want you to look at Romans 15:18[-19]. Notice what Paul says here:

For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

Paul describes what he accomplished as "Christ has accomplished through me" and "the power of the Spirit," and yet at the end of verse 19, he says, "I have fully preached the gospel." Well who was it? Was it God? Was it Christ? Was it the Holy Spirit? Or was it Paul? The answer: yes.

Turn over to 1 Corinthians 15. This is the great text on the resurrection. [In] 1 Corinthians 15, Paul just mentions his ministry in verse 10. Notice what he says in 1 Corinthians 15:10: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." Now, does that sound confusing? In Colossians 1:29, Paul says to the Colossians: "For this

purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

You know, as a preacher, there are certain things in the Word of God that I *have* to do because God commands me to do those things. I have to reprove, rebuke, exhort, admonish, instruct, [and] refute, to name a few. I have to command the Scriptures. Multiple times it says “command these things.”

A lot of times when [people] hear me teach, they say, “Man, you’re really laid back when you teach. But when you preach, you are serious. You’re ‘in your face.’” Well I have to [be like that]. A lot of people, though, don’t know those commands [I am under], and when they hear me preach, and I’m using the second person, and I’m in their face, they [say], “You’re a legalist! You are a legalist! You’re always talking about works, and obeying, and doing, but you’re not talking about the grace of God.” I realize that people who say things like this don’t understand what the Scriptures command me to do. They don’t understand grace either because the grace of God is the ability to do what God wants you to do. [The] grace of God [doesn’t take you] off the hook from obedience. The grace of God has been given so that we obey. The only way we can obey is by grace.

And so, some, in an attempt to massage their screaming consciences because they don’t want to part from their sin, [tell] me that I’m a legalist. Listen, a legalist is somebody who’s telling you [that] you can be saved by works or that you should do works without trusting God. I’ve never said that. Yet the Word of God is clear: when we go about obeying and ministering to others, it must be by His grace.

When you drive somewhere in your car, is it the engine that gets you there? Is it the transmission? Is it the gasoline? Is it the oil? Or is it you? That question is faulty. It is an erroneous question because it implies that only one of those things gets you somewhere. Your car needs all of those things and you or it can’t function. Just try driving somewhere sometime without an engine, without a transmission, without gasoline, [or] without oil in your car. You’re not going anywhere. All those things need to happen

simultaneously. It's not just one component. As a believer, you are saved, you have the Holy Spirit, you have spiritual gifts, you have the grace you need already, you have the command of God, you are told to trust God and do it. Those things *all* happen by God's grace. *None* of those things are apart from God's grace. The grace of God instructs us to live holy lives and to do good. When the Bible commands you to do something, that command itself is the grace of God because this whole Book, [the Bible], is a gift of God's grace—every piece of it.

What you need to understand is that when you minister you have to teach your disciples to trust God while they minister—not in themselves, not in their intellect, not in their physical strength, but [in] God. What that means is [that] you say, “OK, we're going to go do this ministry, [so] let's pray. Let's ask God to help us here.” Make sure that when you go out, whether it's teaching, [or] whether it's bulletin folding, you do all for the glory of God, you ask God to help you, you ask Him to do it, you rely upon Him, you trust in Him. That's what it means.

We have to learn how to do this because if you don't do it that way, then you're trusting in the flesh. Go to Jeremiah [17:5–6]: “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength,. . . For he will be like a bush in the desert And will not see when prosperity comes.” That guy is in the wasteland. But the person who thrives is not the person who just “lets go and lets God,” it's the person who trusts in God and then labors, trusting God.

In 2 Peter 1:3, we read, “Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.” Anything you need at all is given to you by grace. [We see] the same thing in 2 Timothy 3:17. When [Paul] talks about the Word of God, he says we are “equipped for every good work.” Every one. Second Corinthians 3:5–6 [reads]: “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant.” Sometimes you just feel like you're so inadequate. And

you know what? You are. . . apart from Christ. You know, like Howard Hendricks says, get your finger, put it in a glass of water and pull it out. The dent that's left is how significant you are. You're not adequate apart from Christ, but if you know Christ and you're trusting in Christ, you're adequate, even if you've been a believer for seven months and they say, "Will you teach junior highers?"

You see, it's not your responsibility to do what's right for someone else. So even when God, by His providence, puts you in a situation and you *know* you're not adequate, you do the best you can, and that's adequate enough for God. His grace is sufficient [see 2 Corinthians 12:9]. I mean, when I'm preparing my sermons, I just feel so bad sometimes. I am so convicted, I think to myself, "God, why don't You just strike me dead and then raise up somebody else? Where's Aaron [see Exodus 4:10–17]?" And yet, here I am. I have this perfect Word I'm teaching, [and] I'm not perfect. I'm never perfect. I always preach to you and tell you to do stuff, [but] not because I [have] already arrived—I have not. [I preach] because that's what God tells me to do. He makes me adequate. He makes you adequate.

So, when you send people out, you say, "Trust God and He will be your adequacy." And He always is. He always is. It may not be flashy, it may not be profound, but God's going to use it. He's going to use it for His glory. Second Corinthians 9:8 says, "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed." All, all, all—did you hear it? That's what God has for you. He is your sufficiency.

So when you leave here today, what do you need to remember? Train your disciples to do ministry. Give your disciples opportunities to serve. Empower them to do ministry and succeed. Then, as you send your disciples out, teach them to trust in God to provide for them. They, in and of themselves, are not adequate, but Christ, in His grace, is. Paul, in his prayer to the Ephesians says this in Ephesians 3:20–21, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the

power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” Let’s pray.

Father, we are so grateful for Your Word. What a great text! What great principles! May each person here put them into practice. And, Father, may we as a church model Jesus’ discipleship ministry tactics. May we train people, may we help them succeed, may we empower them, [and] give them opportunities to serve. And, Father, as we send them out, may we encourage them to trust in You for Your grace is sufficient. Father, we pray for success in these endeavors for Your glory, in Christ’s name, Amen.

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