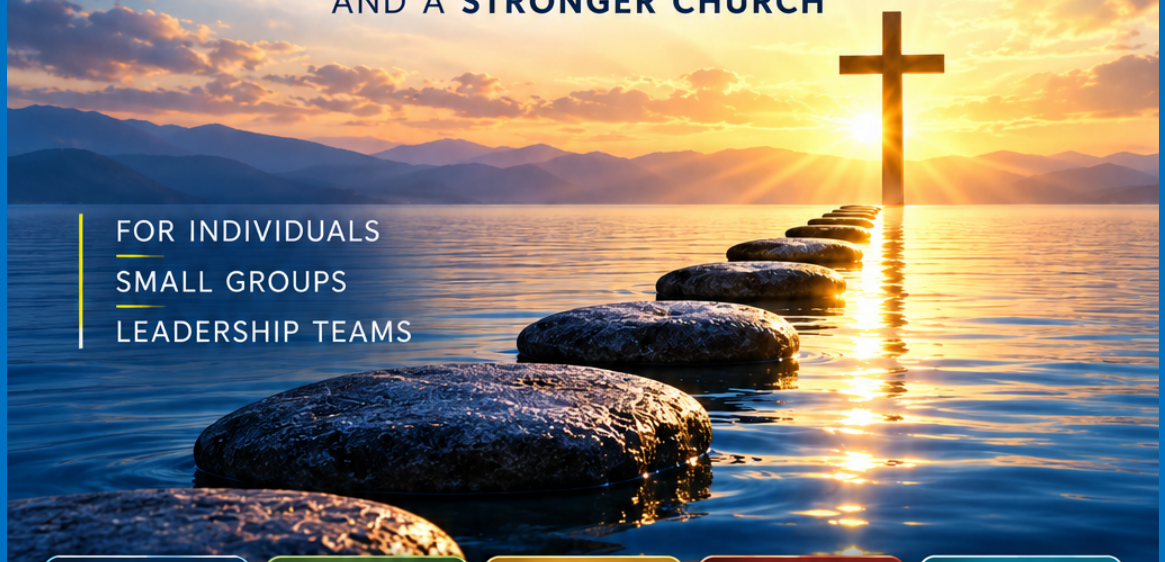
BISHOP DR. ANTHONY COLLINS

10 Things
Every Church Member Should Know

COMPANION
WORKBOOK

PRACTICAL EXERCISES FOR PERSONAL GROWTH
AND A **STRONGER CHURCH**



FOR INDIVIDUALS
SMALL GROUPS
LEADERSHIP TEAMS

SCRIPTURE STUDY	SPIRITUAL FORMATION	KINGDOM PRINCIPLES	LEADERSHIP INSIGHT	PRACTICAL APPLICATION
DIG DEEPER IN GOD'S WORD	BECOME MORE LIKE CHRIST	DISCOVER TIMELESS TRUTH	LEARN AND GROW AS A LEADER	PUT TRUTH INTO ACTION

BISHOP DR. ANTHONY COLLINS

All of our discipleship resources are available to the public at no charge through HOWICP.org. Our mission is to advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ by equipping believers to obey the Great Commission through biblical discipleship, spiritual formation, and leadership development.

If these resources have encouraged your walk with Christ or strengthened your ministry, we invite you to partner with us. Your tax-deductible donation enables us to continue developing and distributing these materials free of charge to individuals, churches, and ministries worldwide.

Thank you for helping us make disciples who make disciples - for the glory of God.

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

COMPANION WORKBOOK

This Companion Workbook aims not only at helping you to understand biblical truth but also at enabling you to go through a spiritual transformation as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit, because of the authority of God's Word, and through deliberate application. Each session has been thought out so that you will progress from a stage of learning to one of living, from belief to obedience, and from personal growth to aiding others in their growth in Christ.

Our purpose is not to produce better church members but to produce mature disciples who in turn make mature disciples, and every graduate is expected to become a disciple maker.

This companion workbook is intended to be used with the book "10 Things Every Church Member Should Know".

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"To help people know Christ deeply, walk with Him daily, and represent Him faithfully through lives transformed by the presence of God."

The CDI Learning Cycle

Learn

↓

Live

↓

Lead

↓

Launch

↓

Repeat

OPENING PRAYER

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ,

Thank you for Your church and for letting me take a place within the Body of Christ. As I start this journey, I ask that Your Word may be opened to my heart and that You would not only show me what I need to know but also who I need to become.

I want the humility to be able to accept correction, the wisdom to see the areas in which I need to improve, and the courage to put biblical truths into action. Teach me how to lead by serving, to communicate with grace, to respect others, to strive for unity, to deal with conflict in a biblical way, and to remain consistent in what I say.

Let this workbook do more than simply provide information. May it lead to transformation. I want to be a positive influence within my congregation and make use of my life to strengthen Your Church.

For Your glory and for the progress of Your Kingdom, I pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.

BISHOP'S NOTE

Dear Friend,

A church's strength is not determined by its building, its budget, its programs, or even the size of its congregation. A church becomes strong when its people understand that every member matters and every member has influence. That is why this companion workbook was created.

10 Things Every Church Member Should Know was never intended to give you ten principles to remember. I want these truths to become part of how you think, serve, lead, communicate, build relationships, handle differences, resolve conflict, and represent Jesus Christ.

As you work through these sessions, resist the temptation to evaluate everyone around you. Begin with yourself. Ask:

- What is God saying to me?
- What needs to change in me?
- How can I become a stronger servant, team member, leader, and disciple?
- How can my influence strengthen my congregation?

Do not rush through these pages. Pray and reflect. Write honestly. Complete the exercises and apply the principles. The goal is not only to finish the workbook.

The goal is to become the person God can use to strengthen His Church.

Ad Gloriam Christi — For the Glory of Christ.
+Bishop Dr. Anthony Collins

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INTRODUCTION

Become a Positive Influence in Your Congregation

Every church member is an influence. The question is not whether you have influence. The question is: What kind of influence are you?

You do not need a title to influence a church. You do not need to stand behind a pulpit, lead a ministry, sit on a board, or hold an official position. Your attitude influences people. Your words influence people. Your faithfulness influences people. Your response to leadership influences people. How you handle disagreement influences people. How you treat people who are different from you influences people. Even the spirit you bring into a room influences people. That means every Christian bears responsibility for the kind of influence he or she brings into the Body of Christ.

This companion workbook was designed to help you move the principles of *10 Things Every Church Member Should Know* from the page into your life. Throughout these ten sessions, you will examine principles involving leadership, Christian influence, thinking, communication, teamwork, diversity, conflict, character, and authentic Christian living. But the purpose is not simply to learn principles. The purpose is *transformation.*

Each session will take you through Scripture study, theological reflection, leadership principles, personal examination, spiritual formation, practical application, prayer, and journaling. You will repeatedly be challenged to move through four stages: *Learn it. Examine yourself through it. Live it. Help strengthen others through it.*

There is another important principle to remember as you begin: *Do not use this workbook primarily to identify what is wrong with someone else.* It is always easier to recognize another person's pride, poor communication, prejudice, inability to work with a team, mishandling of conflict, or lack of integrity, than our own. Spiritual formation begins when we allow the Holy Spirit to turn the mirror toward us. So, approach every session with one prayer: *"Lord, show me, me."* Then have the courage to respond to whatever He reveals.

Healthy churches require healthy Christians. Strong teams require strong team members. Christlike leadership requires Christlike character. And lasting Kingdom influence requires believers who are willing not simply to *talk* Christianity but to *live* it. You can become that kind of Christian. You can become that kind of church member. You can become a positive influence in your congregation. Let the journey begin.

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

Companion Workbook

The Disciples Journey

SESSION 1 - CHOOSE THE RIGHT LEADERS

Prepare the Sanctuary/Opening Prayer

Before studying leadership, begin with an honest recognition: Leadership in the church belongs to Christ. The church is not ours. Its people are not ours. Its ministries are not ours. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and those entrusted with leadership are stewards of what belongs to Him. Take a few moments to quiet your heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to remove personal preferences, loyalties, prejudices, ambitions, and assumptions that might interfere with your ability to recognize biblical leadership.

Opening Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, I thank You for Your Church and for giving us the opportunity to take part in the work of Your Kingdom. Give me the wisdom needed to grasp what You mean by leadership. Teach me to place character before charisma, faithfulness before popularity, maturity before availability, and obedience before my own personal preferences. Grant me the ability to judge carefully the people whom I follow and to remain humble about the influence I have over others. Bring to light in me anything that seeks a position without service, authority without accountability, or recognition without responsibility. Shape my heart to align with Your Word and make me teachable. Make me humble, faithful, courageous, forgiving, and committed to Your purposes. Let every position I hold, every person I affect, and every leader I support be for the glory of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Opening Scripture

"Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands."- 1 Timothy 5:22

Paul's instruction to Timothy establishes an important principle for the church: *Leadership should never be assigned carelessly*. The urgency of a ministry need must never cause the church to abandon biblical discernment. A vacant position does not automatically mean that the first available person should fill it. A willing person is not necessarily a qualified person. A talented person is not necessarily a spiritually mature person. Leadership requires discernment because leadership multiplies influence. Consider: Why do you think Scripture warns against being hasty when recognizing or appointing leaders?

_____

_____

_____

The Main Point

The quality of leadership profoundly influences the health, direction, culture, and effectiveness of the church. Therefore, choosing leaders is not merely an organizational decision. It is a spiritual responsibility.

The church must not confuse availability with qualification, or popularity with character. It must not confuse a large financial contribution with spiritual maturity, or education with wisdom. The church must not confuse loyalty with discipleship, talent with godliness, or influence with spiritual authority.

The right question is not simply: **"**Who can do the job?" The deeper question is: "Who demonstrates the character, spiritual maturity, commitment, and capacity necessary to be entrusted with Kingdom influence?"

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, you should be able to:

1. Explain why leadership is mainly concerned with influence rather than with titles.
2. Understand the spiritual responsibility that is involved when choosing church leaders.
3. Identify inadequate criteria commonly used when choosing leaders.
4. Distinguish availability and ability from biblical qualification.
5. Identify essential character qualities of healthy Christian leaders.
6. Explain why humility, teachability, forgiveness, and accountability are essential to leadership.
7. Understand the relationship between leadership character and church culture.
8. Evaluate your own influence according to biblical principles.
9. Recognize servant leadership as the model established by Jesus Christ.
10. Commit yourself to becoming the kind of person who can be trusted with Kingdom influence.

Chapter Overview

Leadership matters because influence matters. Every leader moves people in some direction. That direction may lead toward spiritual maturity, unity, obedience, and Kingdom effectiveness - or toward confusion, division, stagnation, and spiritual weakness. Churches often make leadership decisions based upon readily observable qualities: attendance, financial giving, education, social standing, friendship, family relationships, availability, talent, or community influence. None of these qualities is necessarily wrong. Some can be valuable. But none is sufficient by itself. Biblical leadership requires something deeper. Christian leaders should demonstrate a relationship with Jesus Christ, commitment to Scripture, alignment with the church's biblical vision, humility, teachability, relational maturity, resilience, accountability, sound judgment, adaptability, courage, and a servant's heart.

The chapter therefore presents two challenges. First, choose leaders carefully.

Second, become the kind of person who should be chosen. Leadership selection cannot merely ask what a person can accomplish. It must also examine who that person is becoming in Christ.

Theology Corner

Leadership as Stewardship: Biblical leadership begins with stewardship, not ownership. Jesus declared: "*I will build my church*."- Matthew 16:18. Notice the possessive word: My. The Church belongs to Christ. This radically changes the meaning of church leadership. Apostles, Bishops, Pastors, elders, ministry leaders, teachers, administrators, volunteers, and other leaders do not possess the church. They have been entrusted with responsibilities within Christ's Church. Biblical leadership therefore carries at least four dimensions:

- Authority - responsibility to provide direction.
- Accountability - responsibility before God for how influence is exercised.
- Stewardship - responsibility to care faithfully for what belongs to Christ.
- Service - responsibility to use influence for the good of others rather than personal elevation.

Jesus overturned worldly assumptions about leadership when He said:

"And whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life as a ransom for many."
Matthew 20:27–28

Kingdom leadership therefore asks a fundamentally different question. The world may ask: **"**How many people serve you?" Jesus asks: "How many people are being served through you?"

Digging Inside Scripture

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, and Matthew 20:25-28. As you study these passages, notice how frequently Scripture emphasizes character rather than charisma.

1 Timothy 3:1–13
List five character qualities you observe:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Which qualification challenges you the most?

_____

Why?

_____

Titus 1:5-9
What relationship do you see between a leader's private character and public ministry?

_____

_____

Why would the ability to teach truth be connected with the ability to resist false teaching?

_____

_____

Matthew 20:25-28
How does Jesus contrast worldly leadership with Kingdom leadership?

_____

_____

Complete this statement:
According to Jesus, greatness in leadership is demonstrated through

_____

_____

Word Study

A significant New Testament word associated with service is the Greek word *diakonos*, commonly translated *minister*. The word redirects our understanding of ministry. Biblically, a minister is not primarily someone who possesses status. A minister is someone who serves. This means ministry cannot properly be separated from service. A person may possess a title without possessing a servant's heart. Conversely, a person may exercise profound

Kingdom influence without possessing an impressive title. Jesus established the pattern: *Kingdom authority is exercised through Kingdom service.*

How does viewing a leader as a servant change your understanding of church leadership?

What happens when someone desires the authority of leadership but not the responsibility of service?

Leadership Insight

Never Allow an Empty Position to Lower the Standard: One of the most dangerous moments in leadership selection occurs when something needs to be done immediately. A ministry needs a leader. A teacher resigns. A department needs help. A position suddenly becomes vacant. Someone says: "We just need somebody." That statement can become dangerous. Urgency can tempt leaders to substitute availability for qualification. While an unfilled position may be inconvenient, an unhealthy leader can be destructive. The larger the influence of the position, the greater the importance of careful discernment.

Never become so desperate to fill a position that you place someone into leadership whom you would never have chosen if the position were already filled.

Principle of the Kingdom

Character Must Carry the Weight of Influence: Influence magnifies what already exists within a person. If humility is present, influence can expand service. If integrity is present, influence can expand trust. If wisdom is present, influence can expand effectiveness. But if pride is present, influence can expand pride. If insecurity is present, influence can magnify control. If selfishness is present, influence can expand selfish ambition. Therefore: God is not merely concerned with increasing our influence. He is first concerned with developing the character capable of carrying that influence. Before asking God for a larger platform,

greater responsibility, or increased authority, we should ask whether our character is prepared to carry it.

Walking it out

Evaluate the following common reasons for selecting church leaders. Place a check beside any criterion you have seen given too much importance:

☐ Financial contribution
☐ Community influence
☐ Education
☐ Family relationship
☐ Friendship
☐ Regular attendance
☐ Availability
☐ Talent
☐ Popularity
☐ Longevity in the church

Now identify five biblical qualities that should receive greater consideration:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now turn the evaluation inward. If you were being considered for significant ministry leadership today, what qualities would demonstrate your readiness?

_____

_____

What areas would require additional development?

_____

_____

_____

Individual Reflection

Think carefully and give these questions a prayerful and honest answer.

1. Is it usual for me to judge leaders based on biblical standards or my preferences?

2. Am I capable of learning when someone points out my errors?

3. How do I respond when I disagree with leadership?

4. Am I quick to forgive?

5. Am I quick to apologize when I am wrong?

6. How do I respond when I do not get my way?

7. Do I serve because I love Christ and people, or because I want recognition?

8. Am I willing to serve when nobody notices?

9. Does increased responsibility make me more humble or more important in my own eyes?

10. Would I willingly follow someone who demonstrated the same character I currently demonstrate? Why or why not?

Spiritual Formation Exercise

The Leadership Mirror: This week, do not begin by evaluating someone else's leadership. Evaluate your own. Prayerfully examine yourself in these 7 areas:

Area	*Strong*	*Growing*	*Needs Attention*
Humility	☐	☐	☐
Teachability	☐	☐	☐
Forgiveness	☐	☐	☐
Accountability	☐	☐	☐

Servanthood	☐	☐	☐
Resilience	☐	☐	☐
Commitment to Scripture	☐	☐	☐

Choose one area in which you need spiritual growth. My area of focus:

_____

Write one specific action you will take this week:

_____

Write one Scripture you will meditate upon:

_____

At the end of the week, record what God revealed:

_____

Living the Principle

The principles of this chapter must move beyond leadership selection committees and become part of everyday Christian life. This week:

Pray before evaluating. Ask God for discernment rather than relying solely upon personal impressions.

Observe character. Pay attention to how people respond to correction, disappointment, disagreement, inconvenience, and adversity.

Examine yourself first. Apply every leadership standard to yourself before applying it to someone else.

Practice servant leadership. Find something valuable to do for someone who cannot advance your position.

Receive correction. When appropriate correction comes, resist defensiveness and listen.

Repair relationships. If you owe someone an apology, give it. If you are harboring an offense, begin the process of forgiveness.

At the end of the week, answer: When I intentionally practiced biblical leadership principles, what changed?

_____

_____

_____

Weekly Declaration

Declare the following out loud every day: I belong to Jesus Christ, and every influence He gives me is a sacred trust. I will not pursue position without character, or authority without accountability. I will not pursue leadership without service. I choose humility over pride and teachability over defensiveness. I choose forgiveness over offense, and obedience over convenience. I will honor God's Word, serve God's people, and support leadership that advances Christ's Kingdom. By the grace of God, I will become the kind of leader I would want to follow. My influence will be used for His purpose and His glory.

Guided Prayer

Father, search my heart. Show me where pride has influenced my decisions. ***Pause and listen.*** *Show me where I have confused talent with character.* ***Pause and listen.*** *Reveal any offense, unforgiveness, selfish ambition, or resistance to accountability within me.* ***Pause and listen.*** *Teach me to recognize Godly leadership. Give me wisdom when I am entrusted with choosing or supporting leaders. Develop within me the character I expect from others. Make me humble. Make me teachable. Make me courageous. Make me faithful. Make me forgiving. Make me a servant. May my influence lead people closer to Jesus Christ rather than closer to me. May every responsibility entrusted to me advance Your Kingdom and glorify Your Son. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Shepherd's Challenge

Stop Looking at the Position - Look at the Person: Churches sometimes discover leadership problems after appointments that could have been recognized before

the appointment. Character usually leaves clues. Watch how a person responds when corrected. Watch how they treat people who cannot benefit them. Watch what happens when their idea is rejected. Watch how they respond when someone else receives recognition. Watch whether they remain faithful when serving becomes inconvenient. Watch whether they reconcile relationships or abandon them. Watch whether they need applause to remain committed. And then turn the same examination toward yourself. The Shepherd's Challenge this week is simple: Do not ask God merely to show you better leaders. Ask God to make you a better follower and a trustworthy leader.

From The Shepherd's Heart

There is something I want every church member to understand: *You are helping shape the future of your church by the kind of leadership you encourage, support, tolerate, and become.* Leadership is too important to be reduced to popularity, friendship, family relationships, financial contribution, education, talent, or availability.

The Church belongs to Jesus. His people deserve leaders who love Him, honor His Word, serve His people, receive correction, practice forgiveness, walk humbly, and remain faithful when ministry becomes difficult. But before we examine everyone else, we must examine ourselves. It is easy to identify pride in another leader. It is harder to confront pride within ourselves. It is easy to demand accountability from someone else. It is harder to welcome accountability personally. It is easy to say leaders should be servants. It is harder to serve when nobody recognizes our contribution.

Never forget this*: Leadership begins long before someone gives you a title.*
It begins with character. Become faithful before you are recognized. Become teachable before you are promoted. Become a servant before you are called a leader. Become trustworthy before you are entrusted with more. If God can trust your character, He can determine the appropriate measure of your influence.

Worship Response

Leadership ultimately brings us back to Jesus. He possessed all authority yet humbled Himself. He was Lord yet served. He was King yet washed feet. He deserved honor yet accepted rejection. He possessed power yet used that power for the redemption of others. Take several minutes and worship Jesus specifically as Lord, King, Shepherd, and Servant. Then write your personal response:
Jesus, because You are my Lord, I surrender my influence to You.

Jesus, teach me to serve as You served by

The leadership quality of Jesus I most desire to demonstrate is

because

Journal

What Is God Saying to Me? Use this space to record what the Holy Spirit emphasized during this session. What did God reveal about my understanding of leadership?

What did God reveal about my character?

Is there an attitude, habit, relationship, or behavior I need to address?

What leadership quality is God calling me to develop?

What specific act of obedience will I take as a result of this session?

My Prayer

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

Companion Workbook

The Disciples Journey

SESSION 2 - BECOME A MODEL OF POSITIVE CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

Prepare the Sanctuary

Leadership begins before we speak, organize, direct, or make decisions. It begins in the heart. Before examining what makes someone else a good or poor leader, allow the Holy Spirit to examine you. Christian leadership is not primarily about occupying a position. It is about becoming a person whose character, faith, love, and obedience give others a trustworthy example to follow. Take a few moments to become quiet before God. Ask yourself: What do people learn about Jesus by watching me lead?

Opening Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, I surrender my heart, my influence, my attitudes, and my leadership to You. Teach me to lead as Jesus led - with love, humility, courage, faith, and the heart of a servant. Deliver me from fear, selfish ambition, insecurity, pride, and dependence upon what I see in the natural. Give me confidence in Your Word. When circumstances contradict Your promises, teach me to believe You. When others become fearful, make me a calming voice of faith. When obedience becomes uncomfortable, inconvenient, or costly, give me courage to say yes. Develop me into a leader who strengthens people rather than diminishes them, creates unity rather than division, and develops other leaders rather than merely collecting followers. May my life become a model of positive Christian leadership that points others toward Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Opening Scripture

"Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.'" - Numbers 13:30

Caleb saw exactly what the other spies saw. He saw fortified cities. He saw powerful people. He saw formidable opposition. He understood the magnitude of the challenge. The difference was not what Caleb saw. The difference was how Caleb interpreted what he saw. Ten leaders interpreted their circumstances through their limitations. Caleb interpreted his circumstances through the Word and faithfulness of God. That distinction lies at the heart of Christian leadership.

Leadership Question: When circumstances become difficult, what normally speaks loudest to you - what you see or what God has said?

_____

_____

_____

The Main Point

Positive Christian leaders model a life of love, faith, courage, obedience, and confidence in God's Word. They help others see their circumstances through the faithfulness of God rather than through the limitations of the natural.

Leadership is contagious. Fear spreads. But faith spreads too. Negativity spreads. But courage spreads too. Confusion can influence a congregation. But so can calm confidence in God's Word. A Christian leader must therefore recognize: *My response does not affect only me.* Other people are watching. Other people are listening. Other people may eventually respond to God based partly upon the leadership example they have seen demonstrated before them.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

1. Identify love and servanthood as foundational qualities of Christian leadership.
2. Explain why leadership is critical to fulfilling the Great Commission.
3. Contrast the leadership responses of Caleb and the majority of Israel's spies.
4. Recognize how fear can distort leadership judgment.
5. Explain the relationship between spiritual identity and courageous leadership.
6. Distinguish circumstance-focused leadership from Word-centered leadership.
7. Recognize the influence a leader's emotional and spiritual response has upon others.
8. Evaluate whether your leadership tends to calm people or stir fear within them.
9. Distinguish between leadership that produces followers and leadership that develops leaders.
10. Identify specific areas in which your leadership can move from good toward greater Kingdom effectiveness.

Chapter Overview

Quality Christian leaders minister with the heart of a servant. They encourage people, challenge them toward excellence, make allowances for human weakness without compromising Scripture, and above all, lead in love. Jesus established love as one of the defining evidences of authentic discipleship. The effectiveness of Christian leadership therefore cannot be measured simply by organizational size, ministry activity, or visible accomplishment. Christian leadership must reflect the character of Christ. Numbers 13 provides a dramatic picture of leadership influence. Twelve men observed the same land. All twelve saw its abundance. All twelve saw its opposition. All twelve returned to the same congregation. But they did not provide the same leadership. Ten magnified the obstacles. Caleb magnified the faithfulness of God. The majority became a

source of fear. Caleb became a source of faith. Poor leadership becomes dominated by circumstances, develops a distorted understanding of identity, magnifies problems, fears people, questions God's faithfulness, develops a spirit of "can't," and spreads instability to others. Caleb demonstrates another way. His focus remained upon God's Word. He remembers God's previous faithfulness, refused to fear his enemies or his peers, recognized what is possible with God, and became a calming voice of truth among frightened people. The ultimate goal, however, is not merely to become a good leader. Christian leadership should multiply. Great leaders develop other leaders.

Theology Corner

Love as Evidence of Christian Leadership: Jesus said: *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* - John 13:35. Christian leadership cannot be separated from Christian love. This is important because leadership can easily become overly focused upon: Performance - Results - Programs - Attendance - Budgets - Objectives - Growth. These things may matter, but none replaces love.

Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 establishes a demanding leadership standard. Love is patient. Therefore, Christian leaders must learn patience with developing people. Love is kind. Therefore, leadership cannot use cruelty as a motivational strategy. Love is not self-seeking. Therefore, leadership cannot exist primarily for the leader's advancement. Love is not easily angered. Therefore, leaders must learn emotional discipline. Love keeps no record of wrongs. Therefore, Christian leadership must understand forgiveness. Love rejoices with truth. Therefore, biblical love never requires abandoning biblical truth. Love perseveres. Therefore, genuine Christian leadership does not disappear when relationships become difficult.

Christian leadership is not simply leadership performed by Christians. It is leadership shaped by the character of Christ.

Digging Inside Scripture

Numbers 13:25-33
Read the passage slowly. The spies initially agreed about the land.
What evidence did they bring confirming the goodness of the land?

What word introduces the majority's shift from God's promise toward the obstacles before them?

What did Caleb say?

What did the other leaders say?

Compare the Perspectives
Caleb focused upon:

The ten spies focused upon:

Caleb believed:

The ten spies believed:

Caleb's message produced the possibility of:

The majority's message produced:

Now examine Numbers 14.
What happened to the congregation after listening to the fearful report?

What does this teach you about the power of leadership influence?

Complete this statement:
A leader's perspective matters because

Word Study

Scripture repeatedly commands God's people not to fear. Biblical courage does not mean pretending danger does not exist. Caleb did not deny the giants. He did not deny the fortified cities. He did not deny Israel's natural disadvantages. His faith did something different: *It refused to give those realities greater authority than God's promise.* Fear asks: "What can happen to me?" Faith asks: "What has God said?" Fear magnifies opposition. Faith magnifies God. Fear calculates only natural resources. Faith includes God in the calculation. Fear says: "We can't." Faith responds: "If God has commanded us, He will provide what is necessary for our obedience."

What situation currently tempts you to focus more upon circumstances than God's Word?

_____

_____

What does Scripture say that should govern your response?

_____

_____

Leadership Insight

Leaders Set the Emotional Temperature: One of the most significant observations from Numbers 13 is what happened after the leaders spoke. The ten spies did not keep their fear private. They spread it. Their internal perspective became a public report, and their public report eventually influenced an entire nation. Caleb did something different. He attempted to quiet the people. This provides an important leadership principle: *Leaders often become either thermostats or thermometers*. A thermometer merely reflects the temperature of the environment. A thermostat influences it. When everyone becomes anxious, the Christian leader should not simply become another anxious voice. When rumors spread, the leader should bring truth. When fear rises, the leader should bring faith. When confusion increases, the leader should bring clarity. When conflict escalates, the leader should bring peace. When circumstances appear impossible, the leader should bring everyone back to what God has said. *Never underestimate the effect your response to difficulty has upon the people you lead.*

Principle of the Kingdom

Faith-Filled Leaders Interpret Circumstances Through God's Word: Poor leadership says: **"**Look at the giants." Kingdom leadership says: "Remember what God said." Poor leadership says: "Look how weak we are." Kingdom leadership says: "Remember who we are in Christ." Poor leadership says: "What if this goes wrong?" Kingdom leadership says: "What does obedience require?" Positive Christian leadership does not ignore reality. It establishes the proper hierarchy of reality: *God's Word is greater than what my eyes see*. *God's faithfulness is greater than my fear. God's power is greater than my weakness. God's purposes are greater than my comfort.*

Walking it out

The chapter identifies several truths concerning the believer's identity in Christ. Choose five and rewrite them personally. Example:

John 1:12 teaches that I am _____.

1. Scripture: _____
   I am

_____

2. Scripture: _____
   I am

_____

3. Scripture: _____
   I am

_____

4. Scripture: _____
   I am

_____

5. Scripture: _____
   I am

_____

Now answer:
Which truth is most difficult for you to consistently live as though you believe?

_____

Why?

What would change in your leadership if you truly acted upon this truth?

Individual Reflection

1. When problems arise, do I normally become problem-focused or solution-focused?

2. Do difficult circumstances cause me to question what God has said?

3. Are my worries more about people's approval or God's approval?

4. Can you name a situation in which fear had an effect on your leadership?

5. Do I, when encountering new difficulties, regularly recall God's past faithfulness?

6. Does talking to me during a crisis generally have the effect of making people calmer or more anxious?

7. Do I give people encouragement when I see them engaging in something difficult?

8 Is it possible to correct someone and at the same time show genuine love?

9. Am I building followers or developing leaders?

10. What would need to change for my leadership to become more Christlike?

Spiritual Formation Exercise

Remember What God Has Done: Caleb's confidence was not detached from history. He belonged to a generation that had witnessed God's mighty acts. This week, create a personal record of God's faithfulness. Write five situations in which God has demonstrated His faithfulness in your life.

1. God was faithful when

_____

2. God was faithful when

_____

3. God was faithful when

_____

4. God was faithful when

_____

5. God was faithful when

_____

Now identify one current challenge:

_____

Write this declaration beneath it: *The God who was faithful then is still faithful now.* Spend five minutes each day thanking God specifically for His past faithfulness before praying about your current challenge. At the end of the week, record how remembering changed your perspective.

_____

_____

_____

Living the Principle

For the next seven days, practice *Caleb leadership.* When you encounter a problem:

1. Identify the facts. Do not deny reality.
2. Identify your fear. Be honest about what concerns you.
3. Identify God's Word. Discover the biblical truth that determines how you respond.
4. Remember God's faithfulness. Think back at all that He has already achieved.
5. Choose obedience. Find out what faithfulness demands of you.

6. Speak faith. Use your influence to strengthen rather than frighten others.
7. Move forward.

Do what God requires even when the outcome cannot yet be seen. Ask at the end of the week: Where did I have an opportunity to practice Caleb leadership?

What did I do?

What did I learn?

Weekly Declaration

Declare the following out loud every day this week: I will lead according to the Word of God and not according to fear. I know who I am in Jesus Christ. I will not allow circumstances, opposition, discomfort, or the opinions of others to become greater than God's Word in my life. I will remember God's faithfulness, walk courageously in obedience, and use my influence to bring faith, peace, truth, and unity to others. I will lead in love. I will serve with humility. I will encourage others toward excellence. I will not only build followers. I will develop leaders. If God says I can, I will move forward believing that through Christ I can accomplish everything He has commanded me to do.

Guided Prayer

Father, show me where fear has influenced my leadership. ***Pause.*** *Show me where circumstances have become larger in my thinking than Your Word.* ***Pause.*** *Remind me of what You have already done.* ***Pause.*** *Remind me who I am in Christ.* ***Pause****. Show me anyone I have discouraged through my words, attitude, or example.* ***Pause****. Teach me to lead in love. Teach me to speak truth without abandoning kindness. Teach me to confront problems without magnifying them. Teach me to face opposition without fearing people. Teach me to remember Your faithfulness when circumstances appear impossible. Make me a calming force for truth. Make me a source of courage. Make me a builder of people. Make me a developer of leaders. And when You say move, give me the faith to move. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Shepherd's Challenge

Eliminate "Can't" When God Has Said "Can": There are legitimate things we cannot do. But there is a dangerous kind of *"can't"* that appears when God has already commanded obedience. Sometimes "I can't" really means: "I don't want to be uncomfortable." Sometimes it means: "I am afraid." Sometimes it means "I cannot predict the outcome." Sometimes it means "Other people may not agree with me." *And s*ometimes it means "This will cost more than I want to give." The ten spies had reasons for saying no. Caleb had a Word from God for saying yes. Your Shepherd's Challenge this week is to identify one place where fear, comfort, convenience, or predictability has been masquerading as inability. Write it here:

_____

Now answer: What has God actually said?

_____

Then obey Him.

From The Shepherd's Heart

One of the greatest tests of leadership is not what you do when everyone agrees with you. It is what you do when obedience to God places you in the minority. Caleb stood surrounded by people who saw things differently. The majority had evidence. They had experience. They had persuasive arguments. They had giants. But Caleb had something greater. He had a Word from God. Church, we must become people who believe God's Word enough to act upon it. There comes a point when quoting Scripture is not enough. Studying Scripture is not enough. Teaching Scripture is not enough. Eventually, the Word we say we believe must determine what we actually do. Positive Christian leadership requires men and women who can stand in difficult moments and say: "I see the problem. I understand the risk. I recognize the opposition. But I also know what God has said." Your church does not only need leaders who can organize. It needs leaders who believe God. Your ministry does not merely need leaders who can communicate. It needs leaders who can remain faithful when everyone else becomes afraid. And your people do not just need someone who can tell them where to go. They need someone whose life demonstrates what trusting Jesus looks like along the way. Be that leader.

Worship Response

Jesus Christ is the perfect model of leadership. He loved completely. He served willingly. He obeyed perfectly. He remained faithful under opposition. He did not allow rejection to change His mission. He did not allow suffering to cancel His obedience. He did not allow the opinions of people to determine His identity. Spend several minutes worshiping Jesus specifically for His faithfulness. Then complete these statements: Jesus, I worship You because

_____

_____

The characteristic of Your leadership I most need to imitate is

_____

because

_____

Today I surrender my fear of

_____

and choose to trust You concerning

_____

Journal

What Is God Saying to Me? What did the Holy Spirit emphasize most strongly during this session?

_____

_____

_____

Where have I been behaving more like the ten spies than Caleb?

_____

_____

What "giant" have I allowed to become larger than God's promise?

_____

_____

What truth about my identity in Christ do I need to embrace more fully?

_____

_____

Am I currently building followers or developing leaders?

_____

_____

What must change for me to become a model of positive Christian leadership?

What God Has Said

What I Will Do

My Prayer

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

Companion Workbook

The Disciples Journey

SESSION 3 - THINK LIKE AN AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN

Prepare the Sanctuary

Before you can change the direction of your life, you must become willing to allow God to examine the thoughts that are directing it. Our thoughts are powerful because thoughts influence beliefs, beliefs shape attitudes, attitudes affect responses, and repeated responses become patterns of behavior. Take several moments and become quiet before God. Do not begin by thinking about someone else's attitude. Ask the Holy Spirit: What have I been thinking that does not agree with what God has said?

Opening Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, I surrender my mind to You. Search my thoughts and reveal anything I have accepted that contradicts Your Word. Expose every lie I have believed, every negative pattern I have entertained, every fear I have magnified, and every attitude that does not reflect Jesus Christ. Renew my mind through Your Word. Teach me to recognize thoughts that must be rejected and truth that must be embraced. Give me the discipline to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ. Replace complaining with gratitude, fear with faith, bitterness with forgiveness, anxiety with trust, defeat with confidence in You, and negativity with the life-giving truth of Your Word. May what I believe be demonstrated through how I live. Make my thoughts, words, attitudes, and actions authentic expressions of my relationship with Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Opening Scripture

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." - Romans 12:2

Notice where Paul locates transformation: The mind. Christian transformation is more than changing outward behavior. God changes how we think. As our thinking becomes increasingly aligned with God's truth, our choices begin to change. As our choices change, our behavior changes. As our behavior changes, our lives increasingly demonstrate the character of Christ. The question is not simply: "What am I doing?" We must also ask: "What am I believing that causes me to do it?"

Consider: What recurring thought has had the greatest influence upon your attitude recently?

Does that thought agree with God's Word?

The Main Point

Authentic Christian living requires a renewed mind. We must learn to identify, examine, reject, and replace thoughts that contradict God's Word so that what we believe produces attitudes and behaviors that reflect Jesus Christ.

The progression is significant:

THOUGHTS → BELIEFS → ATTITUDES → RESPONSES → BEHAVIOR → LEGACY

If you try to alter someone's behavior without looking at their beliefs, you might be able to change what they do without altering their reasons for doing it. Since only truth at the root level can lead to lasting change, it follows that if you want to change the way you live you should consider what you believe.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

1. Explain why the mind is central to Christian transformation.
2. Recognize the relationship between thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior.
3. Identify thoughts that contradict the Word of God.
4. Explain what it means to take thoughts captive to Christ.
5. Distinguish a positive Christian attitude from mere positive thinking.
6. Identify attitudes that strengthen or weaken Christian leadership.
7. Recognize negative patterns involving the past, present, and future.
8. Practice replacing destructive self-talk with biblical truth.
9. Accept personal responsibility for attitudes and responses.
10. Develop practical habits for continually renewing your mind through Scripture.

Chapter Overview

The battle for authentic Christian leadership takes place largely within the mind. Scripture records numerous occasions in which destructive ideas preceded destructive actions. The problem was not simply what individuals eventually did. The problem began with what they entertained, accepted, and believed.

The chapter therefore challenges Christians to filter thoughts through God's Word. Knowing Scripture intellectually is insufficient. Truth must be believed deeply enough to influence behavior. A Word-centered mind produces a distinctly Christian attitude characterized by gratitude, confidence, calmness, hope, encouragement, and faith. Conversely, thinking that remains unsubmitted to biblical truth can produce criticism, victimization, unnecessary drama, pessimism, and bitterness. Transformation therefore requires more than managing symptoms. We must address the belief beneath the behavior.

Theology Corner

The Renewed Mind: Romans 12:2 connects two powerful ideas:
Transformation and renewal. Christian transformation is not simply behavioral modification. God works from the inside outward. Our thinking must increasingly come under the authority of Scripture.

Paul writes: *"And we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."*
2 Corinthians 10:5.

The language is forceful. Thoughts are not automatically entitled to remain in our minds simply because they appeared there. A thought can be: Examined - Challenged - Rejected - Replaced. The Christian does not ask merely: "Did I think this?" The Christian asks: "Does this thought agree with Christ?" If it does not, it should not be permitted to establish residence within our thinking.

The renewed mind increasingly learns to interpret life according to God's truth rather than allowing circumstances, emotions, culture, fear, or past experiences to define reality.

Digging Inside Scripture

Read Romans 12:1–2, 2 Corinthians 10:3–5, and Philippians 4:8–9.

Romans 12:2
What should Christians not conform to?

_____

What does Paul say about the way transformation takes place?

_____

What can be achieved with a renewed mind?

_____

2 Corinthians 10:5
What are those who believe told to do regarding their thoughts?

_____

Against what standard are those thoughts judged?

_____

Philippians 4:8
List the categories Paul gives for directing our thoughts:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Now consider your own thought life. Which category needs the most attention?

_____

Why?

_____

Complete this sentence: My mind is being renewed when

_____

_____

_____

Word Study

The Greek word translated "transformed" in Romans 12:2 is *metamorphoō*. It communicates transformation - a genuine change rather than simply an external adjustment. The English word metamorphosis comes from the same linguistic family. Think about the difference between: *Decoration and transformation.* Decoration changes appearance. Transformation changes form. Christianity is not intended simply to decorate an unchanged life with religious language. Jesus Christ transforms us. And according to Romans 12:2, the renewing of our minds is integral to that process.

Where have you been attempting to change behavior without changing underlying thinking?

_____

_____

What belief may be producing that behavior?

_____

What biblical truth needs to replace it?

_____

_____

Leadership Insight

Your Attitude Enters the Room Before Your Strategy Works: Leaders influence environments not merely through decisions but through attitudes. People notice whether you encounter difficulty with: Faith or fear. Gratitude or complaining. Calmness or chaos. Hope or defeat. Solutions or criticism. A leader can communicate the correct organizational strategy while simultaneously undermining it through the wrong attitude. This is why Christian leadership requires more than technical competency. What is inside the leader eventually comes out of the leader. Under pressure, internal beliefs become increasingly visible. Therefore, adversity does not merely create leadership problems. Often, adversity reveals the leader.

Do not just prepare your strategy for difficult moments. Prepare your mind before the difficult moment arrives.

Principle of the Kingdom

What You Continually Believe Will Eventually Influence How You Live: A destructive thought that is immediately rejected has limited opportunity to shape your life. But a destructive thought that is repeatedly entertained can become a belief. Beliefs influence attitudes. Attitudes influence decisions. Decisions influence behavior. Repeated behavior influences character. Character influences legacy. Therefore, spiritual warfare often involves confronting something long before it becomes visible behavior.

The Kingdom principle is simple: *Do not wait until a wrong thought produces wrong behavior before confronting it with truth.* Take it captive early. Replace it with Scripture. Then live according to what God has said.

Walking it out

The Biblical Thought Filter: Choose one recurring negative thought.
The thought:

_____

Now process it through these questions.

1. Is this thought true?

2. Does this thought agree with Scripture?

3. Does this thought produce faith or fear?

4. Does it move me toward obedience or away from obedience?

5. What attitude does this thought produce?

6. What behavior is likely to result if I continue believing it?

7. What does God's Word say instead?

8. What Scripture will I use to replace this thought?

Now rewrite the original thought according to biblical truth:

Individual Reflection

The chapter contrasts life-giving Christian attitudes with attitudes that drain others. Answer honestly.

1. Do I usually look for opportunities or obstacles first?

2. When adversity arises, do I stay calm?

3. Do I usually criticize?

4. Do I see myself as the victim in conflicts on a regular basis?

5. Do I make minor problems seem more important by showing unnecessary drama?

6. Do I usually expect the best or do I tend to assume the worst?

7. Are you holding a spirit of bitterness towards anyone?

_____

8. How does my self-talk sound when no one else is hearing it?

_____

9. Are my attitudes consistent with what I say I believe?

_____

10. If people developed my attitude toward life, would they become more like Jesus?

_____

Explain:

_____

_____

Spiritual Formation Exercise

Take It Captive: For the next seven days, keep a *Thought Capture Journal.* Whenever you recognize a recurring negative, fearful, bitter, critical, or destructive thought, record it. Each day, capture the following:

What is the Thought? _____
What is the Truth? _____
What is the Scripture? _____

At the end of seven days, ask: What pattern did I discover?

_____

_____

_____

Living the Principle

The chapter presents practical ways to strengthen an authentic Christian attitude, including biblical self-talk, honest self-examination, living in the present, intentionally choosing one's response, and continually filling the mind with God's Word. Practice these five disciplines this week:

Speak truth. Begin each morning by declaring a biblical truth aloud.

Own truth. When the Holy Spirit reveals something wrong in your attitude, do not defend it. Address it.

Live now. Do not allow regret about yesterday or anxiety about tomorrow to steal today's obedience.

Choose your response. Before reacting emotionally, ask: "What response would honor Jesus?"

Renew your mind. Spend intentional time every day reading and meditating upon Scripture.

At week's end: Which discipline affected me most?

_____

What changed?

_____

_____

_____

Weekly Declaration

Declare the following out loud each day: My mind belongs to Jesus Christ. I will not accept every thought simply because it enters my mind. I will take my thoughts captive and submit them to the authority of God's Word. I reject fear, bitterness, criticism, defeat, victimization, and destructive thinking. I choose gratitude, faith, peace, truth, forgiveness, hope, and obedience. I will think according to God's Word, speak according to God's Word, and increasingly live according to God's Word. My circumstances will not define my God. My God will determine how I respond to my circumstances. Through the renewing of my mind, I am being transformed into an authentic follower of Jesus Christ.

Guided Prayer

Father, reveal any lie I have believed. ***Pause.*** *Show me the thoughts I have entertained that contradict Your Word.* ***Pause.*** *Reveal any negative past experience that continues to control my present thinking.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where*

fear of the future is stealing today's peace. ***Pause.*** *Reveal any bitterness, criticism, self-pity, or victim mentality within me.* ***Pause.*** *Father, renew my mind. Teach me to think truth. Teach me to recognize deception. Teach me to control my response. Teach me to speak life. Teach me to be grateful. Teach me to remain calm in adversity. Teach me to expect Your faithfulness. I surrender my thoughts to Jesus Christ. Let the mind of Christ increasingly govern the life that I live. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Shepherd's Challenge

Find the Lie Beneath the Behavior: This week, identify one behavior you sincerely want to change. Do not stop with the behavior. Dig deeper. Ask: Why do I respond this way? Then ask: What do I believe when I respond this way? Then ask: Is that belief actually true according to Scripture? Your Shepherd's Challenge is to identify the lie beneath one destructive behavior and replace it with biblical truth.

Behavior:

_____

Underlying belief:

_____

The lie:

_____

God's truth:

_____

Scripture:

_____

My new response will be:

_____

Do not simply fight the fruit. Deal with the root.

From The Shepherd's Heart

There is a truth I want you to carry beyond this session: *You cannot consistently live beyond what you truly believe.* We sometimes become frustrated with our behavior while protecting the thinking that produces it. We want peace while rehearsing fearful thoughts. We want joy while continually rehearsing everything

that is wrong. We want forgiveness while repeatedly revisiting the offense. We want faith while constantly meditating upon the worst possible outcome. We want transformation while refusing to change our minds. Something has to change. God has given us His Word so that we do not have to remain prisoners of every thought that enters our minds. You can stop a thought. You can examine it. You can compare it with Scripture. You can reject what is false. You can embrace what is true. And you can choose to live according to that truth. Authentic Christianity is not pretending that problems do not exist. It is looking directly at reality while refusing to allow anything to possess greater authority in our thinking than God. Fill your mind with His Word. Speak His truth. Believe His promises. Own the truth about yourself when correction is necessary. And when your thoughts attempt to lead you somewhere Jesus would never take you, take them captive. Your mind belongs to Christ.

Worship Response

Jesus is not merely interested in what you do. He desires your heart and your mind. Take several minutes and worship Him by intentionally surrendering your thoughts. Complete these statements prayerfully:

Jesus, I give You my thoughts concerning

_____

I surrender my fear about

_____

I release my bitterness concerning

_____

I choose to believe Your Word when You say

_____

The truth I will carry from this session is

_____

Now spend several moments thanking Jesus for the freedom that comes from truth.

Journal

What thought pattern did God reveal during this session?

What belief is underneath that thought pattern?

Does that belief agree with God's Word?

What truth must replace it?

What Scripture will I meditate upon this week?

Which attitude most needs to change?

How has my attitude affected the people around me?

What will I begin doing differently today?

Three Things I Will Do: The chapter concludes by challenging the reader to identify concrete changes that will demonstrate the attitude of an authentic Christian.

1. I will

2. I will

3. I will

My Prayer

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

Companion Workbook

The Disciples Journey

SESSION 4 - DEVELOP A GOOD COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Prepare the Sanctuary

Communication is one of the most powerful forms of influence God has entrusted to us. Words can encourage or discourage. They can clarify or confuse. They can reconcile or divide. They can communicate grace or inflict unnecessary wounds. But effective communication involves more than speaking. It requires listening, understanding, wisdom, self-awareness, and concern for the person receiving the message. Before beginning this session, ask the Holy Spirit to examine not merely what you say, but how well you listen, how clearly you communicate, and how your words and nonverbal behavior affect others.

Opening Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for the ability to communicate with others. Teach me to use my words wisely. Give me ears that truly listen, a heart that seeks understanding, and wisdom to recognize that others may interpret circumstances differently than I do. Guard me from careless words, unnecessary jargon, prideful speech, defensiveness, and the desire to be heard without first seeking to understand. Help my words and actions agree. Teach me to speak truth with love, correction with grace, instruction with patience, and encouragement with sincerity. May my verbal, written, and nonverbal communication consistently reflect the character of Jesus Christ and positively influence those around me for Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Opening Scripture

*"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.***"** - James 1:19

Notice the order. Quick to listen. Slow to speak. Slow to anger. Much ineffective communication reverses that order. We become: Quick to speak. Quick to react. Slow to listen. Biblical communication begins with a willingness to hear.

Consider: When someone is speaking to you, are you normally listening to understand or listening so you can respond?

_____

How are the two different?

_____

_____

_____

The Main Point

To carry out effective Christian communication it is necessary to do more than just give out information. We should make an intentional effort to understand and acknowledge the different points of view of other. Additionally, we should communicate clearly and in a gracious way. We should listen carefully, and see that our words, our actions, and our nonverbal signals all consistently convey the message we want to send.

Communication is not complete because: "I said it." The more important question is: "Was it understood?" Effective communicators accept responsibility not only for constructing the message but also, as far as reasonably possible, for helping the recipient understand what was intended.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

1. Explain the basic sender-message-receiver-feedback communication process.
2. Define a frame of reference and describe how it affects communication.
3. Recognize common barriers to effective communication.
4. Practice listening for understanding rather than merely preparing a response.
5. Recognize how cultural differences affect communication.
6. Communicate spiritual truth without unnecessary jargon.
7. Improve clarity in verbal and written communication.
8. Recognize the importance of nonverbal communication.
9. Identify conflicting signals between words and behavior.
10. Develop a personal communication process that reflects Christian love, wisdom, courtesy, and integrity.

Chapter Overview

Communication appears simple: A sender develops a message. The sender communicates the message. A receiver interprets it. The receiver provides feedback. But the process becomes complicated because human beings do not receive words in a vacuum. We interpret communication through personal frames of reference shaped by experiences, temperament, personality, beliefs, culture, and present circumstances. Therefore, two people can hear the same words and construct very different meanings.

Effective communicators learn to recognize these differences. They listen before speaking. They recognize cultural distinctions. They avoid unnecessary spiritual jargon. They speak to express rather than impress. They avoid information overload. They ensure that their actions support their words. And they remain approachable.

The chapter also examines three major dimensions of communication:

Verbal communication - what we say.
Written communication - what we write.
Nonverbal communication - what our behavior communicates.

The goal is not merely better technique. For Christians, the larger objective is to communicate in ways that positively influence people for Jesus Christ.

Theology Corner

Words as Stewardship: Scripture consistently treats speech as spiritually significant. Proverbs 18:21 teaches that the tongue possesses tremendous power. Ephesians 4:29 instructs believers to avoid corrupt communication and instead speak what builds others up according to their needs. Jesus also taught that our words reveal something about our hearts. Communication, therefore, is a matter of stewardship. God has entrusted us with the ability to use words. The Christian question is not simply: "Do I have the right to say this?" We must also ask: "Will saying it this way accomplish something consistent with the character and purposes of Christ?" Truth matters. But so do: Timing - Tone - Clarity - Motivation - Audience - Understanding. Biblical communication does not require choosing between truth and love. We are called to communicate truth in love.

Christian communication should make truth clearer without making Christ harder to see.

Digging Inside Scripture

Read James 1:19, Proverbs 18:13, Ephesians 4:15, and Ephesians 4:29.

James 1:19

1. What are the three instructions?
2. _____
3. _____

4. _____
5. Which one is the most difficult for you?

_____

Why?

_____

Proverbs 18:13
What does the Scripture teach regarding answering before listening?

_____

What communication problem does this verse highlight?

_____

_____

Ephesians 4:15
What are Christians told about communicating the truth?

_____

Why are both elements necessary?

_____

Ephesians 4:29
What should determine whether something is beneficial to say?

_____

Who should benefit from Christian communication?

_____

Complete this statement: Biblical communication is effective when

_____

_____

_____

Word Study

To understand someone requires more than hearing sounds. Hearing asks: "What words did they say?" Understanding asks: "What are they trying to communicate?" This distinction is crucial. A person may accurately repeat every word you said while completely misunderstanding your intended message. Therefore, good communication requires feedback. Questions such as these can help: "What did you hear me say?" "Does that make sense?" "How are you understanding what I am asking?" "Help me understand what you mean." "Can you explain your concern?" These are not signs of weak communication. They are tools of intentional communication.

Think about a recent misunderstanding. What did you say?

What did you intend?

What did the other person apparently hear?

What could have been done differently?

Leadership Insight

Communication Is Measured by Understanding, Not Merely Delivery: One of the easiest leadership mistakes is assuming: "I told them, so they know." Not necessarily. The message may have been spoken without being understood. It may have been emailed without being read. It may have been understood differently than intended. It may have contained unfamiliar terminology. It may have been overwhelmed by too much information. Or the leader's behavior may have contradicted the message. Effective leaders therefore build feedback loops into communication. They do not simply ask: "Did you hear me?" They seek to determine: "Did we arrive at a shared understanding?"

The responsibility of leadership communication is not merely to transmit information but to pursue clarity.

Principle of the Kingdom

Seek to Understand Before Demanding to Be Understood: Human nature wants to explain itself. We want people to understand: Our intentions - Our feelings - Our reasoning - Our position - Our frustration. But effective Christian communication begins by turning attention toward the other person. What are they saying? What are they feeling? What are they trying to accomplish? What experiences influence their interpretation? What might I be missing? Listening does not mean agreeing. Understanding does not mean compromising. It means respecting another person enough to hear accurately before responding. In the Kingdom of God: Listening can be an act of love.

Walking it out

Assess how you communicate:

My strongest communication area is:

My weakest communication area is:

One communication habit I will intentionally change is:

Individual Reflection

1. Do people normally feel heard when speaking with me?

2. Do I interrupt?

3. While others speak, am I mentally preparing my response instead of listening?

4. Do I use language that people might not understand?

5. Have I mixed up spiritual terminology with spiritual maturity?

6. Do the actions I take always match the things I say?

7. Am I easy to get along with when someone disagrees with me?

8. Does the tone that I adopt convey something other than what my words actually say?

9. Do I adjust the way I communicate when dealing with people who come from backgrounds other than my own?

10. What would the people who are closest to me think of the way I communicate?

Spiritual Formation Exercise

The Listening Discipline: For one week, intentionally practice listening. Choose at least one meaningful conversation each day. During that conversation:

- Do not interrupt.
- Do not mentally prepare your rebuttal.
- Ask at least one clarifying question.
- Restate what you believe the person said.

Then ask: "Did I understand you correctly?"

Record what you discover each day.
Day 1 - I learned:

Day 2 - I learned:

Day 3 - I learned:

Day 4 - I learned:

Day - I learned:

Day 6 - I learned:

Day 7 - I learned:

At the end of the week: What changed when I concentrated on understanding before responding?

Living the Principle

The chapter offers practical guidance for verbal communication. Prepare what you want to say, consider the listener's perspective, move from simple concepts to complex ones, choose clear words, speak clearly, stay courteous and natural,

repeat when needed, pay attention to eye contact and body language, eliminate distracting verbal fillers, and relax. Use this process during one important conversation this week:

PRAY - Ask God for wisdom.
PREPARE - What needs to be communicated?

PERSPECTIVE - How might the other person view this?

PURPOSE - What should this conversation accomplish?

PLAINNESS - How can I communicate this simply?

PAUSE - Am I prepared to listen?

PROCEED - Communicate graciously and clearly.
PROCESS - Afterward ask: Was understanding achieved?

Weekly Declaration

Declare the following out loud each day: God has entrusted me with the ability to communicate, and I will use that gift wisely. I will be quick to listen and thoughtful before I speak. I will seek understanding before demanding to be understood. My words will communicate truth with love, clarity with grace, and correction with respect. I will recognize that others may see circumstances through a different frame of reference than mine. My words, actions, tone, and attitude will increasingly communicate the same message. I will use communication to strengthen relationships, build God's people, promote unity, and positively influence others for Jesus Christ.

Guided Prayer

Father, show me where my communication has injured rather than strengthened. ***Pause.*** *Show me where I have spoken without listening.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where I have assumed people understood me when they did not.* ***Pause.*** *Reveal where my tone, facial expressions, or actions contradict my words.* ***Pause.*** *Show me anyone*

whose perspective I have dismissed without attempting to understand. ***Pause.*** *Father, give me wisdom in my words. Teach me to listen. Teach me to understand. Teach me to speak clearly. Teach me to communicate truth lovingly. Teach me to correct graciously. Teach me to receive feedback humbly. Make me approachable. Make my words instruments of grace. May the way I communicate draw people closer to truth, closer to one another, and closer to Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Shepherd's Challenge

Listen Long Enough to Learn Something: Your challenge this week is not to give a great speech. It is not to make an impressive presentation. It is not to win an argument. Your challenge is to have one conversation in which your primary objective is: Understanding. Choose someone whose perspective differs from yours. Ask a meaningful question. Then listen. Do not correct immediately. Do not defend yourself. Do not interrupt. Listen long enough to discover something you did not know before the conversation began. Afterward write: What did I learn?

What assumption did I discover?

How will this change the way I communicate with this person?

Remember: You do not have to agree with someone in order to understand them.

From The Shepherd's Heart

Communication problems are rarely caused by an absence of words. We have plenty of words. The problem is that speaking and communicating are not necessarily the same thing. You can say something clearly in your own mind and still be misunderstood by the person standing directly in front of you. Why? Because they are not you. They have different experiences. Different memories. Different personalities. Different cultures. Different wounds. Different expectations. Different frames of reference. Mature Christian communication recognizes these differences. We must learn to listen. Sometimes the most

loving thing you can do is stop preparing your response long enough to hear someone's heart. And leaders, never assume that because you announced something, everybody understands it. Communicate. Clarify. Listen. Repeat when necessary. Invite questions. Watch your tone. Watch your body language. And above all, make sure your behavior does not contradict your words. The credibility of your words will never consistently rise above the credibility of your character. We represent Jesus Christ. Let us communicate accordingly.

Worship Response

Jesus communicated truth perfectly. He knew when to speak. He knew when to remain silent. He knew when to ask questions. He knew when to confront. He knew when to comfort. He spoke with authority without surrendering compassion. Spend several moments worshiping Jesus as the Word made flesh. Then respond: Jesus, I surrender my words to You.

I surrender my tone to You.

I surrender my desire always to be understood before understanding others.

Teach me to communicate like You by

The communication habit I most want You to change in me is

Journal

What Is God Saying to Me? What did God reveal about the way I communicate?

What did God reveal about the way I listen?

What communication barrier appears most frequently in my relationships?

Is there someone I have misunderstood because I failed to consider their frame of reference?

Do my words and actions communicate the same message?

Explain:

What one change would most improve my communication?

My Communication Commitment: This week I will intentionally:

My Prayer

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

Companion Workbook

The Disciples Journey

SESSION 5 - FOSTER AN ATMOSPHERE OF OPEN COMMUNICATION

Prepare the Sanctuary

Healthy communication does not happen accidentally. People learn whether it is safe to speak by watching what happens when someone speaks honestly. They learn whether questions are welcome by watching how questions are received. They learn whether disagreement is permitted by watching how leaders respond when someone holds a contrary opinion. They learn whether bad news should be communicated by watching how the messenger is treated. An atmosphere of open communication must therefore be intentionally cultivated. Before beginning this session, ask yourself: Do people feel free to communicate honestly with me?

Opening Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, teach me to create an atmosphere in which truth can be spoken, questions can be asked, concerns can be expressed, disagreements can be handled graciously, and people can communicate without unnecessary fear. Make me approachable. Deliver me from defensiveness, impatience, pride, and the need always to be right. Teach me to listen completely before responding. Help me distinguish disagreement from disrespect and correction from rejection. Give me wisdom to communicate information at the right time, to the right people, in the right way. May my words communicate truth, my attitude communicate grace, and my responses communicate respect. Use me to build relationships characterized by trust, honesty, clarity, dignity, and love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Opening Scripture

"The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out." - Proverbs 20:5

Good communication often requires more than hearing someone's first statement. Sometimes we must *draw out* what is really being communicated. That requires: Patience - Questions - Listening - Discernment - Interest - Humility. A person may initially communicate the surface issue while the real concern lies deeper. *Effective communicators learn to listen not merely for words but for meaning.*

Consider: Do people have to work hard to make you understand them?

When someone disagrees with you, do you become more curious or more defensive?

Why?

The Main Point

Open communication thrives when leaders deliberately establish an atmosphere in which there is trust, timely information, respectful disagreement, genuine listening, accessibility, clarity, and a concern for the dignity and success of other people.

A culture that encourages open communication means that you are allowed to speak, that your voice will be heard, that you can ask questions, that you may respectfully hold a different opinion, that you can deliver bad news, that you can request an explanation, and that you will be treated with dignity.

Open communication does not mean everyone always agrees. It means disagreement does not destroy communication.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

1. Explain why communication culture affects organizational effectiveness.
2. Identify behaviors that encourage open and honest communication.
3. Communicate constructive feedback without attacking people.
4. Respond positively to contrary viewpoints.
5. Distinguish disagreement from personal conflict.
6. Explain why appropriate access to information strengthens trust.
7. Practice listening to understand rather than only preparing to respond.
8. Use clarification, paraphrasing, and summarization to improve understanding.
9. Recognize behaviors that unintentionally shut down communication.
10. Develop practical habits that create a healthier communication culture within your church, ministry, family, or team.

Chapter Overview

The previous session focused primarily upon becoming a better communicator. This session goes further. It asks: What kind of communication atmosphere are we creating? An organization may contain talented people who share the same goals and still fail to reach its potential if communication remains disorganized, closed, defensive, delayed, or unclear. Leaders therefore have a responsibility to cultivate open communication. This involves communicating in a timely manner, giving constructive feedback, clarifying vague messages, speaking directly without unnecessary aggression, expressing important concerns with love and humility, and focusing on problems without demeaning people. Open communication also requires healthy disagreement. People must be allowed to complete their thoughts, clarify their positions, substantiate claims, and identify areas of agreement before concentrating upon disagreement. Healthy communication cultures also provide people with the information necessary to fulfill their responsibilities and intentionally develop listening skills. Ultimately, the priority is: *First, seek to understand. Then, seek to be understood.*

Theology Corner

Truth and Grace Belong Together: John 1:14 describes Jesus as being full of grace and truth. That combination provides an important model for Christian communication. Truth without grace can become harsh. Grace without truth can become dishonest. Jesus embodies both. This means an open Christian communication environment cannot simply be one where: "Everybody says whatever they want." Christian openness remains governed by: Love - Truth - Wisdom - Self-control - Respect - Humility - Dignity. The objective is not unrestricted speech. The objective is truthful communication within Christlike relationships.

Ephesians 4:15 describes this balance as: *"Speaking the truth in love."*

We must not use love as an excuse to avoid necessary truth. Neither should we use truth as an excuse for unnecessary cruelty.

Christian communication reaches maturity when truth and grace are not competitors but partners.

Digging Inside Scripture

Read Ephesians 4:15, 25–32.
While you are reading, note the principles that ought to regulate communication between believers.
In verse 15: What is the proper way to communicate the truth?

Verse 25: What ought to take the place of falsehood?

What is the reason that Paul associates truthful communication with our relationships with one another?

Verse 29: What kind of speech should not come from believers?

What should our words accomplish instead?

Verse 31: Identify attitudes that damage healthy communication:

Verse 32: What qualities should replace them?

Apply It: Which instruction from this passage would most improve communication in your relationships?

Why?

Word Study

Listening and hearing are not identical. Hearing receives words. Listening pursues meaning. The chapter describes several practices that strengthen listening: Listen to understand. Listen to the entire message. Ask open-ended questions. Paraphrase what you believe you heard. Use summary statements. Do not interrupt. Listen willingly to disagreement. Ask clarifying questions. Effective listening therefore requires intentional participation.

The Listening Sequence: HEAR → LISTEN → UNDERSTAND → INTERPRET → RESPOND. Notice that *respond* appears last.

Where does your normal process break down?

☐ Hearing
☐ Listening
☐ Understanding
☐ Interpreting
☐ Responding
Explain:

Leadership Insight

Leaders Teach People Whether It Is Safe to Tell Them the Truth: Imagine that someone brings a leader bad news. The leader becomes angry. The messenger is embarrassed. The leader criticizes the person publicly. What has everyone watching just learned? Do not bring the leader bad news. The leader may continue claiming to have an open-door policy, but behavior has communicated something entirely different. People study leaders. They notice what happens when someone: Disagrees - Asks questions - Admits failure - Reports a problem - Offers another idea - Requests clarification - Communicates disappointing information. Every leadership response is teaching the organization something about communication.

If people consistently hide important information from you, do not automatically assume they have a communication problem. Ask whether your responses have trained them to remain silent.

Principle of the Kingdom

Understanding Must Precede Effective Response: A common communication mistake is responding to something before we understand it. We hear the beginning of a statement. We assume the conclusion. Then we respond to our assumption rather than to what the person actually meant. Kingdom communication slows the process down. Listen first, then clarify for understanding, and only after you have clear understanding should you respond.

LISTEN - CLARIFY - UNDERSTAND - RESPOND

Proverbs 18:13 warns against answering before listening. Therefore:
The speed of your response is less important than the accuracy of your understanding. Sometimes the wisest response is: "Help me understand what you mean."

Walking it out

Open Communication Assessment: Rate each statement from 1 to 5.
1 = Rarely True - 5 = Consistently True

- People can disagree with me without fearing my reaction. _____
- I communicate important information promptly. _____
- I respond to communication promptly. _____
- I give people my full attention. _____

My strongest area is:

_____

My weakest area is:

_____

One behavior that may discourage people from communicating openly with me is:

_____

One change I will make is:

_____

Individual Reflection

1. Do people feel comfortable disagreeing with me?

_____

2. What happens emotionally inside me when someone challenges my opinion?

_____

3. Do I interrupt people?

_____

4. Do I listen for areas of agreement or immediately look for weaknesses in another person's argument?

_____

5. Am I known for responding to messages promptly?

_____

6. Have I ever punished someone emotionally for bringing me bad news?

_____

7. Do I unnecessarily withhold information?

_____

8. Do I give people enough information to succeed?

_____

9. Can someone tell from my body language when I disagree with them?

10. If I asked those closest to me whether I was approachable, what would they say?

Why?

Spiritual Formation Exercise

The No-Defense Conversation: Choose one trustworthy person with whom you regularly interact. Ask: **"**What is one thing I could do to communicate better with you?" Then follow these rules: Do not interrupt. Do not explain. Do not justify. Do not correct their perception. Do not tell them what they do wrong. Listen. When they finish, say: **"**What I hear you saying is..." Summarize what you heard. Then ask: "Did I understand you correctly?" Finally say: "Thank you for telling me." Afterward record: What I heard:

My initial internal reaction:

What I learned:

What I will change:

Living the Principle

For the next seven days, intentionally practice these communication habits:

Respond promptly. Do not unnecessarily leave people waiting.

Give full attention. Do not multitask during meaningful conversations.

Ask before assuming. Use clarifying questions.

Summarize before disagreeing. Before presenting your position, accurately restate theirs.

Communicate even when there is no update. Silence creates uncertainty. Ask: "Who needs to know?" Then communicate with the appropriate people.

Listen for emotion as well as information. Sometimes the feeling behind the words helps explain the words themselves.

The chapter repeatedly emphasizes these practical disciplines as part of creating an atmosphere where communication remains open and productive.

At the end of the week: Which practice made the greatest difference?

What did you discover?

Weekly Declaration

Each day this week declare the following out loud: I am going to create an atmosphere characterized by open, honest, respectful and Christ-centered communication. Before replying I will listen, I will aim to understand before defending my own views and will see disagreement as an opportunity for greater clarity not as a personal attack. I will make sure to communicate any necessary information, respond promptly, ask questions to clarify things and give people my full attention. I will concentrate on the issues without putting people down. I will speak the truth with love, receive feedback with humility and use my influence to build trust. Thanks to God's grace, people will come to know that they can tell me the truth and at the same time be treated with dignity, grace and respect.

Guided Prayer

Father, show me where pride interferes with my ability to listen. ***Pause.*** *Show me where defensiveness prevents honest communication.* ***Pause.*** *Reveal anyone who may be hesitant to speak honestly with me because of how I have responded in the past.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where I have interrupted, assumed, dismissed, or misunderstood.* ***Pause.*** *Reveal where I have withheld information that someone needed to succeed.* ***Pause.*** *Father, make me approachable. Teach me to listen without becoming defensive. Teach me to receive correction. Teach me to handle disagreement graciously. Teach me to communicate difficult information lovingly. Teach me to value people above my need to win arguments. Give me wisdom to know when to speak, when to listen, when to ask questions, and when to remain silent. May my communication strengthen Your Church and glorify Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Shepherd's Challenge

Find Out Whether People Can Tell You the Truth: Many people believe they are approachable. Fewer have actually asked anyone. Your challenge this week is to ask a mature, trustworthy person: "Do you feel that you can disagree with me or tell me something I don't want to hear without worrying about how I will respond?" Do not ask unless you are prepared to hear the answer. If the answer is yes, ask: "What do I do that makes you feel safe communicating honestly with me?" If the answer is no or sometimes, ask: "What do I do that makes honest communication difficult?" Then listen. Do not defend yourself. Your assignment is not to prove their perception wrong. Your assignment is to learn.

What did I discover?

_____

_____

What will I change?

_____

_____

From The Shepherd's Heart

One of the greatest gifts you can give another person is permission to tell you the truth. That sounds simple until the truth being communicated is something you do not want to hear. Everybody appreciates honesty when honesty agrees with them. Maturity is demonstrated when someone can disagree with us and we still treat them with dignity. Leaders, hear me carefully: If people are afraid to bring you problems, eventually you will become the last person to know that a problem exists. If people cannot question an idea, weak ideas will survive longer than they should. If people cannot bring bad news, you will make decisions without necessary information. If people cannot disagree respectfully, artificial agreement will masquerade as unity. That is dangerous. Real unity does not require everybody to have the same opinion about everything.

Christian unity requires us to remain committed to Christ and to one another while we work through our differences in truth and love. So, listen, ask questions, and let people finish. Do not humiliate the person who brings a concern. Do not confuse disagreement with rebellion. Do not demand that everyone see everything exactly as you do. And when you are wrong, possess enough humility to say: *"I was wrong."* An open door means very little if people are afraid of what happens after they walk through it.

Worship Response

Jesus always knew what people were thinking, yet He still asked questions. He listened. He allowed people to speak. He responded to their needs. He confronted when necessary. He extended grace. He communicated truth. Take several moments and worship Jesus for the way He relates to people. Then respond: Jesus, teach me to listen like You by

_____

Teach me to respond to disagreement by

_____

Teach me to communicate truth with

_____

I surrender my defensiveness concerning

_____

I ask You to make me more approachable by

Spend several quiet moments allowing the Holy Spirit to speak.

Journal

What did the Holy Spirit emphasize during this session?

What communication behavior do I most need to change?

Who may find it difficult to communicate openly with me? Why?

How do I normally respond when someone disagrees with me?

Where could I communicate more openly?

My Open Communication Commitment: I will become more intentional about:

I will listen more carefully by:

I will handle disagreement differently by:

My Prayer

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

Companion Workbook

The Disciples Journey

SESSION 6 - FOCUS ON THE TEAM

Prepare the Sanctuary

The Kingdom of God was never designed to be advanced through isolated individuals. Jesus formed a community of disciples. The early Church functioned as a body. Spiritual gifts were distributed among many believers. Ministry requires people who recognize that what God has placed within each person contributes to something larger than any one individual could accomplish alone. Before beginning this session, consider: Do I primarily think about my role, my responsibility, my recognition, and my success - or do I think about the health and success of the entire team?

Opening Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for allowing me to serve alongside others in Your Kingdom. Deliver me from selfish ambition, unhealthy competition, pride, insecurity, and the desire for personal recognition. Teach me to value every member of the team. Help me recognize the gifts, strengths, perspectives, and contributions You have placed in others. Give me humility to receive their ideas, courage to address problems, wisdom to resolve conflict, and generosity to share credit. Teach me to cooperate rather than compete. Help me become dependable, coachable, encouraging, accountable, and committed to the mission You have entrusted to us. Make me the kind of team member who makes the entire team stronger. May everything we accomplish together bring glory to Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Opening Scripture

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."
1 Corinthians 12:27

Paul's picture of the Church as a body destroys the illusion of independent Christianity. Every part matters. No part is the whole. Every part contributes. Every part needs others. A healthy body requires healthy relationships between its members. Likewise, a healthy ministry requires people who understand: I have value. You have value. We need one another. Our mission is greater than any individual role.

Consider: Do you naturally think more independently or interdependently?

How does your approach affect the teams on which you serve?

The Main Point

Healthy teams are created when leaders and members value one another and cooperate rather than compete. We are better together when we understand the mission, embrace our roles, and share responsibility. Our teams are healthier when we build trust, resolve conflict, develop one another, and recognize that together we can accomplish more than they can separately.

The focus must move from: Me to We. From: My ministry to Our mission. From: My success to Our success. From: My recognition to Christ's glory. A team becomes stronger when every member asks: "What can I contribute to help us fulfill what God has called us to accomplish together?"

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

1. Explain why team health affects organizational and ministry health.
2. Identify characteristics of an environment conducive to teamwork.
3. Distinguish cooperation from unhealthy internal competition.
4. Explain why mission, vision, roles, and responsibilities must be clear.
5. Recognize the value of every team member's contribution.
6. Explain the importance of interaction and interdependence.
7. Identify practical ways to build trust within a team.
8. Explain why appropriate conflict can contribute to team growth.
9. Recognize the importance of developing, coaching, protecting, and encouraging team members.
10. Evaluate your contribution to the health and effectiveness of the teams on which you serve.

Chapter Overview

Excellent team leadership requires sustained attention to the welfare and effectiveness of the team. Creating that environment is not solely the leader's responsibility. Leaders and members share responsibility for developing a culture where people cooperate, receive necessary resources, exercise appropriate authority, evaluate performance, and lead by example. Effective teams understand their mission and vision. Members know their roles and how those responsibilities contribute to the larger purpose. They are invited to contribute ideas, participate appropriately in decisions, establish performance goals, evaluate effectiveness, and appreciate differences. Healthy teams also value every member. They encourage interaction. They develop interdependence. They share credit. They support team decisions. They involve the appropriate people in decision-making. And when success comes, they celebrate it together. The objective is not simply to assemble talented individuals. It is to develop people who can become something stronger together.

Theology Corner

One Body, Many Members: Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. Paul's theology of the Body of Christ gives us a biblical foundation for teamwork. The body contains many parts. The parts are different. Their functions are different. Their visibility is different. Yet their value comes from their relationship to the body. Paul confronts two destructive attitudes. The first says: "Because I am not like you, I do not belong." That is insecurity. The second says: "Because you are not like me, I do not need you." That is pride. Both damage the body. Kingdom teamwork requires us to reject both. I do not need your gift in order to validate mine. Your strength does not diminish my value. My responsibility does not make me superior. Your role does not make you inferior. God intentionally created diversity within His Body.

Unity does not require sameness. Biblical unity allows different people, gifts, personalities, and responsibilities to function together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ for a common Kingdom purpose.

Digging Inside Scripture

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–27 and Ecclesiastes 4:9–12.

1 Corinthians 12
What image does Paul use to describe believers functioning together?

Why does a body need different parts?

What happens when one part suffers?

What happens when one part is honored?

What does this teach about individualism within ministry?

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12
Why are two better than one?

What happens when one person falls?

What principle do you see in the statement about a cord of three strands?

Apply It: What strength does someone on your team possess that you do not?

How does that person's strength make the team better?

Word Study

Synergy describes a combined effect that is greater than what the individual parts would normally produce separately. In healthy teamwork: 1 + 1 can produce more than 2. This is because strengths complement weaknesses. Ideas sharpen ideas. Encouragement strengthens endurance. Accountability improves performance. Different perspectives expose blind spots. Shared responsibility expands capacity. The chapter describes synergy as the combined effort of team members becoming greater than the individual parts and connects it with genuine interdependence.

What can your current team accomplish together that you could not accomplish alone?

What prevents greater synergy on your team?

What could you personally do to strengthen it?

Leadership Insight

Your Job Is Not to Be the Team - Your Job Is to Strengthen the Team: Some leaders unintentionally weaken their teams by becoming indispensable. Everything requires their approval. Every decision comes through them. Every idea originates with them. Every problem is brought to them. Every visible success centers around them. That may look like strong leadership. Often, it is weak team development.

Healthy leaders provide:

- Clarity without unnecessary control.
- Authority with accountability.
- Direction with participation.
- Standards with support.
- Coaching without creating dependency.

Strong leaders do not need to demonstrate that they can do everything. They develop people who can accomplish things without constant supervision.

If the team cannot function without you, you may have built dependence rather than leadership.

Principle of the Kingdom

We Are Stronger When Every Part Does Its Share: Ephesians 4 describes the Body growing as each part does its work. This establishes a Kingdom principle: *Participation produces strength*. A healthy team does not consist of one person doing everything while everyone else watches. Neither does it consist of individuals independently pursuing personal agendas. Every member contributes toward a common purpose. Therefore: My gift matters. Your gift matters. My responsibility matters. Your responsibility matters. But the mission matters more than either of us individually. Kingdom teamwork occurs when individual gifts are willingly submitted to a shared Kingdom purpose.

Walking it out

Team Health Assessment: Rate your current team from 1 to 5.
1 = Significant Improvement Needed - 5 = Consistent Strength

Mission is clear. _____
Vision is understood. _____
Roles are clearly defined. _____

My strongest area:

My weakest area:

What specific actions can you take yourself to enhance the weakest area?

Individual Reflection

1. Do I behave as a cooperative team member?

2. Do I secretly compete with the other members of my team?

3. Is it possible for me to enjoy another person's success without myself feeling inferior?

4. Should I be given credit?

5. After a decision has been made, do I accept it as part of the team, even if my suggestion had not been chosen?

6. Have I got a clear understanding of the team's mission and vision?

7. Do I have a clear understanding of the role I am expected to play?

8. Is the value I place on team members who are not easily seen equal to the value I place on those who are easily seen?

9. Am I coachable?

10. Does being with my team make it stronger?

Why?

Spiritual Formation Exercise

Celebrate Another Person: One threat to teamwork is the human desire for recognition. This week's spiritual formation exercise is intentionally designed to confront that tendency. Choose someone on your team who contributes meaningfully. Preferably choose someone whose contribution is often overlooked. Do three things:

1. Identify their contribution. What do they do well?

---

2. Tell them specifically. Do not merely say, "Good job." Explain what you appreciate and why it matters.

3. Tell someone else. When appropriate, recognize that person's contribution publicly or to another leader. Then examine your heart. How did I feel celebrating someone else?

Was any jealousy or insecurity exposed?

What did God reveal?

Living the Principle

Practice these five team-building behaviors this week.

Cooperate. Help someone accomplish something that does not directly benefit your own assignment.

Include. Ask someone quieter or less assertive for their perspective.

Empower. If you lead others, give someone appropriate responsibility and enough authority to carry it out.

Support. Once a team decision has been properly made, support it rather than undermining it.

Celebrate. Recognize another person's contribution.

At the end of the week: Where did I cooperate?

Whom did I include?

Whom did I empower?

What decision did I support?

Whom did I celebrate?

What changed in me?

Weekly Declaration

Each day this week say out loud: I am a member of the Body of Christ and God has called me to serve with other people. I will choose to cooperate instead of competing. I will respect all the members of the team and show respect for the gifts which God has given to them. I will take on my share of the responsibility, accept criticism, support the decisions of the team, celebrate the successes of others, and carry out our shared mission faithfully. I will reject insecurity, selfish ambition, unnecessary competition, and the desire for personal recognition. I will use my gifts to strengthen other people and will let their gifts also strengthen me. Together, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we are able to achieve more for His Kingdom than we can achieve by ourselves.

Guided Prayer

Father, show me where selfish ambition has affected my teamwork. ***Pause.*** *Show me where I have competed with someone I should have supported.* ***Pause.*** *Reveal any jealousy concerning another person's gifts, opportunities, or recognition.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where I have failed to value someone else's contribution.* ***Pause.*** *Reveal where pride has prevented me from receiving help, input, or correction.* ***Pause.*** *Father, make me a healthy member of Your Body. Teach me to cooperate. Teach me to share credit. Teach me to celebrate others.*

Teach me to receive correction. Teach me to resolve conflict. Teach me to strengthen those around me. Give me wisdom to know when to lead, when to follow, when to speak, when to listen, and when to empower someone else. Make our team stronger because I am part of it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Shepherd's Challenge

Make the Team Better: Your challenge this week is simple: Do something that strengthens your team without increasing your personal recognition. Help someone succeed. Solve a problem quietly. Encourage someone who is struggling. Share information. Offer a resource. Take responsibility. Support another person's idea. Celebrate someone else's success. Then do not worry about receiving credit. Ask yourself: If nobody knows I did this except Jesus, is that enough?

What did I do?

_____

Who benefited?

_____

What did God teach me?

_____

From The Shepherd's Heart

There is a major difference between having a collection of talented people and having a team. Talent alone does not create teamwork. You can put gifted people in the same room and still accomplish very little if everyone is protecting territory, competing for recognition, refusing correction, withholding information, or pursuing personal agendas. A team becomes powerful when people decide: *The mission is bigger than me*. We need that understanding. There is no insignificant role in the Body of Christ. The person preaching is not more valuable to Jesus than the person quietly serving where few people ever notice. Visibility does not determine value. Title does not determine value. Platform does not determine value. Every person matters because every person matters to Christ. I encourage you as leaders to care about your people. Know them. Develop them. Coach them. Correct them when necessary. Fight for them when

appropriate. Recognize their contribution. Give them opportunities to grow. And do not become threatened. when someone you developed becomes excellent. That is not your failure. That is your success. And team members, do not sit back waiting for your leader to create the team you want. You help create it. Bring the right attitude. Bring cooperation. Bring faithfulness. Bring encouragement. Bring your gift. Bring your best. Then watch what God can accomplish when His people stop asking, "What about me?" and begin asking, "What can we accomplish together for His glory?"

Worship Response

Jesus could have accomplished His earthly ministry without involving imperfect people. Yet He called disciples. He taught them. Corrected them. Empowered them. Sent them. Trusted them with responsibility. And after His ascension, His mission continued through the people He had developed. Take several moments and worship Jesus as the Head of the Church. Then respond: Jesus, thank You for allowing me to be part of Your Body.

Thank You for the people You have placed around me, especially

_____

Forgive me for competing when I should have

_____

Teach me to strengthen my team by

_____

The gift in someone else I need to appreciate more is

_____

Journal

What Is God Saying to Me?

_____

_____

What kind of team member am I?

_____

_____

What do I contribute positively to my team?

What behavior of mine may weaken the team?

Whose contribution have I undervalued?

Where do I need to cooperate instead of compete?

Am I willing to support an idea that is better than mine?

Am I developing others or making them dependent upon me?

My Prayer

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

Companion Workbook

The Disciples Journey

SESSION 7 - BECOME A GREAT TEAM MEMBER

Prepare the Sanctuary

It is easy to evaluate leadership. It is more difficult to evaluate followership. We often know what we expect from those who lead us, but have we given equal attention to what those leaders should be able to expect from us? Every Christian operates under authority somewhere. Every leader follows someone. Every teacher remains a student. Every person who expects faithfulness from others must first learn to demonstrate faithfulness personally. Before beginning this session, ask yourself: If every member of my team served exactly as I do, what kind of team would we have?

Opening Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for every opportunity You have given me to serve. Teach me to become faithful whether I am leading or following. Remove pride, entitlement, selfish ambition, laziness, excuses, negativity, and the desire to receive recognition without accepting responsibility. Make me dependable. Make me teachable. Make me accountable. Give me passion for Your Kingdom, commitment to excellence, and a willingness to do more than what is merely required. Teach me to honor those who lead me, strengthen those who serve beside me, encourage those who struggle, and help without always waiting to be asked. May my presence make every team stronger. May my service honor Christ rather than promote myself. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Opening Scripture

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." - Colossians 3:23

This verse changes the meaning of service. The ultimate audience for Christian service is not: The pastor. The supervisor. The ministry leader. The congregation. The team. Our ultimate audience is *Jesus Christ.* That means our standard should not rise when someone important is watching and fall when nobody notices. Christian excellence asks: "If Jesus were personally receiving this service from me, what would I give Him?"

Consider: Does the quality of your work change depending upon who is watching?

What would change if you consistently viewed your responsibilities as service directly to Christ?

The Main Point

Great team members understand that faithful followership is part of Christian leadership. They are dependable, productive, positive, passionate, continually improving, willing to exceed minimum expectations, aligned with the mission, and open about their goals. They are willing to accept new challenges, and committed to strengthening the entire organization for the glory of Christ.

Great team members do not continually ask: "What is the minimum required?" They ask: "What contribution can I make?" They do not wait for someone to force them to grow. They pursue growth. They do not merely identify problems. They help solve them. They do not merely occupy positions. They strengthen the mission.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

1. Explain the relationship between good followership and good leadership.
2. Evaluate your personal dependability as a team member.
3. Distinguish activity from productive results.
4. Demonstrate positive leadership during adversity and change.
5. Identify behaviors that demonstrate passion and dedication.
6. Accept responsibility for continuous personal improvement.
7. Recognize opportunities to exceed minimum expectations.
8. Align personal contribution with organizational mission and vision.
9. Identify relational behaviors that increase team effectiveness.
10. Develop a practical plan for becoming a stronger team member beginning now.

Chapter Overview

People who are good followers have the ability to grow into good leaders since leadership involves an understanding of authority, responsibility, accountability, service, and teamwork. The chapter outlines ten ways of becoming an excellent team member. Outstanding team members gain a reputation for accomplishing tasks; they concentrate on results not on the amount of activity carried out. They keep a constructive attitude even in the face of change and difficulties. They show their passion and dedication in their actions. They aim at constant improvement. They do more than the minimum requirement. They know the organization's priorities and make sure that their contributions match them. They communicate their ministry goals, look for further challenges, and expand their experience by taking on duties in other areas when it is appropriate. However, effectiveness is not just a matter of performance. Good team members also control their egos, stay firmly focused on Christ's mission, show courtesy, apologize when needed, respect other people, build up relationships, encourage others, help proactively, refuse to misuse their position or information, and always work on becoming more self-aware. The aim is not simply to become a more valuable team member. It is to become a more Christlike servant.

Theology Corner

Jesus: The Servant King: Jesus Christ possessed ultimate authority. Yet He served. In John 13, Jesus washed His disciples' feet. The One they called: Teacher, Lord, and Master, took the position of a servant. Then He told them:

"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."
John 13:15

This radically reshapes Christian leadership. In the Kingdom, serving does not diminish leadership. Serving demonstrates it. Jesus did not need a title to validate His identity. He knew who He was. Because He was secure in His identity, He could serve without feeling diminished. This teaches us something important: Sometimes unwillingness to serve reveals insecurity more than importance.

The Christian who is secure in Christ does not need every assignment to demonstrate status. Faithful service itself becomes an expression of worship.

Digging Inside Scripture

Read John 13:1–17, Colossians 3:22–24, and Philippians 2:3–8.

John 13
Before Jesus washed the disciples' feet, what did He know regarding His identity?

_____

What was the task that He carried out?

_____

What can be learned from this regarding leadership and service?

_____

Colossians 3:23
How should Christians approach their work?

_____

Who is ultimately being served?

_____

How should this affect the quality of our service?

Philippians 2:3–4
What should believers reject?

How should we view others?

What interests should concern us besides our own?

Which passage most challenges your current attitude toward serving?

Why?

Word Study

Faithfulness involves reliability, trustworthiness, steadfastness, and consistency. A faithful person can be depended upon. Jesus taught:

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much."
Luke 16:10

Many people desire more. They want more responsibility, more authority, more influence, more opportunity, and more recognition. But Kingdom advancement often begins with another question: What are you doing with what God has already entrusted to you? Before seeking a larger assignment, examine the current one.

What has God presently entrusted to you?

Are you handling it faithfully?

What would greater faithfulness look like?

Leadership Insight

Become the Person Who Can Be Trusted with the Assignment: Every team needs people who can be given responsibility without creating additional anxiety for the leader. When an assignment is given, the leader should not have to continually wonder: Will it get done? Will they remember? Will they arrive? Will they communicate? Will they make excuses? Will they require constant supervision? Dependability creates trust. Trust creates opportunity. Opportunity creates greater responsibility. Greater responsibility develops leadership. The chapter calls this becoming a "*go to*" and "*get it done*" team member.

Do not spend all your energy asking for greater opportunity. Develop the character and competence that make greater opportunity reasonable.

Principle of the Kingdom

Faithfulness Precedes Greater Stewardship: We often pray: "Lord, give me more." God may respond: "What are you doing with what I already gave you?" Jesus repeatedly connected faithfulness in smaller responsibilities with greater stewardship. Therefore:

- Do not despise small assignments.
- Do not perform ordinary responsibilities carelessly.
- Do not wait for a title before demonstrating leadership.
- Do not wait for recognition before pursuing excellence.
- Do not wait for promotion before developing yourself.

Your current assignment may *be preparation for your next assignment.*
Kingdom excellence means giving God your best where He has placed you now.

Individual Reflection

1. Where is one place that people trust me?

2. Do I make excuses in the case where the assignments are not completed?

3. Are you busy or are you productive?

4. How does my attitude change as a result of organizational change?

5. Does my conduct show a passion for my duty in the ministry?

6. What steps am I presently taking to improve myself?

7. Am I regularly carrying out only what is required?

8. Do I understand the way in which my role contributes to the overall objective?

9. Am I relying on somebody else to bring about opportunities for my own growth?

10. Would my leader describe me as someone who can be trusted to get things done?

Why?

Spiritual Formation Exercise

Serve Without Recognition: This week, intentionally do something helpful that is: Necessary. Beneficial. Within appropriate boundaries. And unlikely to bring you recognition. Do not announce it. Do not post it. Do not make sure someone important sees it. Simply serve. Then examine your heart.

What did I do?

What was the reason for my selection?

_____

Did I in fact have a secret desire that someone should notice?

_____

What was my feeling when no recognition was given?

_____

What did this show regarding my motives?

_____

Finish this sentence: Jesus, teach me to serve You even when

_____

Living the Principle

The chapter expands team effectiveness beyond task performance into everyday relational conduct: check the ego, stay focused upon Christ's mission, show courtesy, apologize when necessary, respect others, build relationships, encourage people, help proactively, avoid exploiting position, and continually increase self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Choose five practices for this week.

___ Encourage someone.
___ Apologize to someone.
___ Assistance without it being requested.
___ Get there early and make sure you are prepared.
___ Finish the assignment earlier than scheduled.
___ Ask your leader for advice on how you can be of help.
___ Compliment someone's contribution.
___ Find out something that will make you more effective.
___ Establish a relationship with someone who is outside your usual circle.
___ Take responsibility and don't make an excuse.

At the end of the week: What did I practice?

_____

What happened?

_____

What did God reveal about me?

_____

Weekly Declaration

Read this out loud every day this week: I will become an excellent team member. I will be faithful, dependable, positive, productive, teachable, and committed to continuous improvement. I will not confuse activity with results or excuses with accountability. I will serve Jesus Christ through the responsibilities He has entrusted to me. I will honor leadership, strengthen my teammates, help others without always waiting to be asked, and pursue excellence whether anyone recognizes me or not. I will check my ego at the door, remain focused on the Kingdom mission, and allow God to use my present assignment to prepare me for whatever He chooses to entrust to me next.

Guided Prayer

Father, show me where I have been unreliable. ***Pause.*** *Show me where I have made excuses rather than accepted responsibility.* ***Pause.*** *Reveal where pride or ego has affected my service.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where I have desired recognition more than service.* ***Pause.*** *Reveal where I have become comfortable and stopped growing.* ***Pause.*** *Father, make me faithful. Make me dependable. Make me teachable. Give me passion for Your Kingdom. Help me finish what I start. Help me keep my commitments. Help me remain positive through adversity. Help me receive correction without defensiveness. Help me see needs and respond before someone has to ask. May I serve with excellence because I am ultimately serving Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Shepherd's Challenge

Stop Waiting for Someone to Ask: One characteristic of an excellent team member is the ability to recognize what needs to be done and respond appropriately. This week, look around. Ask:

- Who needs help?
- What problem can I help solve?
- What assignment needs support?
- What could make our team stronger?

- What can I do without being told?

Then act. Do not overstep authority. Do not interfere with someone else's responsibility. But within appropriate boundaries, become proactive. Your Shepherd's Challenge: Identify one legitimate need and respond before anyone asks you. The need I noticed:

_____

What I did:

_____

The result:

_____

What I learned:

_____

From The Shepherd's Heart

Everybody wants the opportunity. Everybody wants the promotion. Everybody wants to be trusted. Everybody wants greater responsibility. But before asking whether you are ready for more, ask yourself: What am I doing with what God has already placed in my hands? There is tremendous spiritual value in becoming dependable. There ought to be people in every ministry about whom the leader can say: "If I give it to them, I know it will get done." Be that person. If you say you will be there, be there. If you accept the assignment, finish it. If you make a mistake, own it. If you need help, ask. If you do not understand, seek clarification. If someone else succeeds, celebrate them. If you hurt someone, apologize. If you see a need you can legitimately meet, help. And never become so impressed with what you already know that you stop learning. The Kingdom of God does not need more people looking for titles. It needs faithful servants. Sometimes the greatest preparation for leadership is learning how to follow faithfully when you are not in charge. Do not despise that season. God may be developing something in you that authority alone could never produce. Serve well. Follow well. Learn continually. Love people. Honor Christ. And wherever God places you, *make the team better because you are there.*

Worship Response

Jesus did not just command service. He demonstrated it. He came not to be served, but to serve. He humbled Himself. He obeyed the Father. He completed His assignment. He remained faithful when obedience became costly. Take several moments and worship Jesus as the perfect Servant. Then respond:

Jesus, thank You for serving me through

Forgive me for seeking recognition when

Teach me to become more dependable in

The responsibility I need to take more seriously is

The person I can serve this week is

The area in which I need to grow is

Journal

What did the Holy Spirit emphasize during this session?

Would I describe myself as an excellent follower? Why or why not?

What excuses have I allowed myself to make?

Where have I confused being busy with being productive?

What does continuous improvement need to look like in my life?

Where can I begin doing more than the minimum?

How can I better support my leader?

How can I better support my teammates?

My Prayer

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

Companion Workbook

The Disciples Journey

SESSION 8 - VALUE DIVERSITY

Prepare the Sanctuary

God could have created a world in which everything looked the same. He did not. Creation displays extraordinary variety. Humanity reflects differences in culture, background, experience, personality, perspective, gifting, and expression. The challenge is not merely recognizing that differences exist. The challenge is learning to value people who are different from us. Before beginning this session, ask the Holy Spirit: Are there people I find easier to love, respect, trust, hear, or include simply because they are more like me?

Opening Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for the beautiful diversity of Your creation and for every person You have created in Your image. Search my heart. Expose every prejudice, stereotype, assumption, preference, tradition, fear, or attitude that prevents me from valuing people as You value them. Forgive me where I have confused familiarity with superiority. Forgive me where comfort has determined fellowship. Forgive me where I have tolerated barriers that Jesus died to destroy. Teach me to see people through the eyes of Christ. Give me humility to learn from people whose experiences are different from mine. Give me courage to stand against prejudice, exclusion, and division. Give me wisdom to distinguish biblical unity from human uniformity. May Your Church demonstrate to the world that people who are different can become one in Jesus Christ without ceasing to be beautifully different. Make me an instrument of that unity. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Opening Scripture

"For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." - Ephesians 2:14

Jesus does more than forgive individuals. He reconciles people. The gospel destroys barriers that sin erects between humanity and God, and between people. The Cross therefore confronts every attitude that says: "People like us belong here, but people like them do not." Christ is our peace.

Consider: What human barriers have you seen separate people whom Christ desires to unite?

Have any of those barriers influenced you?

How?

The Main Point

God values diversity, and His people should value what He values. Authentic Christian diversity intentionally welcomes and values people who are different from us while bringing those differences together in unity under Jesus Christ and His Kingdom purpose.

The goal is not sameness. The goal is unity. There can be diversity in: Culture - Background - Experience - Perspective - Personality - Gifts - Process. But there must never be diversity concerning our ultimate Kingdom purpose. There can be different people, different gifts, and different perspectives. But there is only One Lord, One Gospel, and One Kingdom purpose.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

1. Define diversity beyond outward demographic differences.
2. Explain why diversity reflects God's creative nature.
3. Describe Christ's work of destroying barriers between people.
4. Distinguish biblical unity from human uniformity.
5. Recognize how tradition, preference, comfort, and predictability can create unnecessary barriers.
6. Identify assumptions and stereotypes that may influence attitudes toward others.
7. Explain how diverse perspectives strengthen teams and churches.
8. Recognize behaviors and practices that unintentionally exclude people.
9. Develop intentional relationships with people whose backgrounds and experiences differ from your own.
10. Demonstrate the heart of Jesus Christ by intentionally valuing and including others.

Chapter Overview

Diversity involves much more than surrounding ourselves with people of different races or cultures. It involves an intentional openness toward people who are unlike us and a willingness to include those who might otherwise remain excluded. Creation itself demonstrates God's appreciation for variety. Yet humanity has often turned God-given differences into barriers. Race, economic status, culture, tradition, preference, comfort, convenience, and predictability are examples.

Christ came to tear down dividing walls. Therefore, Christians should not rebuild through prejudice, preference, or tradition what Christ destroyed through His Cross. The Church should demonstrate something extraordinary to the world: *People can be genuinely different and genuinely united.* Diversity strengthens the Church because different people bring different gifts, experiences, insights, perspectives, and strengths. The objective is not diversity for diversity's sake.

The objective is a people whose God-given differences contribute to a stronger expression of Christ's unified Body.

Theology Corner

Christ Has Broken Down the Wall: Ephesians 2 provides one of Scripture's great pictures of reconciliation. There was profound hostility between Jews and Gentiles. Yet Paul declares that Christ: *"has made the two groups one."* The solution was not for one group simply to become culturally identical to the other. The solution was Christ. Jesus became their peace. This gives us an essential theology of Christian diversity. Our unity is not grounded primarily in: Culture - Nationality - Economic status - Education - Personal preference - Tradition - Personality. Our unity is grounded in *Jesus Christ.* Therefore, biblical unity does not demand uniformity. God can bring together people with different backgrounds while giving them a shared identity and purpose in Jesus Christ.

The Cross does not eliminate all human differences since it gets rid of the hostility which causes differences to become barriers. The Church should thus serve as a clear example of the reality of reconciliation through Christ.

Digging Inside Scripture

Read Ephesians 2:13–22, Galatians 3:26–28, and Revelation 7:9–10.

Ephesians 2
Who is described as our peace?

What did Christ destroy?

What was created from previously divided peoples?

What can be inferred from this regarding the reconciling power of the gospel?

Galatians 3
What distinctions does Paul make?

What identity is common to all those distinctions?

Does the idea of unity among Christians imply that people give up their different backgrounds and experiences?

Explain:

Revelation 7
Who is standing before the throne?

What differences remain visible in John's description?

What unites this diverse multitude?

What does this picture suggest about the kind of Church we should desire to become now?

Word Study

Biblical *unity* should not be confused with uniformity. Uniformity says: "Become like us." Kingdom unity says: "Let us become like Christ together." Uniformity can require people to suppress legitimate differences. Unity allows different people to share a common Lord and purpose. This means Christian unity can contain:

- Different cultures.
- Different experiences.
- Different personalities.
- Different gifts.
- Different perspectives.
- Different methods.

Yet authentic Christian unity remains centered upon: Jesus Christ - Biblical truth - The Gospel - Kingdom purpose.

Have you ever confused unity with everyone doing things the way you prefer?

What happened?

What legitimate difference do you need to become more willing to appreciate?

Leadership Insight

Familiarity Is Not the Same as Superiority: Leaders naturally gravitate toward people they understand. People who communicate like us are easier to understand. People with similar backgrounds are easier to relate to. People who think like us often affirm our assumptions. That may feel comfortable. It can also create dangerous blind spots. A team composed entirely of people who think alike may repeatedly overlook the same problems. Diversity introduces different perspectives. Someone else may see what you cannot see. They may ask the question you never considered. They may recognize an obstacle invisible from your perspective. They may understand people you struggle to reach. Strong leaders therefore do not simply tolerate different perspectives. They learn to value them.

Do not surround yourself only with people who confirm what you already see. Include people who can help you see what you have been missing.

Principle of the Kingdom

Unity in Christ Is Stronger Than Human Difference: The world frequently divides people according to categories. The Kingdom brings people together under Christ. This does not mean differences disappear. It means differences no longer possess ultimate authority over our relationships. Therefore:

- Race does not outrank Christ.
- Culture does not outrank Christ.
- Economic status does not outrank Christ.
- Tradition does not outrank Christ.
- Preference does not outrank Christ.

- Comfort does not outrank Christ.

When our preferences become more important than fellowship with people Christ has received, something is spiritually wrong. The Kingdom declares: We may be different, but in Jesus Christ we belong to one another.

Walking it out

Diversity Self-Assessment: Rate yourself from 1 to 5.
1 = Significant Growth Needed - 5 = Consistent Strength

I intentionally build relationships with people different from me. _____
I can worship beside people whose cultural expression differs from mine. _____
I intentionally include people who might otherwise be overlooked. _____
I am willing to be mentored by or learn from someone different from me. _____
I am willing to mentor someone whose background differs from mine. _____

My strongest area:
_____
My greatest growth area:
_____
One assumption I need to examine:
_____
One action I will take:
_____

Individual Reflection

1. Who are the people I naturally feel most comfortable around?
_____
2. Why?
_____
3. With whom am I most unlikely to build relationships?
_____
4. Why?
_____

5. Has it ever happened that the traditions have become more important to me than reaching people?

---

6. Have I mixed my cultural preference with biblical truth?

---

7. How do I respond when someone challenges an assumption I have held for years?

---

8. Have I ever remained silent when someone else was being stereotyped or devalued?

---

9. Is my circle of meaningful relationships diverse?

---

10. What would greater Kingdom diversity look like in my life?

Spiritual Formation Exercise

Go beyond the comfortable boundary by this week spending some meaningful time with a person whose background or life experiences are different from your own. The aim is not to change them but to get to know them. You could ask questions such as:

- Tell me something you want me to know about your background
- Which experiences have influenced you the most?
- What do you hope that others will understand better about your culture or your experiences?
- Have you ever felt that you were excluded in church or ministry situations?
- What could Christians do to improve?

Now hear what they say. Don't argue about their experience. Don't at once compare it with your own. Don't tell them why they shouldn't feel that way. Just listen.

What surprised me?

What did I learn?

What assumption was challenged?

What did I appreciate?

What should I do differently?

Living the Principle

The chapter identifies practical ways to increase diversity within a team or organization. Apply them personally this week.

Examine your automatic thoughts. Identify assumptions or stereotypes that appear without deliberate thought.

Challenge prejudice. Do not quietly cooperate with comments or behaviors that demean others.

Examine humor. Ask whether jokes about human differences are exposing attitudes that need correction.

Speak for the overlooked. When someone's contribution is unfairly dismissed, help ensure it receives appropriate consideration.

Examine systems. Ask whether established practices unnecessarily exclude people.

Build a cross-cultural relationship. Develop a meaningful relationship with someone whose background differs from yours.

Diversify problem-solving. Invite different perspectives when making important decisions.

This week I will intentionally:

The person I will seek to know better is:

The perspective I need to hear is:

Weekly Declaration

Declare the following out loud every day this week: I believe that every individual has dignity in God's sight and that Jesus Christ has broken down the barriers of hostility which divide people. I oppose prejudice, pride, stereotypes, exclusion, and the idea of putting personal preference above the purposes of the Kingdom. I will deliberately show respect towards people who are different from myself. I will listen, acquire knowledge, include others, encourage them, and form relationships that go beyond the limits of my comfort. I will not insist on uniformity where God wants unity. I will celebrate diversity in culture, talents, experiences, and points of view while still staying firmly united with God's people in biblical truth and Kingdom purpose. I will help show the world the reconciling power of Jesus Christ.

Guided Prayer

Father, search me. Reveal every prejudice I recognize. **Pause.** Reveal every prejudice I do not yet recognize. **Pause.** Show me where tradition has become more important than people. **Pause.** Show me where comfort has limited fellowship. **Pause.** Show me where I have confused my preference with Your will. **Pause.** Bring to my mind anyone I have stereotyped, dismissed, ignored, or undervalued. **Pause.** Father, give me the heart of Jesus. Teach me to value people. Teach me to listen. Teach me to learn. Teach me to include. Give me courage to confront prejudice without becoming prideful myself. Give me humility to recognize my blind spots. Tear down every wall in my heart that Jesus died to destroy. Make my life evidence of the reconciling power of the cross.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Shepherd's Challenge

Leave Your Comfortable Circle: Look carefully at the people closest to you. Not acquaintances. Not people you occasionally greet. Look at the people whose:

- Opinions you seek.
- Advice you trust.
- Homes you enter.
- Tables you sit around.
- Stories you know.
- Perspectives influence you.

Now ask: How diverse is my circle? If everyone close to you looks like you, thinks like you, comes from the same background, shares the same experiences, and sees life through nearly the same lens, you may have created a comfortable circle, but you may also have created a limited one.

Your Shepherd's Challenge is: Intentionally begin one genuine relationship across a boundary you would not normally cross. Do not make someone your diversity project. Love them. Know them. Listen to them. Learn from them.

The boundary I will intentionally cross is:

_____

My first action will be:

_____

From The Shepherd's Heart

One of the easiest things in the world is to love people who are just like us. They understand our jokes. They know our traditions. They like our music. They understand our language. They see things the way we see them. That requires very little spiritual maturity. But Jesus did not command us merely to love people who make us comfortable. Look at the Cross. Jesus stretched His arms wide enough for the world. The Gospel was never intended to belong to one race, one culture, one economic class, one generation, one nation, one personality, or one preferred expression of worship. We must be careful that we do not rebuild with

tradition what Jesus tore down with His blood. There is strength in diversity. Someone who is different from you may see what you cannot see. Their experience may expose your blind spot. Their gift may strengthen your weakness. Their story may expand your compassion. Their perspective may help your ministry reach someone you would never have understood alone.

We do not need diversity in our ultimate purpose. Our purpose remains Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. But within that unity of purpose, there is room for a beautiful diversity of people whom God has created, redeemed, gifted, and called. Do not simply tolerate people who are different - value them. Do not merely permit them into the room. Listen to them. Do not simply say everyone is welcome. Make sure your life demonstrates it. The world has seen enough division. Let the Church show them what Jesus can do.

Worship Response

The Gospel gives us a picture of people from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne of God. Different people - One Savior. Different backgrounds - One redemption. Different languages - One worship. Take several moments and worship Jesus as the Savior whose Kingdom reaches beyond every human boundary. Then respond:

Jesus, thank You for loving people from

_____

Forgive me for allowing this preference to become a barrier:

_____

Teach me to value people who

_____

The assumption I surrender to You is

_____

The person or group I want to understand better is

_____

Use my life to demonstrate Your reconciling power by

_____

Journal

What did the Holy Spirit emphasize during this session?

What did I discover about my understanding of diversity?

What personal preference have I treated as though it were biblical truth?

What stereotype or assumption needs to be challenged?

Who have I unintentionally excluded?

Whose perspective do I need to hear?

Where has comfort prevented me from building relationships?

What would it look like for me to go out of my way to include someone who might otherwise be excluded?

Three Actions I Will Take

1. I will

2. I will

3. I will

My Prayer

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW
Companion Workbook
The Disciples Journey

SESSION 9 - LEARN TO EFFECTIVELY HANDLE CONFLICT

Prepare the Sanctuary

Conflict makes many people uncomfortable. Some attack. Some withdraw. Some become defensive. Some remain silent while resentment grows. Some recruit other people into the disagreement. Some pretend nothing happened. But avoiding conflict does not necessarily produce peace. Sometimes it only postpones the confrontation while allowing the offense to deepen. The mature Christian must learn two disciplines: What should I overlook? And: What must I confront? Before beginning this session, ask the Holy Spirit: Am I carrying an offense that needs to be released or confronting an issue that needs to be addressed?

Opening Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, search my heart. Reveal every offense, resentment, bitterness, pride, preference, prejudice, and unresolved conflict within me. Teach me not to become easily offended. Give me the security to know who I am in Christ so that I do not constantly need recognition, agreement, honor, or validation from others. Give me wisdom to distinguish between insignificant personal preferences and matters that genuinely require biblical confrontation. When confrontation is necessary, give me courage to address it. When something should be overlooked, give me maturity to release it. Keep revenge, pride, anger, and selfish motives out of my heart. Teach me to listen before responding, understand before judging, attack problems rather than people, and pursue

restoration rather than victory. Make me an instrument of reconciliation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Opening Scripture

"A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense."
Proverbs 19:11

Not every offense requires confrontation. Sometimes spiritual maturity is demonstrated by confronting. Sometimes spiritual maturity is demonstrated by overlooking. Wisdom knows the difference. Before reacting, ask:

- Is this sin or preference?
- Is this significant or merely irritating?
- Is this biblical or personal?
- Will confronting this help the person or just satisfy me?

Consider: Are you easily offended?

What kinds of situations most often offend you?

Why?

The Main Point

Conflict is inevitable, but division is not. Spiritually mature Christians learn to distinguish significant biblical issues from personal preferences. They learn how to overlook insignificant offenses, confront necessary issues with love and humility, and listen carefully. They attack problems rather than people, and pursue reconciliation that strengthens relationships and protects Kingdom purpose.

Conflict asks: "Who is right?" Reconciliation asks: "How can we honor Christ and move forward?" The goal is not winning. The goal is: Truth - Growth - Restoration - Unity - Christ's glory.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

1. Explain why conflict is unavoidable in human relationships.
2. Reframe conflict as a potential opportunity for growth.
3. Recognize the relationship between security in Christ and freedom from unnecessary offense.
4. Distinguish biblical concerns from preferences and opinions.
5. Identify pride, preference, and prejudice as potential sources of unnecessary conflict.
6. Apply biblical principles to confrontation.
7. Recognize the stages through which conflict escalates.
8. Select appropriate responses for different conflict situations.
9. Apply a practical conflict-resolution process.
10. Pursue reconciliation while preserving truth, dignity, unity, and Kingdom purpose.

Chapter Overview

Conflict is unavoidable wherever relationships exist. The objective is therefore not to eliminate every disagreement but to learn how to respond biblically. The chapter begins by challenging our tendency to become easily offended. Security in Christ produces humility because people who know who they are in Him do not require continual human recognition or validation. When an offense is insignificant, maturity may require overlooking it. When confrontation is biblically necessary, it should occur promptly but not impulsively, prayerfully rather than angrily, and with love, humility, grace, and a genuine desire for the other person's growth.

The chapter also identifies *pride, preference,* and *prejudice* as major sources of unnecessary offense. God creates unity in diversity and unity of purpose without requiring unity in every process. Finally, the chapter provides preventative strategies, stages of conflict, several conflict-management approaches, and a practical resolution model. The objective is always greater than simply ending an

argument. The objective is to protect relationships, preserve unity, strengthen the team, and honor Jesus Christ.

Theology Corner

Reconciliation Is Gospel Work: The gospel itself is a message of reconciliation. Sin created hostility between humanity and God. Christ came to reconcile. Paul writes:

"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ..."- 2 Corinthians 5:19

Christians therefore cannot proclaim reconciliation with God while continually refusing reconciliation with one another. Jesus also addressed interpersonal conflict directly in Matthew 18. When a brother or sister sins, Jesus does not teach us first to: Tell our friends. Post about it. Build a coalition. Avoid the person indefinitely. Retaliate. He directs us toward the person. This is because biblical confrontation seeks restoration.

The purpose of biblical confrontation is not punishment, humiliation, or revenge. It is truth expressed in love for the purpose of restoration.

Digging Inside Scripture

Read Matthew 18:15–17, Galatians 6:1, Proverbs 19:11, and Ephesians 4:26–32.

Matthew 18
If someone sins against you, where should the conversation begin?

Why is private conversation important?

What is the desired outcome?

Galatians 6:1
What should spiritually mature believers seek to do when someone is caught in sin?

In what spirit?

What warning is given to the person doing the restoring?

Proverbs 19:11
What sort of things is it possible for a person to do because of their wisdom?

What sorts of offences might be more easily overlooked?

Ephesians 4
What warning does Paul give concerning anger?

Which attitudes should believers get rid of?

Which is harder for you:
Overlooking insignificant offense _____
Confronting significant offense _____
Why?

Word Study

Reconciliation involves restoring relationship where hostility, alienation, or division has occurred. Reconciliation is more than: "We stopped arguing." People can stop speaking and still remain divided. Biblical reconciliation seeks something deeper: Truth acknowledged. Sin addressed where necessary. Forgiveness extended. Dignity preserved. Relationship restored where possible. Peace pursued. The Christian does not ask merely: "How do I end this conflict?" We ask: "How can Christ be honored through the way this conflict is resolved?"

What happened?

What remains unresolved?

What would reconciliation require from you?

What would require cooperation from the other person?

Leadership Insight

Do Not Major in the Minors: One of the fastest ways to create unnecessary conflict is to treat every preference as a principle. There is a difference between:

- Biblical truth and personal opinion.
- Purpose and process.
- Sin and irritation.
- Conviction and preference.

Mature leaders learn the difference.

The chapter uses a simple illustration: Two people may clean the same house differently. One begins upstairs and another downstairs. If both approaches honor God and the house is properly cleaned, the process does not have to be identical. Some leaders create unnecessary conflict because they do not merely require the right outcome. They require: "Do it exactly the way I would do it." That can destroy creativity, trust, ownership, and teamwork.

Do not turn your preference into someone else's commandment.

Principle of the Kingdom

Purpose Must Remain Greater Than Preference: Many conflicts become destructive because people lose sight of the mission. The argument becomes more important than the objective. Being right becomes more important than relationship. Process becomes more important than purpose. Personal recognition becomes more important than Christ's glory. Ask: What are we actually trying to accomplish? Then: Does this disagreement prevent us from accomplishing it? If the process is biblical and the purpose is being accomplished, we should be very careful about creating conflict just because someone chose a different method. Kingdom maturity says: "It does not have to be my way for God to use it."

Walking it out

The Offense Filter: Think of one current or recent offense. Write it here:

_____

Now evaluate it. 1. Is this clearly a biblical issue? Explain:

_____

2. Is this primarily a personal preference? Yes ___ No ___
3. Has pride contributed to my reaction? Yes ___ No ___
How?

_____

4. Has prejudice or a preconception contributed? Yes ___. No ___
How?

_____

5. Is the issue significant enough to require confrontation? Yes ___ No ___
6. Can I genuinely overlook it without becoming resentful? Yes ___ No ___
7. If confrontation is necessary, what is my motive?

_____

8. Can I approach the person with love, humility, and grace? Yes ___ Not yet ___
Based upon the Word of God, my next action is:

_____

Individual Reflection

1. Do I find it easy to be offended?

_____

2. What does the fact that I have given that answer show about my security in Christ?

_____

3. Am I confusing disagreement with disrespect?

_____

4. Are preferences to be mixed up with biblical principles?

_____

5. Do I shun the conflict that is necessary?

_____

6. Am I confronting too soon?

_____

7. If a person confronts me, do I then become defensive?

_____

8. Have I ever confronted someone simply because I wished for revenge or vindication?

---

9. Do I attack problems or people?

---

10. Is there a relationship currently waiting for me to take a biblical step toward resolution?

Spiritual Formation Exercise

Pride, Preference, or Principle? For the next seven days, whenever irritation or offense occurs, stop before reacting. Ask:

PRIDE - Is my ego involved? Do I feel dishonored, ignored, unappreciated, or disrespected?

PREFERENCE - Do I simply want something done my way? Is another approach actually sinful or merely different?

PREJUDICE - Am I making assumptions about this person because of some preconceived judgment?

PRINCIPLE - Is there a clear biblical principle at stake?

PURPOSE - What response would best honor Jesus and protect Kingdom purpose?

At the end of the week: What pattern did I discover?

Which category caused most of my offenses?
Pride ___
Preference ___
Prejudice ___
Genuine principle ___
What is God teaching me?

Living the Principle

The chapter presents several legitimate ways of managing conflict depending upon the circumstances: decisive authority when urgent action is necessary, yielding when wrong or when the issue matters substantially more to the other person, compromise, temporary postponement, gaining another perspective, and collaboration toward a win-win resolution. Before addressing your next conflict, ask:

How important is this issue?

_____

How important is the relationship?

_____

Am I wrong?

_____

Do emotions need time to settle?

_____

Do I understand the other person's perspective?

_____

Is compromise biblically appropriate?

_____

Would collaboration produce a stronger long-term solution?

_____

My intended approach:

_____

Why?

_____

Weekly Declaration

Every day this week say the following out loud: I am secure in my identity because of Jesus Christ. I have no need to be easily offended, to be constantly recognized, or to have my views proven correct. I will tell the difference between biblical principles and personal preferences. I will ignore trivial offences and at the same time bravely deal with important matters when it is necessary. I will deal with people in a way that is full of love, humility, grace and wish for restoration rather than seeking revenge. I reject pride, prejudice, bitterness, unnecessary division and self-centered preference. I will listen before I reply, look for understanding

first, focus on the problems not on the people, keep everyone's dignity and work towards reconciliation. I choose unity in Christ and our common purpose in the Kingdom over the need for everything to be done my way.

Guided Prayer

Father, show me where I am easily offended. ***Pause.*** *Show me where pride has magnified something insignificant.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where preference has masqueraded as principle.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where prejudice has influenced my judgment.* ***Pause.*** *Bring to my mind anyone I need to forgive.* ***Pause.*** *Bring to my mind anyone I need to confront biblically.* ***Pause.*** *Show me anyone I have offended and need to approach.* ***Pause.*** *Father, give me courage without aggression. Give me humility without fear. Give me truth without cruelty. Give me grace without compromise. Teach me to listen. Teach me to understand. Teach me to forgive. Teach me to apologize. Teach me to confront. Teach me to reconcile. May every conflict become an opportunity for greater maturity and deeper Christlikeness. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Shepherd's Challenge

Deal With It - Biblically: Your challenge this week is to stop allowing one unresolved issue to remain unresolved simply because dealing with it is uncomfortable. First determine: Should this be overlooked? If yes: Release it. Forgive. Move forward. If it cannot biblically be overlooked: Deal with it. Pray first. Examine your motives. Go privately. Listen. Speak truth. Remain humble. Preserve dignity. Seek reconciliation. Your objective is not: "I need to win." Your objective is: "Christ must be honored." The issue I need to address is:

_____

The biblical response is:

_____

The first action I will take is:

_____

From The Shepherd's Heart

If you are going to have relationships, you are going to have conflict. Someone will disappoint you. Someone will misunderstand you. Someone will disagree with you. Someone will say something you do not like. Someone will do something differently than you would have done it. The question is not whether offense will come. The question is: What will you do when it comes? Some things need to be confronted. But hear me carefully: *Some things simply need to be gotten over.* Not every irritation is spiritual warfare. Not every disagreement is rebellion. Not every different method is disobedience. Not every criticism is persecution. Sometimes we are offended because our pride was touched. Sometimes our preference was challenged. Sometimes somebody simply did not do it our way. We must become mature enough to know the difference.

And when genuine confrontation is necessary, remember why you are going. You are not going to punish. You are not going to embarrass. You are not going to prove superiority. You are not going to win. You are going because you love Jesus, you care about the person, and the issue is significant enough that leaving it unresolved would damage the relationship, the person, the testimony, or the mission. Go with grace. Go with humility. Go with truth. Listen before you speak. And always leave room for the possibility that you may not understand everything as clearly as you think you do. Sometimes the greatest victory in conflict is not proving who was right. *It is discovering how Christ can make the relationship stronger than it was before the conflict began.*

Worship Response

Jesus experienced rejection, misunderstanding, false accusation, betrayal, abandonment, ridicule, and hostility. Yet He never surrendered His character. He spoke truth. He extended grace. He confronted sin. He forgave His enemies. He remained obedient to the Father. Take several moments and worship Jesus as the Prince of Peace and the One who reconciled us to God. Then respond:

Jesus, I surrender this offense to You:

_____

The person I need to forgive is:

_____

The relationship I desire to see restored is:

The pride I need to surrender is:

The preference I have elevated too highly is:

Teach me to become a peacemaker by:

Journal

What did the Holy Spirit emphasize during this session?

What offense am I carrying?

Is it biblical, personal, or both?

What role has pride played?

What role has preference played?

What role has prejudice or assumption played?

Should I overlook this offense or confront it?

If confrontation is necessary, what should my motive be?

What might the situation look like from the other person's perspective?

My Prayer

My Conflict-Resolution Plan

The chapter provides a practical five-step resolution process:

LISTEN - allow the person to fully communicate.
SHARE - demonstrate that you heard and understood.
CLARIFY - identify and restate the actual problem.
PRESENT - develop possible solutions.
ASK - agree upon specific action toward resolution.

LISTEN **-** What do I need to hear?

_____

SHARE - How will I demonstrate understanding?

_____

CLARIFY - What is the real issue?

_____

PRESENT **-** What possible solutions exist?

_____

ASK - What specific action is needed?

_____

This process follows the conflict-resolution model developed in the chapter.

10 THINGS EVERY CHURCH MEMBER SHOULD KNOW

Companion Workbook

The Disciples Journey

SESSION 10 - WALK THE TALK

Prepare the Sanctuary

There comes a point when learning must become living. We can study leadership. Discuss discipleship. Memorize Scripture. Attend church. Complete workbooks. Agree with biblical principles. And still fail to live what we profess. Christian maturity is not measured merely by what we know. It is demonstrated by what we consistently obey. As we enter this final session, the question is no longer simply: "What have I learned?" The deeper question is: "What will I now live?"

Opening Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, thank You for everything You have taught me throughout this journey. Now give me the courage to live it. Do not allow truth to remain merely information in my mind. Transform my thoughts, attitudes, decisions, habits, relationships, leadership, and conduct. Teach me to take responsibility for what I can control and trust You with what I cannot. Help me reject entitlement, guard the voices influencing my life, pursue continual growth, think long-term, value people, discipline myself, walk humbly, serve others, maintain integrity, stand courageously, and pursue excellence even when nobody notices. May there be no contradiction between what I profess and how I live. Make my life a visible testimony of the transforming power of Jesus Christ.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Opening Scripture

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship." - Romans 12:1

Paul does not merely ask believers to give God their thoughts. He asks for their bodies. Why? Because eventually faith must become visible. What we believe must influence what we do, where we go, how we speak, and how we work. It must influence how we respond to situations, how we treat people, and how we behave when nobody is watching. Worship is not confined to what happens during a church service. *A surrendered life is worship.*

Consider: Where is there currently the greatest gap between what you believe and how you live?

_____

What would surrender look like in that area?

_____

The Main Point

Authentic Christian leadership requires consistency between biblical belief and daily behavior. We cannot control every circumstance, but we can choose how we respond. When our thoughts are governed by God's Word, they shape Godly decisions. Godly decisions produce obedient actions. Obedient actions produce Christ-honoring outcomes. And consistent obedience moves us toward God's purpose for our lives. The progression is:

THOUGHTS → DECISIONS → ACTIONS → OUTCOMES → DESTINY

Therefore: Think biblically - Choose wisely - Act obediently - Live consistently - Finish faithfully. Do not merely talk about Christianity. Walk the talk.

Learning Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, you should be able to:

1. Explain the relationship between thoughts, decisions, actions, outcomes, and destiny.
2. Distinguish uncontrollable circumstances from controllable responses.
3. Evaluate whether your attitudes reflect the perspective of Christ.
4. Identify influences that should and should not have significant access to your life.
5. Accept responsibility for personal and spiritual development.
6. Apply long-term biblical thinking to present decisions.
7. Demonstrate humility, servanthood, discipline, integrity, and excellence.
8. Respond to adversity in a way that demonstrates authentic faith.
9. Identify specific "rules of engagement" requiring greater development.
10. Create a practical commitment for consistently living what you profess.

Chapter Overview

Much of life lies outside our control. We cannot control every event, circumstance, disappointment, difficulty, or action of another person. But we can exercise responsibility over our response. We can choose criticism or gratitude, victimhood or faith, anxiety-producing behavior or a calming influence, unforgiveness or trust in Christ.

The chapter then moves from attitude to action. Christian leadership is a lifelong process requiring preparation, persistence, courage, strength, and willingness to endure the difficulty of transformation.

The chapter provides eighteen *Rules of Engagement* that bring together many principles developed throughout the book. They challenge us to reject entitlement, guard our influences, become the best version of ourselves, think long-term, value people, solve problems, develop discipline, pursue substance, walk humbly, do what is right, remain strong through adversity, live harmoniously, serve others, maintain integrity, stand alone when necessary, work excellently without recognition, accept assignments others avoid, and maintain a

truthful perspective. This final chapter asks: Will these principles remain ideas or become a way of life?

Theology Corner

Obedience Is Truth Made Visible: Jesus asked: **"***Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"* - Luke 6:46

That question exposes one of Christianity's greatest dangers: *Profession without practice.* James describes the same problem:

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."
James 1:22

Knowledge alone does not equal maturity. Agreement alone does not equal obedience. Conviction alone does not equal transformation. The Word must become flesh in our daily behavior. Jesus said that the wise person hears His words *and puts them into practice.* Therefore, authentic discipleship requires movement from: Revelation to Conviction to Decision to Obedience to Transformation.

Biblical truth reaches its intended purpose when what God has revealed becomes what His people actually live.

Digging Inside Scripture

Read Romans 12:1–2, James 1:22–25, Luke 6:46–49, and Colossians 3:17.

Romans 12
What are those who believe commanded to offer to God?

_____

How does transformation occur?

_____

What is the relationship between transformed thinking and transformed living?

_____

James 1
What is the danger of hearing the Word without obeying it?

Luke 6
What question does Jesus put to those who address Him as Lord?

What sets the wise builder apart?

What happens when storms come?

Colossians 3
What areas of life are included in the phrase "whatever you do"?

Whose name should our lives represent?

Where is God asking you to move from knowing to doing?

Word Study

Integrity is wholeness. It describes consistency between: Belief and behavior - Words and actions - Private life and public life - Profession and practice. The chapter gives a penetrating definition: *"Integrity is who you are when no one else is around."* That means character is not determined primarily by how we behave when: The pastor is present. The leader is watching. The congregation sees us. The family is listening. Someone is evaluating our performance. The question is: Who am I when I believe nobody will ever know?

Who are you when nobody is watching?

Does your private life agree with your public profession?

Where is greater integrity needed?

Leadership Insight

You Cannot Lead Others Beyond the Life You Are Unwilling to Live: Eventually leadership credibility comes down to consistency. People pay attention to what we say, but they also examine our lives. People will notice if we teach the value of sacrifice yet lead a selfish life. They will notice if we preach humility but still ask for recognition. There's no denying that people will notice if we teach forgiveness yet hold grudges. They will notice if we demand excellence but ourselves produce only mediocrity. And eventually the contradiction will undermine our influence if we show integrity in public while giving in to compromise in private.

The most convincing leadership message you will ever deliver is the life you consistently live.

Principle of the Kingdom

Obedience Must Be Greater Than Consequences: One of the chapter's Rules of Engagement is: *"Do the right thing."* Another is: *"Don't be afraid to stand alone."* Together they establish an important Kingdom principle. We do not determine obedience by asking: Will people approve? Will this be comfortable? Will I receive recognition? Will everyone understand? Will this cost me? Will I lose relationships? Will I immediately succeed? The Christian asks: *"What honors Christ?"* Then obeys.

The chapter calls believers to choose biblical obedience regardless of consequences and to remain willing to stand alone when obedience requires it. Kingdom obedience does not require favorable consequences before saying yes to God.

Walking it out

Rules of Engagement Assessment: Rate yourself from 1 to 5.
1 = Significant Growth Needed - 5 = Consistent Strength

Look at the rules of engagement:

1. No Entitlements _____
2. Be Careful Who You Listen To _____
3. Become the Best "You" You Can Become _____
4. Focus on the Long Term _____
5. Focus on People, not Possessions _____
6. Focus on Problems, not People _____
7. Discipline Yourself _____
8. Focus on Substance, not Looks _____
9. Have a Humble Spirit _____
10. Do the Right Thing _____
11. Show Strength in Adversity _____
12. Live in Harmony with Those Around You _____
13. Be a Servant to Others _____
14. Live a Life of Integrity _____
15. Don't be Afraid to Stand Alone _____
16. Do Excellent Work while No One Notices _____
17. Do What Others Will Not Do _____
18. Have a Correct Prospective about What Is Going on Around You _____

These become my primary growth areas.

Individual Reflection

1. Is there any area where my words and lifestyle contradict each other?

---

2. What circumstance am I allowing to control my attitude?

---

3. Who currently has too much influence over my thinking?

---

4. In what situation have I acquired a feeling of entitlement?

---

5. Are my efforts being directed more towards criticizing problems or towards becoming part of the solution?

---

6. Which part of my life is without discipline?

7. Which decision should I assess from a long-term point of view?

8. What can my actions show about my faith when I am going through difficult times?

9. If I knew that no one would ever acknowledge my contribution, what changes would I make?

10. Which biblical belief are you prepared to uphold even if you have to be alone?

Spiritual Formation Exercise

The Integrity Audit. Divide a page into two columns. At the top of the first write: *WHAT I SAY I BELIEVE.* At the top of the second write: *WHAT MY LIFE DEMONSTRATES.*

Consider these areas: Prayer. Scripture. Money. Forgiveness. Family. Sexual purity. Work. Service. Humility. Generosity. Speech. Integrity. Church commitment. Relationships. Time. Leadership.

For each area ask: Do my actions agree with my profession? Do not condemn yourself. Do not excuse yourself. *Own the truth.* Then identify one discrepancy God wants you to address immediately.

The discrepancy is:

God's Word says:

My obedient response will be:

I will begin:

Living the Principle

The chapter ends by asking which three Rules of Engagement you are willing to improve in order to meet Christ's expectations for your ministry service. Choose exactly three.

Rule One: The Rule of Engagement:

Why does this require improvement?

What specific behavior will change?

How will I measure progress?

Rule Two: The Rule of Engagement:

Why does this require improvement?

What specific behavior will change?

How will I measure progress?

Rule Three: The Rule of Engagement:

Why does this require improvement?

What specific behavior will change?

How will I measure progress?

Weekly Declaration

Speak this out loud every day this week: I am going to live what I preach. I won't accept the idea of knowing the biblical truth unless I also live it. I will subject my thoughts to the authority of God's Word so that my decisions, actions, the results of my efforts, and my overall course of life will ever more honor Jesus Christ. I reject entitlement. I reject destructive influences and excuses. I reject selfishness, pride, and compromise. I reject mediocrity and the desire for human

recognition. Instead, I choose discipline, humility, servanthood, integrity, excellence, courage, perseverance, and obedience. I will do the right thing even when it is expensive, I will serve even if no one sees it, I will work well even if no one praises me, and I will stand by God's Word even if I have to stand all by myself. My life is dedicated to Jesus Christ and I will live in order that His glory may be seen.

Guided Prayer

Father, show me where my walk does not agree with my talk. ***Pause.*** *Show me where I have expected something I was unwilling to earn or develop.* ***Pause.*** *Reveal any voice influencing me more than Your Word.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where I am blaming others instead of improving myself.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where short-term gratification threatens long-term purpose. Reveal where I lack discipline.* ***Pause.*** *Reveal where I need greater humility.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where my integrity is being tested.* ***Pause.*** *Show me where I am afraid to stand alone.* ***Pause.*** *Father, I surrender my life again to You. To You, I surrender my thoughts, my attitudes. my decisions, my relationships, my work, my leadership, my reputation, and my future. Give me courage to do what is right. Give me strength in adversity. Give me humility in success. Give me discipline when nobody is watching. Give me excellence when nobody notices. Make my life consistent with my confession. May Jesus Christ be glorified through the person I become. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Shepherd's Challenge

Close One Gap: Do not attempt to change eighteen things this week. Change one. Identify the greatest gap between what you know and what you live. Maybe you know you should forgive, but have not forgiven. Maybe you know you should serve, but keep waiting to be recognized. Maybe you know you need discipline, but keep making excuses. Maybe you know a relationship needs repair, but continue postponing the conversation. Maybe you know what God told you to do, but fear the consequences. Your challenge is: Close one gap between conviction and conduct.

I know:

But I have been doing:

Therefore, this week I will:

I will begin on:

Do not merely write it. Do it.

From The Shepherd's Heart

We have reached the point where there is nothing left to do but live it. We can read another book. Attend another conference. Listen to another sermon. Complete another workbook. Underline another Scripture. Take another page of notes. And still remain unchanged. There comes a time when God says: *Now walk it out.*

The Christian life was never intended to become an accumulation of information. Truth is supposed to transform us. If you know you need to forgive, forgive. If you know you need to apologize, apologize. If you know you need greater discipline, begin today. If you know your attitude is wrong, change it. If you know someone has too much influence over your thinking, move them out of the front row. If you know God has given you an assignment, stop waiting for perfect circumstances. If nobody recognizes your work, keep doing excellent work. If nobody wants the assignment, serve anyway. If obedience costs you popularity, obey anyway. And if standing for God's Word means standing alone, then stand. You are never truly standing alone when you stand with Christ.

Do not spend your life trying to become somebody else. Become everything God intended *you* to become. There will always be somebody more gifted in some area. There will always be somebody with a larger platform. There will always be somebody who receives more applause. That is irrelevant. The question is: *Did you faithfully become the person Christ called you to become?* The world has heard enough Christian talk. It needs to see Christian lives. So, live what you profess. Practice what you preach. Obey what you know. And by the grace of God: *Walk the talk.*

Worship Response

Jesus perfectly walked what He taught. He taught obedience and obeyed the Father. He taught servanthood and washed feet. He taught sacrifice and gave His life. He taught forgiveness and forgave His enemies. He taught love and demonstrated it at the Cross. He did not merely explain truth. He embodied it. Take several moments and worship Jesus as the perfect example of obedience, integrity, humility, courage, and love. Then respond: Jesus, the truth I most need to live is

_____

The area I completely surrender to You is

_____

The influence I need to reconsider is

_____

The discipline I need to develop is

_____

The act of obedience I have delayed is

_____

The person You are calling me to become is

_____

Journal

What has God taught me through this session?

_____

_____

What has God taught me through this entire workbook?

_____

_____

What has changed in the way I think?

_____

_____

What has changed in the way I lead?

_____

_____

What has changed in the way I serve?

_____

_____

What has changed in the way I relate to others?

What must still change?

My Three Rules of Engagement
The three principles I am committing myself to strengthen are:
1.

My action:

2.

My action:

3.

My action:

My Personal Leadership Covenant

With Jesus Christ as my Lord, God's Word as my authority, and the Holy Spirit as my Helper, I commit myself to becoming an authentic Christian leader and team member.

I will pursue character before recognition. I will choose biblical truth over personal preference. I will value people. I will serve others. I will remain teachable. I will pursue excellence. I will accept responsibility. I will walk in humility. I will maintain integrity. I will remain faithful through adversity. I will guard the influences that shape my thinking. I will obey God's Word regardless of the consequences. I will do excellent work even when nobody notices. I will serve wherever Christ places me. I will continually seek to become the person He created me to become. And I will strive, by His grace, to ensure that my life. consistently demonstrates what my mouth declares.

My Prayer

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

My Commitment

I will walk the talk. What I believe will shape my decisions. My decisions will shape my actions. My actions will shape my outcomes. And through continual obedience to Jesus Christ, I will faithfully pursue the God-ordained purpose for my life. I offer myself as a living sacrifice for the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX A: Collins Principles for Daily Living

The principles listed below summarize the main truths presented in *10 Things Every Church Member Should* Know and its accompanying workbook. You should regularly review them and put them into practice with purpose.

1. Influence is a sacred trust. No matter whether or not I have a title, the way I think, the things I say, the decisions I make, and the actions I take will have an effect on other people, and I should use that effect to guide them to Jesus Christ.

2. Our character should bear the impact of influence. While giftedness can provide opportunities, it is one's character that decides whether people will place their trust in your influence.

3. Leadership starts with service. My method of judging leadership will be based on the faithfulness with which I serve others rather than on the number of people who serve me.

4. I will be the person that I want others to think I am. Before asking others to show faithfulness, humility, excellence, accountability, or commitment, I will make it my commitment to possess those qualities.

5. My thoughts have to obey God's word. I won't allow fear, assumptions, emotions, the situation, or the views of other people to have more influence on my thinking than biblical truth.

6. My attitude is my responsibility. Although I can't control all the circumstances, I do have the ability to select the attitude and response I adopt towards them.

7. An effective response can only follow a proper understanding. Before answering, I will listen, before forming an opinion I will ask, before making a judgement I will clarify, and before asking to be understood I will try to understand.

8. Truth and Grace go hand in hand. I will tell the truth without being cruel and at the same time show mercy without sacrificing the truth.

9. People should feel safe telling me the truth. I am going to make myself approachable, open to learning, and non-defensive in order that people may be honest when communicating with me.

10. The mission is greater than I am. I will choose to cooperate rather than compete. I will put the success of the Kingdom before anyone. All parts of the body are important.

11. The fact that something is visible has nothing to do with its value. I will respect the gifts, the contributions, and the dignity of each individual.

12. Faithfulness comes before greater stewardship. Instead of always asking God for something more, I will loyally manage the things He has already put into my hands.

13. I will make the team better. No matter where God puts me, I will contribute, encourage, help, strengthen, and serve.

14. Unity does not demand uniformity. I will accept the genuine differences there are regarding culture, experience, personality, gift, point of view, and method, yet stay united in regard to biblical truth and Kingdom purpose.

15. I will value what God values. I am going to reject prejudice, stereotypes, exclusion, and all unnecessary barriers and will deliberately appreciate those who are different from me.

16. Preference must never turn into a commandment. I will make the distinction between what is biblically true and what is a matter of personal preference and will not ask others to do everything exactly as I would.

17.All offenses do not have to be met with confrontation. I shall attain a level of maturity that enables me to disregard trivial offences without letting resentment stay in my heart.

18. Conflict that is necessary must be dealt with in a biblical way. If I have to confront someone, my aim will be truth, understanding, dignity, restoration, and reconciliation, not revenge or personal victory.

19. The purpose should be greater than preference. I will not let personal opinions, methods, comfort, or recognition be more important than the mission which Christ has committed to His Church.

20. I will not attack people. I will attack problems. Whenever there are difficulties, I will look for solutions rather than blaming others.

21. I'll leave my ego at the door. I have no need to get the credit, to have the last say, to win all arguments, or to be the most important person in the room.

22. I Shall Keep Growing. I will stay teachable, open to correction, keep my curiosity and remain committed to becoming all that God has called me to become.

23. Excellence does not need applause. I will do my very best for God even if no one notices, acknowledges, rewards, or thanks me.

24. Integrity is the way I act when no one is looking. The way in which I conduct myself in private ought to correspond with the statement I make in public.

25. Obedience should be greater than the consequences. I will carry out what is honorable to Christ even if following it becomes inconvenient, unpopular, misunderstood, or costly.

26. I will stand when standing is required. I will not lay down biblical convictions just because I have to stand alone.

27. I Will Undertake the Things That Others Are Not Willing to Do. I will not look down upon any task if it is intended to benefit people, promote the Church, and give honor to Christ.

28. **I will take responsibility for the truth regarding myself.** I won't be able to grow if I continue to defend what God is attempting to change.

29. What I believe should develop into what I live. It is not enough to just know Biblical truth. It should influence my attitudes, decisions, relationships, habits, and behavior.

30. I Will Walk the Talk. My ultimate testimony is not what I say about Jesus Christ, but the life I consistently live because Jesus Christ is Lord.

The Collins Principle: *Learn the truth. Live the truth. Lead through the truth. Launch - Help others discover the truth. Then repeat the process until Christ is formed in us and reproduced through us and others.*

Ad Gloriam Christi — For the Glory of Christ.

THE BISHOP'S BLESSING

May the Lord grant you the wisdom needed to recognize the truth, the humility to accept it, the courage to follow it, and the perseverance to put it into practice. Let Jesus Christ bring about in you a sense of character rather than a pursuit of position, service rather than recognition, unity rather than preference, and obedience rather than convenience.

May His grace be in your words, His strength be in your leadership, His encouragement be in your presence, and His honor in your life offered to Jesus Christ.

I pray you will be the type of church member who supports the leaders, forms teams, respects people, works towards reconciliation, welcomes biblical diversity, serves without seeking recognition, and remains faithfully committed to the Word of God.

No matter where God puts you, let people come to know something of Christ since you were there.

Now move forward in Christ. Not just on the basis of knowing what a member of a Christian church ought to be, but because of God's grace determined in you to become what He wants you to be. I pray that your life will have a positive influence within your congregation, will be a blessing to the Body of Christ, and will serve as an instrument in promoting His Kingdom.

For the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Ad Gloriam Christi - For the Glory of Christ.
Amen.

+Bishop Dr. Anthony Collins

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Thank you for reading "***10 Things Every Church Member Should Know***". If this book encouraged, challenged, or strengthened your walk with Christ, would you consider leaving a brief review? Your review:

- Helps other believers find this resource
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Blessings,
+Bishop Anthony Collins

All of our discipleship resources are available to the public at no charge through HOWICP.org. Our mission is to advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ by equipping believers to obey the Great Commission through biblical discipleship, spiritual formation, and leadership development.

If these resources have encouraged your walk with Christ or strengthened your ministry, we invite you to partner with us. Your tax-deductible donation enables us to continue developing and distributing these materials free of charge to individuals, churches, and ministries worldwide.

Thank you for helping us make disciples who make disciples - for the glory of God.



In Matthew 28, our Lord Jesus Christ gave His Church its mission, its vision, and its process for reaching the world. We know it as the Great Commission.

Jesus commanded His followers to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything He had commanded. This is not one ministry among many; it is the mission of the Church. It is the one assignment that every believer, every local church, and the Church universal has received directly from our risen King.

Sadly, much of the modern Church has neglected this divine responsibility. Disciple-making is rarely easy. It is often inconvenient, time-consuming, and personally demanding. It requires patience, commitment, and sacrifice. But the Kingdom of God has never been advanced through convenience. It has always been advanced through faithful men and women who were willing to invest their lives in others.

We cannot fully accomplish biblical discipleship from the pulpit alone. Preaching is essential, but it is only one part of the process. Neither can we effectively disciple someone through occasional meetings or brief conversations. Jesus did not simply teach crowds; He invested deeply in twelve men. He walked with them, answered their questions, corrected their misunderstandings, modeled obedience, and allowed them to observe His life day after day.

That remains the biblical pattern.

Discipleship is life shared together. It is walking alongside another believer, allowing them to see how we respond to life's victories, disappointments, temptations, and trials. It is opening God's Word together, praying together, encouraging one another, and holding each other accountable to grow in Christ.

For us, intentional discipleship means meeting regularly - ideally at least once each week - for meaningful conversation centered on Scripture, spiritual growth, and the practical challenges of living faithfully in a fallen world. It is helping believers develop the spiritual disciplines that deepen their intimacy with Jesus Christ and strengthen their walk with Him.

The goal is not simply to produce knowledgeable Christians. The goal is to develop mature disciples who, in turn, become disciple-makers themselves.

This is the multiplication strategy of the Kingdom.

At **Collins Discipleship Institute**, our passion is to equip individuals, churches, and Christian organizations with practical, biblically sound resources that cultivate mature, vibrant, and Spirit-empowered followers of Jesus Christ. Our desire is to strengthen believers in the essential areas of Christian life and ministry, so they can faithfully fulfill the Great Commission. We do not exist to produce better church members. We exist to produce mature disciples who make mature disciples.

We believe that the future strength of the Church will not be determined merely by the size of our congregations, but by the depth of our disciples. When disciples make disciples, churches become healthier, families become stronger, communities are transformed, and the Kingdom of Jesus Christ advances.

The Great Commission has never been rescinded. It remains the calling of every believer. May we not merely admire it, but may we obey it.

Contact us at info@HOWICP.org for more information. All discipleship resources are free. Visit https://www.howicp.org/cdi-resource-library/ for additional discipleship courses.