



WOW: Word Of the Week

Empower

November 3, 2021

During my years in full-time ministry, I often felt overwhelmed by the numerous, almost unending challenges of ministry. I was acutely aware of the challenge before the church in living out the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20. Every day, there is a growing need for the good news of Jesus Christ to be shared with the people around us in our communities. It is easy to become discouraged – there is only so much that one person can get done. When I read about the church described in the New Testament and how it took the gospel to the then-known world, I am reminded that Jesus intended the Great Commission to be carried out by all believers.

There are several important factors that can be identified in the New Testament description of the church. One factor that is often absent in the contemporary church is the training that is necessary so that disciples will make more disciples. Churches that make disciples who make more disciples have seen the importance of example, expectation, training, and support. Such churches have clearly defined processes in place to encourage, nourish, and challenge members to grow spiritually and multiply the number of disciples.

Paul's ministry provides a good example of how one can encourage, nourish, and challenge others. Paul trained leaders who would train other leaders (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul urged leaders to develop more leaders. Paul saw that God's plan for the church involved training more people who would communicate the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Four generations are mentioned in the reading of 2 Timothy 2.

Paul's relationship with Timothy, whom he called his son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2), shows that Paul's goal was to train the next generation who would teach future generations of disciples of Christ. Paul trained Timothy with his teachings, by spending time with him, and by being an example. Timothy witnessed Paul's troubles as Paul shared the gospel (as when Paul and Silas were beaten and jailed, Acts 16:24-34).

Paul shared the gospel with others as part of his mission ministry, but as Paul aged, he passed the torch by teaching and devoting time to individuals who would pass the torch to others. Paul encouraged, nourished, and challenged Timothy to grow and to teach others. Paul did not replace himself with someone who would do exactly what he had been doing. Paul trained others to do God's work within their own context and opportunities.

The "empowerment" model described in the Bible is still valid today. Future generations will be reached when the church learns the importance of training that involves teaching, spending time together in spiritual pursuits, and modeling as churches are filled with "disciples who make more disciples." May our churches renew their efforts to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, with disciples making disciples, until He returns!