

## Lesson 9

# Involvement

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,"  
Mark 10.45.

## Introduction

We have probably all heard of the 80/20 rule, where twenty percent of people inside a group do eighty percent of the work. We may have experienced this as a member of a community organization, on a team at work, or even in the church. Just about every congregation will have to confront this problem at one time or another. Those who do and are successful are often blessed with spiritual and numerical growth . . . excelling in their mission to change individual lives.

Getting involved in the local work is key to a vibrant spiritual life and it is fundamentally *how* we knit ourselves together with other Christians in the body. Immediately after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, Luke takes the time to describe his initial efforts in serving the Lord. Saul began to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah. He sought to be around other Christians, many of which were, initially, very afraid of him, Acts 9.20-30. What Saul chose to do after conversion was not intended to be unique as God has declared He wants all of those he has saved to serve Him, no matter the circumstances they find themselves in.

Involvement means having a *ministry mindset*, whereby we are filled with such gratitude for having been saved that we cannot help but live to serve others, 2 Corinthians 5.15. This is the kind of Christian who is always looking for an opportunity to be used by God . . . in whatever situation he or she finds himself.

What does Paul's early experience in ministry teach us about involvement inside the local congregation?

## We all should be sharing Jesus

Acts 9.19-20 reveals that very quickly upon his conversion that Paul *began proclaiming in the synagogues: "He is the Son of God."* There were no excuses. There was no worrying about what people would think. There was no questioning about whether he knew enough. He simply began by proclaiming "Jesus is the Messiah," Acts 9.22.

It is worthy of considering that at first, Paul did not have things all together. Luke says he had to grow in strength, 9.22a. The more he shared, the more he grew. While knowledge is obviously important and a certain amount is required before we go out to share the gospel, *a person learns by doing*. And the first few times may prove difficult. However, when someone asks a question we cannot answer, it will force us into the scriptures to find out the answer. It has been said that if a person chooses not to go to work for the Lord because they are afraid of making mistakes, they have already made the greatest mistake of their life – doing nothing.

Every Christian can speak about Jesus Christ, and should be able to show from the scriptures who He is and what He did by dying on the cross.

## Saul Made it a Priority to Connect with Other Believers

As Saul grew in his ability to teach Jesus, he met with heavy resistance among the Jews in Damascus. As the days turned into weeks and months, the Jews determined to do away with him, so the disciples took him by night and helped him escape the city through an opening in the wall, Acts 9.23-25. When he gets to Jerusalem, Saul tried to join the disciples but ran into trouble because they were afraid of him. Enter Barnabas, who vouches for him with the apostles. The apostles then accepted him into fellowship, after which *Saul was coming and going with them in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord*, Acts 9.28.

It is important to note that when Paul got to Jerusalem, he looked for a group of Christians to be with. He did not decide that he could do it all alone and be an independent with no congregational affiliation. He knew he needed other Christians for growth and encouragement. He knew he would be bringing his own abilities and experiences that he could use to build them up. It should be easy to see that Paul felt it of great importance to connect with other believers. And for that matter, so did Barnabas, who upon seeing the resistance to Saul went to work on his behalf so Saul could function effectively inside that local body.

Being involved in the local church is essential for your personal spiritual growth. There, you find the opportunity to be strengthened by other members with different experiences and levels of knowledge. Putting down spiritual roots is very important ... and being a part of the local body is the perfect place to do so. The acceptance and encouragement you receive are vital. You can benefit from the teaching of and learning from older members, Titus 2.2-6.

## How Can I Get Involved?

Christians have been saved to serve. Ephesians 4.11-12 mentions who our leaders equip us *for the work of ministry*. What is your ministry in your local congregation? What is the work God is calling you to do? Remember Ephesians 2.10:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

## Attend Bible Class and Worship

You have to be there to be involved. In almost every congregation there are those who neglect attendance and by doing so lose that vital connection to other members of the spiritual family. The Bible classes the congregation offers are important and should never be treated as optional. They are an opportunity to open the word and learn from those who are experienced in it. Your time spent with others in the word is just as important as your own personal time studying. The same is true for being present for worship. Every Sunday you have the opportunity to strengthen the connection with your God, as well as other believers who are on the journey of life. It is a shame when God's sons and daughters purposely neglect the assembly for weeks at a time for some trivial matter.

And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching, Hebrews 10.24-25.

## ***Teach or Assist a Children's Bible Class***

Growing churches often have lots of kids. You can help build the excitement by helping teach or co-teach a children's bible class. There is almost always a need for more help. Some who have been teaching for a while would love to have a break. There is behind-the-scenes work to be done in class prep, projects, the resource room, decoration, etc. You can play a significant role in shaping the next generation of believers by being in their presence, enthusiastically sharing Jesus, the word, and what Christianity means to you.

## ***Look for Ways to Encourage Those in Need***

James spoke of the essentiality of this in James 1.27: *Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world.* In the first century world, widows and orphans had a very difficult life, and would have had a very hard time having their needs met on their own. The basic principle here is to be doing good to others ... especially those who are living in difficulty. Most congregations have a number of widows and widowers. Do they need help around their home? Groceries bought? Snow plowed? Friendship and companionship?

Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap, because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. Let us not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith, Galatians 6.7-10.

## ***Look for a Ministry to Support***

Your congregation may be involved in local or foreign evangelism. Volunteer to help encourage those who are involved in that ministry ... or get involved yourself. Later this year Cornerstone will host the Ignite Youth Conference. Help is needed for marketing, registration, food preparation, activities, hospitality, and other things. You can help by your actual presence or a financial donation. Over the last forty years, Cornerstone has played a major role in foreign evangelism in Colombia. Some of you have traveled with us, personally encouraging the brethren there. Many more of you have contributed financially ... to help meet ongoing needs and emergency needs. The generosity and prayers of the Cornerstone church have made a significant difference in the work in Colombia!

There are many things inside the congregation where your help could be employed. Yard maintenance, building cleaning, ongoing baptistery maintenance, welcoming guests, small group ministry, helping in the AV room, contacting and encouraging new members, etc. are all some places you could help.

## **Conclusion**

As you think about your local congregation, make it your goal to blow up the 80/20 rule. Imagine what the congregation would be if we had the full and undivided attention and dedication of *every* member. Does the picture of Acts 2.42-47 come to mind? Wouldn't it be great to recreate our own version of the Acts 2 church? We can ... if we will all increase our participation level and get more involved!

## For Thought and Reflection

1. What is a *ministry mindset*? Do you feel you have one at this moment? What can you do to increase it?
2. If prompted with an opportunity right now, do you think you would be able to share Jesus with someone who asked? What would that look like or sound like?
3. After arriving in Jerusalem, why do you think Paul attempted to join up with the disciples?
4. Did God intend for the Christian to be an independent and live their life unconnected to other Christians? Why or why not? What does this mean for you?
5. What is your ministry in the local congregation of which you are a part?
6. Besides the ideas mentioned in the lesson, what are some ways you can get involved in the work of the local church?
7. What do you think would happen if more members got more involved in the local work? Is there anything holding you back from increasing your involvement? What can you do to rearrange your priorities?