

LESSON ESSENTIALS

INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 2: GOD EQUIPS US

If you've been feeling inadequate as you do God's work, you probably need to look to God to equip you. This lesson will show you how God loves to shower us with the gifts and talents that are vital for ministry.

This lesson looks at Paul's ministry to help us understand how to lean on God's equipping. It will encourage you to constantly seek help from God so that He can equip you and transform you into becoming the leader He wants you to be.

Ministry can't be effective if we are trying to do it alone. God has a unique plan for us, and knows us completely. While we might participate in training in Christian evangelism or teaching, it is only God who equips us for His work. Read on to know how!

There's a key difference between training and equipping. When Jesus trained His disciples, teaching them kingdom values and truths, they learned the lessons and acquired the knowledge. But it was God who supernaturally equipped them to carry out His work of proclaiming the Gospel, making disciples and healing the sick.

Have you ever wondered how a fisherman could preach convincing sermons or how a tax collector could write a scholarly book? Probably apostles Peter and Matthew also didn't think that they were capable of anything as profound and intellectual. But they'd seen their Leader, a poor carpenter, heal the sick, walk on water, turn water into wine, raise the dead and more. They'd even heard Him tell them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.' (John 14:12) Even if they didn't believe Jesus then, they surely were convinced once the Holy Spirit came! As inadequate as they might have felt to start with, God equipped them to become powerful leaders and influential speakers.

There's a key difference between training and equipping. When Jesus trained His disciples, teaching them kingdom values and truths, they learned the lessons and acquired the knowledge. But it was God who supernaturally equipped them to carry out His work of proclaiming the Gospel, making disciples and healing the sick. Of course, there were many people who couldn't understand what was going on, nor could they comprehend the source of the disciples' strength. Simon the sorcerer was one of them. In Acts 8:9-21 we read how he offered Peter, John and Philip money to buy 'this power'. Needless to say that Peter refused him and rebuked him, saying, "Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God." (verse 20-21) Because God equipped these disciples, they could reach out effectively to the people of Samaria, teaching them the way to be saved.

God continues to equip Christians today with the ability to minister to unbelievers and build up the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-16 talks about different roles and skills that God gives different people: apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, and so on. By working in our respective roles and working together, we can be unified in love and grounded in our faith, and we will develop to be mature followers of Christ. In this passage we read that it is God who equips us for His work. You can't rely on training programmes or intelligent lectures for this transformation. This passage clearly shows us that God wants to 'edify the body of Christ' through His ambassadors. We need to see how God is enabling us and use those skills to grow the body of Christ. For those who are already serving in the church as they

have been equipped, they should befriend a new believer and helping him grow in Christ.

All of our work as Christians will be only partially effective if we don't rely on God to enable us. In John 15:5 Jesus says, "Apart from me you can do nothing." It is essential for our ministry to be accomplished through the power of God. Paul is an ideal example. He understood God's purpose and God equipped Him to fulfil the Great Commission. There are many lessons that we can learn from the life of Paul.

1. **He recognized that God equipped him.** Paul was supernaturally equipped by God, and he fully depended on God. First of all, this is evident in the importance he places on prayer. 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 talks about the incredible hardships that he endured, and that he only survived because of their dependence on God, and because of prayer. As well, Paul recognized God's equipping through the Word, and he used his own Bible knowledge to teach others. The Gospel is as relevant today as it was in Paul's time. It is only God's Word that can release people from the ideas and false teaching that enslaves them and prevents them from hearing the truth. As the Scriptures say, the truth will set them free (John 8:32). How well do you know God's Word? How dependant are you on God and how much time do you spend in prayer?
2. **Paul always gave God the glory.** Even though he was quite an excellent preacher, and blessed with many gifts, Paul never took credit for himself. One time, when Paul and Barnabas heal a man in Acts 14:8-18, the people call them gods. But Paul is very quick to clarify that God was the one who healed, and that they were just ordinary men. In our lives, it is unlikely for anyone to call us a god. However, perhaps someone will ask you how you made it through a hardship or where your joy comes from. Will you follow Paul's example and be quick to glorify God?
3. **Paul was willing to fully obey, even when it was difficult.** He did not avoid teaching or preaching, but testified to the 'whole will of God'. (Acts 20:20-27), speaking with boldness and courage. But this courage

Paul always gave God the glory, and obeyed God even when it was difficult. What is more of a challenge for you? Could this be hindering the Spirit's work through you?

God has stored up for you wealth that can't be destroyed or stolen. And, the present struggles will then seem insignificant and trivial measured against the great reward that God gives you. Are you willing to submit everything to God?

did not come from himself – when he submitted everything to the Lord, God gave him the words to say and the courage to say it. Matthew 10-19 tells us the same thing: that God will give us the words to say when we most need them. We just need to trust Him.

Paul's ministry also involved a great deal of personal sacrifice. He summarized his struggles in Acts 20:28-38, explaining to the people all that he went through for the Lord. Ministry is never easy. It requires commitment and a selfless giving of our resources – talents, money and time. But our reward will be greater than what you can think or imagine. God has stored up for you wealth that can't be destroyed or stolen. And, the present struggles will then seem insignificant and trivial measured against the great reward that God gives you. Are you willing to submit everything to God?

IN REVIEW

- • There is a great difference between training and equipping. Training involves teaching and is a physical learning process. Equipping however, is a supernatural process of God enabling you to do greater things for Him.
- • God continues to equip Christians today with the ability to minister and edify the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-16).
- • Ministry is impossible without God's enabling (John 15:5)
- • There are many lessons that we can draw from Paul's ministry. He recognized God's power in his life, he depended on God and knew the Word. As well, he was quick to give God the glory in all circumstances.
- • Paul and he fully obeyed God even when it was difficult. In his ministry he experienced troubles and struggles of every kind. But he knew that his reward in heaven was much greater.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- In what way do you see God equipping you for His ministry? What are your spiritual gifts? How are you using them?
- If spiritual gifts are given “to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry” how will you engage your congregation or the people you lead to collectively accomplish the task to build the body of Christ?
- How can you translate Paul’s missionary strategy into your ministry? What are your plans the Lord has laid on your heart and mind?
- How do you deal with some of the challenges that you face in reaching out to the lost?

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