

Nazarene Discipleship International (NDI)



Adult Ministries

Manual for Men in the Image of God 2025

By Ángel Rodríguez Gómez

Mesoamerica Region.

Title: ***Manual for Men in the Image of God 2025***
Guide and study for Men

Author: *Ángel Rodríguez Gómez*
Design: B. Patricia Rubio de Rodríguez

Material produced by: Church of the Nazarene, Mesoamerica Region.
Nazarene Discipleship International.

Published and distributed: NDI, Mesoamerica Region.

Copyright © 2025 All Rights Reserved

Reproduction of this material is permitted for non-commercial purposes only, for use in discipleship in churches.

All quotations are taken from the New International Version by the International Bible Society, unless otherwise indicated.

Table of contents

Presentation	iii
Introduction	iv
Lesson 1.	<i>Developing the habit of fervent prayer.....</i>	1
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Development.....	1
1.2.1	Fervent Prayer and its importance	1
1.2.2	Intentional Prayer, specific and consistent.	2
1.3	Conclusions.....	7
Lesson 2.	<i>Intercessory Prayer</i>	9
2.1	Introduction	9
2.2	Development.....	9
2.2.1	Intercessory Prayer and its importance	9
2.2.2	Jesus and the Holy Spirit as Intercessors.....	11
2.2.3	Characteristics of Intercessory Prayer.	12
2.2.4	Characteristics of an intercessor.	13
2.3	Conclusions.....	13
Lesson 3.	<i>Fervent Prayers that transform people.....</i>	16
3.1	Introduction	16
3.2	Development.....	16
3.2.1	The power of fervent prayer.....	16
3.2.2	The prayer of Nehemiah.	17
3.2.3	Other distinctives about Nehemiah's prayer.	19
3.3	Conclusions.....	20
Lesson 4.	<i>Praying for new ministries of compassionate outreach.....</i>	22
4.1	Introduction	22
4.2	Development.....	22
4.2.1	George Müller. A life of prayer.	22
4.2.2	Involve others in prayer.	23
4.2.3	Characteristics of George Müller's ministry.....	24
4.2.4	Results of his ministry.....	26
4.3	Conclusions.....	27
Lesson 5.	<i>He's not a burden, he's my brother</i>	29
5.1	Introduction	29
5.2	Development.....	29
5.2.1	What we must do to have eternal life.....	29
5.2.2	But who is my neighbor?.....	30
5.3	Conclusions.....	35
Lesson 6.	<i>Comprehensive Biblical Knowledge.....</i>	38
6.1	Introduction	38
6.2	Development.....	38
6.2.1	The mandate of Bible study.....	38
6.2.2	Importance of comprehensive biblical learning.....	39
6.2.3	Benefits of Bible study.	41
6.2.4	The convenience of having a study in small groups.	42
6.3	Conclusions.....	42

Lesson 7.	<i>Building Authentic Relationship to evangelize.....</i>	44
7.1	Introduction.....	44
7.2	Development	45
7.2.1	Jesus, friend of sinners.....	45
7.2.2	Ways to Cultivate and Strengthen Relationships	45
7.2.3	Steps to Take to Build More Authentic Relationships	48
7.3	Conclusions	50
Lesson 8.	<i>Relational discipleship in the style of Jesus</i>	52
8.1	Introduction.....	52
8.2	Development	52
8.2.1	The Need for Healthy Relationships	52
8.2.2	Every good relationship begins with a good relationship with Jesus.....	53
8.2.3	Jesus' Model of Relationships with His Disciples	53
8.3	Conclusions	57
Lesson 9.	<i>Equipped for Ministry</i>	59
9.1	Introduction.....	59
9.2	Development	59
9.2.1	Called to serve in some ministry.....	59
9.2.2	Jesus' training model.....	60
9.2.3	The local Church's task in training	61
9.3	Conclusions	63
Lesson 10.	<i>Empowered by God.....</i>	65
10.1	Introduction.....	65
10.2	Development	65
10.2.1	All disciples should work in some ministry	65
10.2.2	Spiritual aspects of training.....	66
10.2.3	Trained for what?.....	68
10.2.4	Think About the Reward	68
10.3	Conclusions	69
Lesson 11.	<i>What is a Christian mentor? Why have a mentor?.....</i>	71
11.1	Introduction.....	71
11.2	Development	71
11.2.1	Definition of mentoring.....	71
11.2.2	Examples of Mentoring in the Bible.....	72
11.2.3	What we can expect from Christian mentoring.	74
11.2.4	How to find a mentor.	74
11.3	Conclusions	75
Lesson 12.	<i>Can I be a Mentor?.....</i>	77
12.1	Introduction.....	77
12.2	Development	77
12.2.1	Importance of Christian mentoring.	77
12.2.2	Reasons Why You May Agree to Be a Mentor	78
12.2.3	Practical tips for effective mentoring.....	81
12.2.4	Some qualities to develop to be a good mentor.....	81
12.2.5	Overcoming challenges in Christian mentoring.....	82
12.3	Conclusions	83

Presentation

The Church of the Nazarene Discipleship Ministries (DNI) develops Ministries among Adults, Ministries among Youth and Ministries among Children.

This material is part of the DNI's Ministry among Adults and aims to help members of the Church of the Nazarene to know the biblical teaching on the holy life for men and for them to put it into practice in their daily lives, in order to grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

The areas of this ministry for men and its objectives are the following:

A. Spiritual area:

- Motivate men to consecrate themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Do personal evangelism with other people.
- Strengthen worship of God and devotional life.

B. Ministerial area:

- Recognize that men have responsibility for the preservation and growth of God's work.
- Work on personal, family and church edification.
- Facilitate the service of men in the church.

C. Personal and family area:

- Apply biblical principles and values for personal Christian life.
- Build their home on the principles and values of the Kingdom of God manifested in the Bible.
- Apply biblical principles and values for a good marital relationship.
- Apply biblical principles and values for raising children.

The book contains 12 lessons that can be shared one per month at the men's meetings. Each lesson contains:

Learning objectives.

These refer to the achievements expected from the student upon completion of the lesson.

Introduction.

This is an initial presentation that contextualizes the topic to be addressed, in order to provide the reader with background information.

Development of the topic.

These lessons have been written in simple, dynamic language connected to the ideas of the contemporary world, in order to facilitate their use for teaching.

Conclusion of the main teaching.

At the end of each lesson, a brief conclusion of what has been learned is provided, which can be used at the end of the class as a closing and in the next session to remember the topics covered.

Dynamics or activities:

Individual or group learning activities or dynamics related to the topic studied are suggested. These can be reproduced for the participants, although it's most recommended that each participant have their own book.

Introduction

In accordance with our new NDI By-Laws, we remind you of our purpose:

The Purpose of NDI is to assist local churches in:

- a. Reaching non-believers for Jesus
- b. Establishing new believers in their faith in Christ
- c. Walking with believers to a fully surrendered, heart-cleansed, fruit-bearing, and Spirit-filled life.

To achieve this goal, we must promote the following core principles:

NDI promotes the following five Core Principles that are essential to the discipleship process:

- a. *Fervent Prayer*
- b. *Compassionate Outreach*
- c. *Comprehensive Biblical Learning*
- d. *Intentional Mentoring and Equipping*
- e. *Authentic Relationships*

In this ecclesiastical year we're going to study through the lessons of our MIG Manual on how we can put these values into practice in such a way that we impact a better formation of disciples with whom we can walk together on the Journey of Grace.

Lesson 1. **Developing the habit of *fervent prayer***

Biblical Text: James 5:16b

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Competence:

- **Consider** whether prayer is a priority in your life.
- **Explain** what fervent prayer is.
- **Evaluate** whether you are intentional, specific, and consistent in your prayers.
- **Commit** to practicing fervent prayer.

1.1 Introduction

One of the least practiced spiritual disciplines by Christians is prayer. In many cases, it isn't practiced, and in others, it's done in a routine manner that doesn't achieve the results that should be obtained.

But God asks us to pray fervently, and for this we can find various models in the Bible, starting with the model of Jesus. He who is fervent shows enthusiasm and devotion. It denotes a great and strong desire on the part of the person.

So in this lesson we're going to explore: Are our prayers prayed with ardent zeal? Are our prayers prayed with all our strength? Are our prayers prayed with intensity? Are our prayers prayed with fervor?

In addition to this, we're going to study some characteristics of prayer such as being intentional, persistent and specific in order to develop the habit of praying fervently.

1.2 Development

1.2.1 Fervent Prayer and its importance

Osmani Cruz (n.d.) points out that the word *fervor* means: enthusiasm, manifest ardor with which something is done. In the subject at hand, it would then be: Burning zeal for spiritual things, vigor in prayer, intensity in the act of speaking with God. Therefore, praying with fervor is praying with ardor, passionately, with intensity. Is this how we usually pray?

True, faithful and fervent prayer is the feeling that arises from the heart and the intimate desire of our spirit to pray to the Lord with humility and faith, so that we receive his direction and strength to be able to fulfill the purpose he has for our lives.

Yovani Blanco (2023) points out that "Effective prayer seeks to fulfill God's plans. Effective prayer seeks the perfect will of the Holy Spirit revealed in our hearts, Who helps you to know it"

Osmani Cruz (n.d.) identifies some examples of fervent prayer such as:

- The king of Nineveh when he told his people to fast and pray with all their might so that God would forgive them (Jonah 3:8).
- The psalmist when he frequently cried out loudly: "To you, O Lord, I will cry, And to the Lord I will make supplication" (Psalm 30:8).
- Isaiah encourages us to pray with fervent cries: "Then you will call, and the Lord will hear you; you will cry, and He'll say, Here I am" (Isaiah 58:9a).
- Jesus prayed for Lazarus with a resounding voice: "And when he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!" (John 11:43).
- Jesus also prayed in agony in Gethsemane, intensely, to the point that his sweat was like great drops of blood (Luke 22:44).
- The church in Jerusalem prayed fervently for Peter (Acts 12:5).

All of these passages attest that fervent prayer was common among those who sincerely sought God.

Yovani Blanco (2023) reminds us that God has great plans for humanity, for his Church, and for each one of us. But his plans will come to fruition only as we practice a lifestyle characterized by fervent and passionate prayer, led by the Holy Spirit.

1.2.2 Intentional Prayer, specific and consistent.

Fervent prayer is characterized by being intentional, specific, and consistent. Below we'll explain in detail what this means.

a) Intentional Prayer

What does it mean to do something with intention? Ana Agila (2020) tells us that "Doing something with intention means that you are going to do something consciously, knowing with certainty the consequences that your actions will have."

John Maxwell points out that being intentional "Means working with a purpose... making every action count. It's being aware of the mission, which means keeping the big picture in mind. It's focusing on doing the right things, moment by moment, day by day and then continuing to work on them consistently."

Living an intentional life is living with purpose, making every action count, being a creator of your reality, rather than simply reacting to what life presents to you. If we want to achieve the purpose of growing into the likeness of Christ, we must be intentional in choosing the actions to take to achieve it. And a good starting point is to pray intentionally for that to happen.

When we pray intentionally, we put into action what the Bible says in Hebrews 11:1:

Faith demonstrates the reality of what we hope for; It is the evidence of things we cannot see. (NLT)

As we pray, let us keep in mind what God tells us:

For I know the plans I have for you—says the Lord—plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11

b) Specific Prayer

God's Word tells us:

Do not worry about anything, but pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Philippians 4:6 NLT

Call to me and I will answer you; I will tell you great and inaccessible things that you do not know. Jeremiah 33:3 NIV

God invites us to bring our requests before Him. But we need to be very specific about what we ask for. In the Bible we can find many examples of specific prayers. For example:

- Hannah asks God to grant her a son. (1 Samuel 1:2)
- Elijah prays for fire to come down from heaven. (2 Kings 1:10)
- Solomon prayed for wisdom to rule God's people (1 Kings 3)
- Hezekiah prayed for God to allow him to live longer (2 Kings 20:1-11)
- Jesus prayed for unity among the disciples (John 17:6-19)
- Jesus prayed for the Father to forgive those who would crucify him (Luke 23)
- The church prayed for the life of Peter who was imprisoned (Acts 12:5-7)

Priscilla Shirer (2015) emphasizes the need to be specific in our prayers. We must take time to identify the areas in our lives that need to be transformed. Whether it's a broken relationship, a financial struggle, or an ingrained sin, we must be willing to bring these concerns before God with clarity.

So we must be specific as well. Some areas we can focus on when praying are:

- The family:
 - May God keep us from falling into sin.
 - For our marriage, so that it may be strengthened in Christ.
 - For the salvation of our family.
 - For our family's finances.
 - For God to give us direction to get involved in the ministries of the church.
- The Church:
 - For our pastor and local leaders.
 - For the various ministries.
 - For God to allow us to fulfill the mission.
 - For more brothers and sisters to become active in some ministry.
- Regarding the unreached:
 - For prevenient grace to touch the hearts of those with whom we're going to share the gospel.
 - Pray that each of us feels burdened for the unconverted and share the gospel with them.

c) Consistent Prayer

Paul exhorts us to live a life of prayer. We can see this for example in:

Always rejoice. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

The Bible tells us a lot about prayer, and it also teaches us how to pray. Something important in the life of prayer is to be persistent or constant in our prayers to God. John Maxwell points out that "Intermittency is the enemy of success. Only through being consistent do you get where you want to go."

Jesus was the model of persistence in prayer.

In Luke 18:1-8, Jesus told his disciples a parable of a persistent widow and an unjust judge. He begins by explaining its meaning: they were to pray at all times and not give up. Nicole Furno (n.d.) points out:

When Luke wrote this passage, he wanted Jesus' message to be very clear: being persistent in prayer was important, even if the disciples faced tough opposition, lost their motivation to

pray, became discouraged, and were tempted to give up. Jesus knew that his future disciples, you and I, would also need this encouragement.

Also in Luke 11:5-10 Jesus tells us the parable of the importunate friend, which shows us the need to pray without giving up.

In addition, we read in Luke's gospel how Jesus often "withdrew to solitary places and prayed" (5:16) and had the habit of going to the Mount of Olives to pray (22:39). Jesus modeled the importance of having consistent times alone with His Father. Nicole Furno (n.d.) notes: *Jesus persisted in sincere and humble prayer while submitting to God's will above His own. If Jesus modeled this while on earth before His most difficult trial, how much more should we be praying, particularly during the most difficult times?*

We can add other passages that denote the importance of being persistent in prayer.

- *I waited patiently for the Lord, And He inclined to me, and heard my cry.* Psalm 40:1
- *Lord, God of my salvation, day and night I cry before you.* Psalm 88:1
- *Seek the Lord and His strength; Seek His face continually.* 1 Chronicles 16:11
- *For He has inclined His ear to me; Therefore I will call upon Him all my days.* Psalm 116:2

There are many more passages that show us the need to be consistent when praying. For example:

- Abraham persisted in praying for Sodom (Genesis 18:23-33).
- Moses persevered in praying for Israel (Exodus 32:21-32; Deuteronomy 9:25-29).
- Hannah continued to pray to the Lord for a son (1 Samuel 1:10-11).
- In Psalm 40:1, David wrote: *"I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined to me and heard my cry."*
- The apostle Paul encouraged us to pray at all times in the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18), to persevere (Colossians 4:2) and to dedicate ourselves to prayer (Romans 12:12)

In light of this reality, we must establish an order of priority in our daily agenda. Without a doubt, prayer should be a top priority in our lives. Nicole Furno (n.d.) suggests that we pay attention to the following points so that we may be more persistent in prayer:

1. We persist by the power of the Holy Spirit

The power to persist in prayer comes from the motivation and ability that the Holy Spirit gives us. Jesus, at his ascension in Acts 1:8, tells the disciples: "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come."

When we pray, God's Spirit provides us with the power to persist and abound in hope, even if we're discouraged or the answer to our prayer is delayed. Nicole Furno (n.d.) tells us, "With prayers filled with the power of the Spirit, we'll not faint, but we'll have the strength to persevere in praying to God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20).

2. We persist by asking for God's help

When we ask God to help us persevere in prayer, we know that this is according to His will and we can trust that it's a request He is pleased to answer (1 John 5:14-15). Nicole Furno (n.d.) tells us:

We can ask Him to fill us with His Spirit to empower our prayers, so that we may be "strengthened with all power according to His glorious might for all perseverance and patience with joy" (Col. 1:11) in our prayer life.

3. We persist by praying together

In our small group we have been experiencing the answer to many of our prayers that we make as a group. God has answered various requests such as:

- For healing, even in cancer problems.
- For our young people to be accepted into the University to study the career they want.
- For financial health for a family.
- For God to take care of a family member in giving birth.

As Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, Someone who is alone can be attacked and overcome, but if two are together, they'll stand back to back and overcome; even better if they are three, because a three-fold cord is not easily broken.

Our prayer lives will not break quickly when we pray with each other.

4. We persist by resisting the devil

Our enemy will try to stop us from persisting in prayer. Satan is our "adversary who prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). So it's our obligation to be alert to his opposition. He'll do this in various ways:

- By making us tired so that we don't invest time to pray.

- He'll try to distract us from our requests so that they aren't in accordance with God's will.
- He'll try to discourage us when God takes time to answer our request.
- He'll try to trick us into thinking that God doesn't hear us.
- He'll tempt us to postpone our prayer, thinking that it's not important.
- He'll try to take away our concentration when trying to pray.
- He'll try to make us think that we're "not worthy" to approach God to present our request. But remember what the writer of Hebrews 4:16 tells us. *So let us approach with all confidence the throne of grace of our God. There we will receive his mercy and find the grace that will help us when we need it most.*

1.3 Conclusions

We need to pray like the heroes of faith who triumphed (Hebrews 6:12). If we do, we'll have more power in our lives and double our effectiveness. We'll have more answers to our prayers and more spiritual experiences. We'll grow more to the stature of Christ. What are you waiting for? Start praying like this right now. (Osmani, n.d.)

We need to be passionate when praying, with the firm purpose that God transforms our lives every day. We must seek to be constant in prayer, and do so with great faith. We have also learned the need to be specific, persistent and intentional when praying.

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. What have been your most fervent prayers? What were the results?

2. What can you do to make your prayer more intentional and consistent?

3. What are your three specific prayers for your family during this time?

Bibliographic references

Agila, Ana. (2020) ***iOremos Intencionalmente! (Let's Pray Intentionally!)***

<https://vidachurchmiami.com/oremos-intencionalmente/>

Blanco, Yovani. (2023). ***La oración ferviente y eficaz (Fervent and Effective***

Prayer). <https://www.maranathavenezuela.com/predicas/la-oracion-ferviente-y-eficaz/>

Cruz, Osmani. (s.f.). ***Fervientes (Fervent)***. [https://www.bible.com/es/reading-](https://www.bible.com/es/reading-plans/37610-fervientes/day/2)

[plans/37610-fervientes/day/2](https://www.bible.com/es/reading-plans/37610-fervientes/day/2)

Furno, Nicole. (s.f.) ***Persiste en la oración cuando te quieras dar por vencida (Persist in prayer when you want to give up)***.

<https://www.avivanuestroscorazones.com/maestra-verdadera/blog/persiste-en-la-oracion-cuando-te-quieras-dar-por-v/>

Shirer, Priscilla. (2015). ***Oración ferviente (Fervent Prayer)***. Editorial B&H

Lesson 2. *Intercessory Prayer*

Biblical Text: Galatians 6:2

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Competencies:

- **Recognize** the need to pray for one another.
- **Explain** the impact of intercessory prayer.
- **Commit** to praying for others.

2.1 Introduction

Fervent prayer shouldn't only be asking for our own benefit. God has entrusted us with the role of intercessors so that He may work, according to His sovereignty, on others' behalf.

I'm sure that the great majority of us who are now part of the Body of Christ have come this far thanks to the intercessory prayer of other brothers and sisters in the faith. It's also true that when faced with a difficult situation we have experienced, we have turned to others to support us in interceding before God in our need.

Therefore, in this lesson we're going to learn: What is it to be an intercessor? Why should we be intercessors? What example has Christ left us as an intercessor? What qualities should we develop to be better intercessors?

2.2 Development

2.2.1 *Intercessory Prayer and its importance*

In the Got Question Blog (n.d.) we find that intercessory prayer is the act of praying on behalf of others. Intercessory prayer is a pointed and persistent plea on behalf of another person for a deep need.

Some examples of intercessory prayer are:

- Abraham intercedes so that God would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis 19:1-29)
- Moses interceded for the Israelites when they sinned by worshiping the golden calf, and his prayers moved God to have mercy (Exodus 32:11-14).
- In Numbers 14:11-25, we can see how Moses invoked forgiveness for the nation of Israel when God was ready to destroy them.

- Jonah interceded for Nineveh, even though he didn't agree at first (Jonah 3).
- Nehemiah prayed for Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1). This gives us a better idea of the scope of intercessory prayer, since an entire people experienced revival and turned to God because of Nehemiah's prayer and God's answer to that prayer.
- Daniel (9) interceded for God to free his people after seventy years of captivity.

The Bible urges us to pray for others. Below, we can see a partial list of those for whom we should offer intercessory prayers (Got Question, n.d.):

- All who are in authority (1 Timothy 2:2).
- For ministers (Philippians 1:19).
- For the church (Psalms 122:6).
- Friends (Job 42:8).
- For our countrymen (Romans 10:1).
- For people who are sick (James 5:14).
- Even for our enemies (Jeremiah 29:7).
- For those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44).
- For those who forsake us (2 Timothy 4:16).
- For everyone (1 Timothy 2:1).

Some examples of intercessory prayer today could be:

- Praying for God to heal a person.
- Praying for a marriage to be restored.
- Praying that when evangelizing a person, they'll accept prevenient and saving grace.
- Praying for a person's spiritual growth.

The importance of praying for others. It's important to pray for others because by doing so, we participate with God in the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18–20). Although God is sovereign over all things, the Compelling Truth Blog (n.d.) notes, "He has chosen to allow us the unspeakable privilege of being a part of working out His plan. He has chosen to include our prayers and our sharing of the gospel as a means of bringing others to repentance and salvation in Jesus Christ" (Matthew 9:37–38; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; 2 Timothy 2:24–25).

When we pray for others, we also enjoy the privilege of rejoicing in God's work in their lives. By praying for others, we actively participate in God's plan for the world, both in our lives and in the lives of others. (Compelling Truth, n.d.)

Dutch Sheets. (1997) notes that,

A believer's role as an intercessor is both a responsibility and a privilege. It involves not only a commitment to pray for others, but also an understanding that their prayers can bring about divine action and change. The concept of "standing in the gap" highlights the intercessor's position as intermediary, bridging the gap between God's provision and human need (Ezekiel 22:30). This crucial role can shape destinies, change circumstances, and bring God's will to manifestation on Earth.

Intercessory prayer is a means through which God's will can be manifested on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). By lifting others up in prayer, believers partner with God in His redemptive plan, bringing healing, deliverance, and blessing to the lives of those for whom they pray. (Sheets, 1997))

2.2.2 Jesus and the Holy Spirit as Intercessors.

Dutch Sheets (1997) notes that "One of the most poignant examples of intercession can be seen in the life of Jesus Christ, who constantly prayed on behalf of others and continues to intercede for us at the right hand of God" (Romans 8:34).

In John 17, just before his crucifixion, we find Jesus interceding before the Father on behalf of his disciples.

I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. (John 17:9-11)

The role of the Holy Spirit in guiding intercessory prayer is very important. The Holy Spirit acts as an intercessor, helping believers in their weakness and interceding on their behalf with groans that cannot be expressed in words, as stated in Romans 8:26-27. By yielding to the Holy Spirit, intercessors are able to pray with insight and direction beyond human understanding, connecting with divine wisdom and bearing spiritual fruit in their efforts. (Sheets, 2017))

2.2.3 Characteristics of Intercessory Prayer.

Some of the core characteristics of intercessory prayer are:

1. God is the One who calls us to be intercessors

Throughout the Bible, God sought out those who were willing to fight the spiritual battle for their land. In Ezekiel, God says:

I looked for someone who could rebuild the wall of righteousness that protects the land. I looked for someone who would stand in the gap in the wall so that I would not have to destroy them, but I found no one. (Ezekiel 22:30)

2. We must all be intercessors

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22)

Because of Christ's merits, all Christians have the privilege and the need to turn to God in prayer. Every Christian has the ability to intercede for others. We can see some examples of this in the Bible.

- *Paul tells the church in Ephesus to pray for others (Ephesians 6:16-18)*
- *Paul asks the Christians in Ephesus, Rome, and Colossae to pray for him (Ephesians 6:19; Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:2-3).*

3. Persistent intercessory prayer can be as an individual or as part of a group

In the Bible we find various examples where "local churches" or even entire cities carried out group intercessory prayers. Some examples are:

- *In the face of the imminent attack of the armies of Moab and Ammon, Jehoshaphat calls upon the people to pray and fast. (2 Chronicles 20:1-14)*
- *In the Book of Nehemiah, we can find that the people prayed when they were experiencing a revival, after restoring gates and walls. (Nehemiah 9:6-30)*
- *The church was praying for Peter to be released from prison. (Acts 12:5-7)*

In more modern times, the power of intercessory prayer has also been seen by groups or cities. For example, as Sheet (1997) mentions,

Revival movements around the world often trace back to a few dedicated intercessors who prayed fervently for a spiritual awakening. The Welsh Revival of 1904, led by Evan Roberts, was characterized by a wave of intercessory prayer that transformed not only the church, but the entire nation of Wales. This revival resulted in significant changes in society, including a decrease in crime rates and an increase in public morals, highlighting the far-reaching impact of ongoing intercession.

2.2.4 *Characteristics of an intercessor.*

Some basic qualities for a good intercessor are:

- Must be right with God. Personal sin and unrepentant behavior create a spiritual barrier that inhibits the effectiveness of prayers. Sin hinders the relationship with God and limits spiritual authority in prayer. Therefore, it's necessary to practice regular self-examination, confession, and repentance to maintain spiritual clarity and integrity. The Bible emphasizes the importance of living righteously in effective prayer, as seen in passages such as Psalm 66:18 and Isaiah 59:2. Establishing the habit of seeking God's forgiveness and striving to live according to His will will pave the way for intercessory prayer. (Sheet, 1997)
- Must have a close relationship with God (Colossians 3:1-3). Dutch Sheets (1997) stresses the need for a pure and sincere heart in intercessory prayer. A believer's motives must be examined to ensure that they are centered on the glory of God and the welfare of others, rather than selfish gain. Psalm 66:18 teaches that if we harbor sin in our hearts, the Lord will not hear our prayers.
- Must ask in faith (James 1:6-8). Faith is vital in intercessory prayer. Therefore, we must pray with confidence that God hears and answers prayers, trusting in His power and love. Hebrews 11:6 states that without faith it's impossible to please God.
- Must be constant in prayer (Luke 18:1-8). Persistence in prayer shows the believer's unwavering commitment to seek God's intervention on someone's behalf. Therefore, we must pray continually, without becoming discouraged, even when the answers aren't immediately evident (Sheets, 1997). Remember that Moses waited more than twenty years to receive the son of promise. (Genesis 25:1)
- Ask according to God's purpose for our lives. When prayers are aligned with God's will, they carry the full backing of divine authority. 1 John 5:14-15 assures believers that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
- There must be love for our neighbor (1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Galatians 6:2). Understanding intercession involves recognizing that it's driven by love and compassion. It requires believers to bear the burdens of others as if they were their own, pleading with God to intervene in situations of need, suffering, or injustice. (Sheets, 1997)
- There must be a burden for the unsaved. There must be deep sorrow for every soul that wanders lost without Christ. If there's not a deep love for them, then we'll not be able to act in intercession on their behalf. (Matthew 9:36))

2.3 Conclusions

We have studied that an intercessor is one who asks God for others. Praying for others involves asking God for things on their behalf, interceding for them, and thanking God for them. We can pray for our leaders to live godly lives and behave in a worthy manner. We also pray for

the salvation of others, knowing that God desires for all to be saved and to walk according to his will.

All Christians have access to God, so we should all pray for others. As disciples of Christ, we have received a special blessing from God the Father thanks to the intercession of Jesus. We can know God and Christ, and be one with them, just as they are with each other. As disciples, we can intercede for our neighbors through the power of prayer.

When interceding for others, we shouldn't only think of our family or brothers in the faith, but we should also and in a very special way pray for those who don't yet recognize Christ as their personal Savior.

Ultimately, we pray for God's will to be done in our lives and in the lives of others. Persistent intercessory prayer has the power to profoundly transform lives, situations, and even entire communities. (Sheet, 1997)

To do this, we must bring together a series of qualities that will allow us to be good intercessors.

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. Why should we intercede for others?

2. What are some specific things you should pray for in your family?

-
3. Who prayed for you in your most difficult times of trial? How did it feel to see others join you in praying?

Bibliographic references

Compelling Truth. (s.f.) *¿Cuál es la importancia de orar por los demás? (What is the Importance of praying for Others?)*

<https://www.compellingtruth.org/Espanol/orar-por-los-demas.html>

Got Question. (s.f.) *¿Qué es la oración intercesora? (What is Intercessory Prayer?)*

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Espanol/oracion-intercesora.html>

Sheets, Dutch. (1997). *La Oración Intercesora (Intercessory Prayer)*. Editorial. Editorial Unilit

Lesson 3. *Fervent Prayers* that transform people

Biblical Text: *Nehemiah 1:4*

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Competencies:

- **Practice** the discipline of intercessory prayer.
- **Apply** another model of how we should pray.
- **Practice** fervent prayer for the community where our church ministers.

3.1 Introduction

For those who have developed the spiritual discipline of prayer, it's easy to know who to turn to in times of trial and crisis, to those who know how to pray for others. In this lesson, we'll study the example of Nehemiah and discover a model of intercessory prayer.

Nehemiah also serve as an example to remind us that fervent prayer is intentional, specific, and consistent. But, above all, we'll see how far prayer transcends, because we'll study how one man's prayer moved God's response to transform an entire nation.

3.2 Development

3.2.1 *The power of fervent prayer.*

This lesson will lead us to reflect on the fact that prayer is one of the greatest privileges and one of the most powerful forces that the disciple of Christ has to deal with. This should move us to include it as a basic spiritual discipline in our lives.

Let's look at a little context of the situation in Jerusalem. The seventy years of captivity that God had said Judah would suffer because of its idolatry and disobedience had already been completed. Two groups had already returned, one led by Zerubbabel and the other by Ezra. The temple had been partially rebuilt. But other things remained to be restored, especially returning to God with all their hearts.

One day Nehemiah received a visit from Hanani his brother with some men from Judah, who told him:

The remnant, those who remained from the captivity, there in the province, are in great trouble and disgrace, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.
(Nehemiah 1:3)

At this, Nehemiah's heart trembled with pain and sadness. What could Nehemiah do to help change such a terrible situation? Without a doubt, the place to start everything is praying before the Lord Our God and asking for His guidance. That was exactly what Nehemiah did.

3.2.2 The prayer of Nehemiah.

In this section we're going to analyze the main elements to highlight in Nehemiah's prayer. We must remember that he served as cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes.

a) Nehemiah begins by highlighting the greatness of God.

Then I said, "I pray to you, O Lord, God of heaven, mighty, great, and awesome." Nehemiah 1:5

To begin with, Nehemiah recognized the character of God. He knew the kind of God he was. That comes from a close relationship with Him. It's a consequence of knowing what the Word says about that Almighty God, but also of experiencing Him personally every day.

b) He asks to be heard in this prayer.

"Now let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant." Nehemiah 1:6

Paul teaches us in Philippians 4:6-7 that our requests must be made known before God. Nehemiah immediately goes to God after learning about the situation they were in in Jerusalem. It's important then to go to God as our first option, trusting that He'll work in some way in our need.

So don't hesitate to go to God in any adverse situation that you or someone you know is going through. That's always the place to start, because God is a God who answers and pays attention to the prayers of His people.

c) He acknowledge sins before God

"...and I confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have committed against you; yes, I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted exceedingly corruptly against you, and have not kept the commandments, statutes, and precepts that you gave to Moses your servant." Nehemiah 1:6b-7

The next thing Nehemiah did was repent of all the personal sins that they as a people had committed against God. This was an honest way of facing his own guilt. It's very striking that he identifies with his people. By identifying with them, he took on the sins of his people and didn't stop to judge them, but focused on seeking God's forgiveness.

Shirer (2015) highlights the importance of recognizing our sins and seeking God's forgiveness. Just as Nehemiah confessed the sins of his people, we too must humble ourselves before God and recognize our need for His mercy and grace. This act of repentance opens the door for God to work in our lives, allowing us to experience true transformation and restoration.

d) He approaches by trusting in God's promises

"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.' Nehemiah 1:8-9

Nehemiah reminded God of His promise of grace to His people. In Deuteronomy 28, God shows Moses the blessings He has for His people if they obey Him. At the same time, He shows them the curses they'll receive if they disobey Him, as had happened, and because of this, some were scattered among the nations and others taken into captivity for seventy years.

But Deuteronomy 30 points out that if they were willing to return and acknowledge the evil they had done, God would bring them back to the land. Nehemiah reminded God of that promise of His grace. And now that is what Nehemiah was asking God for. Notice how important it is to know God's promises, as well as how important it is to obey God in order to be under his care.

e) He asks God in a specific way.

Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man. Nehemiah 1:11

Now he asks God in a specific way to use him to carry out this great work of restoring walls and gates, so that the people may seek God again. Thus, Nehemiah requested concrete help to begin the process. To do this, he had to find favor before the king and count on his support in this titanic task of rebuilding the material things in Jerusalem. But not only that, but most importantly he had to give him favor in the sight of the people to help them turn to God and experience revival, which happened.

Ray Stedman (n.d.) notes that "Nehemiah believed that God would help him, so he began to pray and ask for grace and strength to follow the steps necessary to begin recovery."

3.2.3 Other distinctives about Nehemiah's prayer.

A. It was a fervent prayer.

When I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned for some days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Nehemiah 1:4

In this passage we can see that Nehemiah is not indifferent to the suffering of his people. Despite the distance and the fact that he had not been there personally, his identification with his Jewish brothers and sisters shows the great love he felt for them.

It's also a reflection of his love for God. Nehemiah was in a privileged position before the king, but he never forgot that what he was, he had achieved because God was the one who gave him the grace to achieve it.

B. He asked for God's guidance to face each situation

Nehemiah's prayer also emphasizes the importance of seeking God's guidance and wisdom. In his quest to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah understood that success and progress were only possible through divine intervention. He understood that his plans and strategies were useless without God's leadership.

Likewise, we must approach prayer with a humble heart, recognizing that our own efforts are insufficient. When we invite God into the decision-making process and seek His guidance, we put ourselves in a position to receive His divine favor and providence. (Shirer, 2015)

C. He was persistent in prayer

Hanani's visit probably occurred between mid-November and mid-December of 445 BC. From that time on, Nehemiah prayed. His prayer was answered in the month of Nisan, which is approximately the month of April of 444 BC. That is, four months had passed since Hanani and the Jews brought Nehemiah the disturbing news about the state of Jerusalem. For four months, Nehemiah prayed and fasted.

At times it may seem that God doesn't listen to us, but the lesson here is that He always does and answers us according to His timing. Let's remember then that God's timing is always perfect. Never give up praying for that need of yours or of those for whom you are interceding.

D. He prayed at all times

Shirer (2015) also highlights Nehemiah's persistence and perseverance in his prayer. He didn't give up or become discouraged when faced with opposition and adversity. Instead, he continued to pray fervently, trusting that God would carry him through.

Carmen Camino (n.d.) points out that:

This prayer (1:5-11) is the first of twelve instances of prayer recorded in this book (2:4; 4:4, 9; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 9:5; 13:14, 22, 29, 31). The Book of Nehemiah begins and ends in prayer. It's obvious that Nehemiah was a man of faith, who depended totally on the Lord to carry out the work that God had entrusted to him. Nehemiah was successful because he depended on God.

This demonstrates the importance of maintaining a life of diligent prayer, even in the face of challenges and setbacks. Through constant and unwavering prayer, we develop resilience and strength, which allows us to overcome any obstacle that comes our way.

E. His prayer was aimed at God fulfilling His purpose

In his prayer, Nehemiah asked God to be part of the fulfillment of God's will. He was not asking for something for his personal benefit, but only for God to allow him to be part of what God already had for His People. Let's remember that He had good plans for them. Jeremiah 29:11

Alberto Vega (n.d.) highlights that our requests:

- Must be based on our family relationship with God (v. 10)
- Must be based on our respect and reverence for God (v. 11a).
- Are correct in asking for God's grace in favor of what is His divine will (v. 11b).

F. His prayer was encouraging and led to action

Once God granted him grace before the king to express his request to go and help in the restoration of the gates and walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah dedicated himself to fulfilling this great commission that God granted him.

In the same way, God allows us to be an active part in the building of His Kingdom. So be prepared for action.

3.3 Conclusions

We have learned that whenever we face difficult situations, we must immediately turn to God for help. That will always be the place to start. Of course, we shouldn't only do it in times of distress, but at all times.

It's important to acknowledge our sins before God so that He'll forgive us. In this way God will bless us by fulfilling the hundreds of promises He has made to His children.

To address the problems we face, whether health, financial, relationships, etc., we must seek His direction. Here we must act carefully, because sometimes desperation leads us to act and then ask Him to bless what we did.

Once God responds, He'll provide the means and the people He has allowed us to relate to in order to achieve His purpose. We have also remembered how important it is to persevere in prayer.

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. How could we intercede for our city?

2. What do you think should be the specific needs for which you should pray concerning the community in which your local church is located?

3. What are the three main characteristics that stand out to you about Nehemiah as an intercessor?

Bibliographic references

Blog Sígueme. Net. (s.f.) ***Oración Intercesora de Nehemias / Nehemias 1:4-11***

(Intercessory Prayer of Nehemiah / Nehemiah 1:4-11).

https://www.sigueme.net/bosquejos/la-oracion-intercesora-de-nehemias-bosquejo-para-predicar#google_vignette

Camino, Carmen. (s.f.). ***El Gran Llamado – Nehemias 1:5-6 (The Great Call – Nehemiah 1:5-6).*** <https://carmencamino.com/index.php/ensenanza/devocionales-en-texto/399-el-gran-llamado-nehemias-1-5-6>

Misión bíblica Cristadelfiana. (s.f.) ***Capítulo 1: "Te ruego, Jehová, que esté ahora atento tu oído a la oración de tu siervo." (Chapter 1: "I beseech thee, O Lord, let thine ear be attentive unto the prayer of thy servant.")***

<https://labiblia.com/publicaciones/levantemonos-y-edifiquemos/capitulo-1-te-ruego-jehova-que-este-ahora-atento-tu-oido-a-la-oracion-de-tu-siervo/>

Shirer, Priscilla. (2015). ***Oración ferviente (Fervent Prayer).*** Editorial B&H

Stedman, Ray. (s.f.). ***El lugar donde comenzar (The Place to Begin).***

<https://www.raystedman.org/es/devociones-diarias/nehemias/el-lugar-donde-comenzar>

Vega, Alberto. (s.f.). ***La Oración de Nehemias – Bosquejo para Sermones (The Prayer of Nehemiah – Sermon Outlines).*** https://elpuntocristiano.org/bosquejos/orando-como-nehemias-bosquejo-para-sermones/#google_vignette

Lesson 4. Praying for new ministries of *compassionate outreach*

Biblical Text: Matthew 9:36

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Competencies:

- **Pray** that God will allow new ministries to be established that will reach more people for Christ.
- **Develop** your faith that God will provide what is needed to sustain such compassionate outreach ministries.

4.1 Introduction

One of the hallmarks of Nazarenes is compassion with purpose. This means that through various actions, we show God's love to our neighbor so that through it they'll know Christ's love for them and accept Him as Savior.

Compassion should be a lifestyle of the Christian, so we can exercise it personally or collectively in the church. However, if we take inventory of how many compassionate outreach ministries there are in our local churches, we may find that not all churches have them, or perhaps they invest little in them. Sometimes we can argue that this is due to the lack of economic resources to sustain them. But we forget that God owns everything.

In this lesson we'll study a character who went on to develop a faith that led him to implement a compassionate outreach ministry that went on to transform thousands of lives through Jesus Christ for the sake of Jesus Christ.

4.2 Development

Let's study the example of George Müller's compassionate outreach ministry. But first, we need to study his devotional life in order to understand how this great man was supported in an extraordinary way in his ministry of providing support to the neediest children of his day in Bristol, England.

4.2.1 George Müller. A life of prayer.

Wendy Bello (2023) points out that those we consider great men and women throughout the history of Christianity are people who lived passionately to study God's Word and pray constantly. A. Sims (2009) notes that when George Müller was asked if he spent a lot of time on his knees, he replied:

Several hours every day. But I live in a spirit of prayer; I pray when I walk, I pray when I lie down and when I get up. And the answers always keep coming. My prayers have been answered tens of thousands of times. As soon as I'm persuaded that something is right, I keep praying until the answer comes. I never give up!

Sadly, we must recognize that there are still many Christians who don't have the spiritual discipline of prayer. Some, as Wendy Bello (2023) points out, is because they don't know how to do it. Others because they ignore that need in the life of every believer. Although mainly it's because of not setting aside time for it. Therefore, we must insist again and again that this discipline of prayer, together with the study of the Bible, will allow us to grow spiritually. And on the contrary, not doing so will end up in a spiritual life that will slowly die.

G. Müller kept track of his answered prayers and they added up to more than fifty thousand direct answers. This allowed G. Müller to learn to depend more on God. It's a good example to imitate, don't you think? Müller emphasized that in order to receive answers to prayers, it's crucial to present petitions based on the merits of Jesus Christ and pray for things that honor God. (Litigated, 2023).

An anecdote told about G. Müller's prayer life is as follows:

When Müller was praying in his room, and his fame was already notorious, the Queen of England once came to his house. His maid knocked at the door of his room and said, "Mr. Müller the Queen is in the room, wanting to speak to you." And he answered, "Tell the Queen that I cannot do it now, for I'm talking to the King of Kings and I will not listen to her."

Like George Müller, in the Bible we find the example of Nehemiah who could pray at all times. They didn't just pray when they set aside time alone to do so. They show us that even on the road, or when talking to someone, they could be asking God to help them.

In the same way, Jesus Christ left us the same example. The Bible says that getting up very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed. (Mark 1:35).

- He often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. (Luke 5:16).
- He also prayed when he wanted the Father to multiply food. Or on the cross, imploring forgiveness for those who crucified him.
- The Lord Jesus left us precise instructions for prayer:

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matthew 6:6

4.2.2 *Involve others in prayer.*

One of the first things that the orphans who were cared for in G. Müller's orphanage learned was to pray. Müller made sure that from a young age they learned:

- To have a personal relationship with God
- To trust that God provides
- To study the Bible
- To bring their needs before God in prayer.

But it was not only the children who joined in prayer. Each helper who participated in the ministry was also required to join in daily prayer. No doubt their lives were enriched by seeing that the faith of that man was answered by God in an extraordinary way. Here's an example:

On one occasion there was nothing to eat. When it was time for lunch, Müller asked the children, who were already sitting at the table waiting for their food, to pray as they did every time to bless the food. Just as they finished praying, the doorbell rang. It was the baker who arrived with enough food, stating that God had asked him to do that.

God will allow us to experience such miracles. I remember that in an after-dinner talk, Pastor Esther Bernal told us about something similar. In a campaign they were carrying out, more people had arrived than estimated, so the food available was not enough. But they prayed in faith and in the end the food was enough to care for each person.

We have said that in order to pray rightly, we must know God through His Word and experience His presence personally. Lucas Abadías (2023) points out that by the time G. Müller became an adult, he had formed the habit of reading the entire Bible four times a year.

We also have the example of Paul. The Scriptures show us Paul praying in the most diverse circumstances, notes Wendy Bello (2023):

- In the prison of Philippi, we find him praying and singing hymns with Silas, his companion in ministry (Acts 16:25).
- In cities such as Lystra and Iconium, he prayed to appoint elders in the churches (Acts 14:23).
- He prayed for the sick (Acts 28:8).
- He prayed for other believers (Rom. 1:10; Phil. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:2)

But not only did Paul pray for others, he asked others to pray for him:

- To boldly preach the gospel. (Ephesians 6:19)
- To be delivered from wicked men. (2 Thessalonians 3:2)

4.2.3 Characteristics of George Müller's ministry.

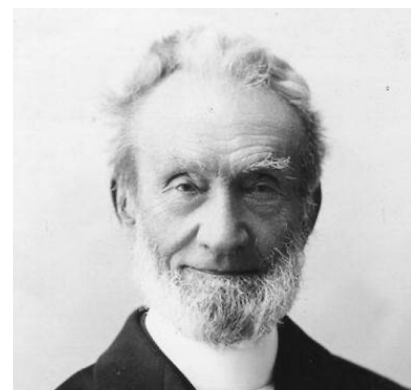
A. Let's start small.

George Müller's best-known ministry had to do with orphanages, which he began in 1834 in his own home with a kind of shelter for thirty girls. The ministry was started with only two shillings in his pocket.

A short time later they managed to occupy three houses, reaching 130 children.

But some time later, God granted him to build his own facilities without having to go into debt. Everything was achieved based on voluntary donations. There it housed 300 children simultaneously.

George Müller prayed to know God's will about whether he should stay on Wilson Street or build a new orphanage. Eventually, he decided to build and prayed for 35 days to get the ten thousand pounds needed, without having to borrow. After receiving a gift and the help of a Christian architect, Müller began construction of the new orphanage. Their patience and faith were rewarded with great provision. (Audiobooks, 2022). In the last years of his life, he housed two thousand children. (Litigated, 2023)



B. Trust God to Provide

Müller was convinced that the One to whom he addressed his prayers would supply all his fundamental needs. Charles Spurgeon, Müller's contemporary, said the following in one of his sermons (Garrido, 2018):

People say that Mr. Müller of Bristol is enthusiastic, because he gathers seven hundred children and believes that God will provide for them; Even if there's nothing in the bag, he often believes that provision will come. My dear brethren, he is not an enthusiast; He only does what should be the common action of every Christian... He does not act according to common sense, but according to something higher than common sense: uncommon faith.

Müller himself said years later (Garrido, 2018):

Here's the great secret of ministry success: Work with all your might; But don't trust your work in the least. Pray with all your might for God's blessing; but at the same time, work with all diligence, with all patience, with all perseverance. Pray then, and work. Work and pray... And do it like this every day of your life.

C. Let's include everyone who can contribute

We recognize that the resources available to us are scarce. That's why we must pray that God will touch the hearts of more people who can contribute their financial, material, time, etc. resources to the ministry.

Our financial contributors can come from a variety of sources:

- Brethren in the faith with good finances and a merciful heart
- People who don't believe in Christ, but practice philanthropy or sympathize with the church
- Funding from the various local, state, or federal governments

But we should also pray that God will raise up many brothers and sisters to join in the ministry of compassionate outreach. Imagine the number of collaborators that G. Müller needed to be able to adequately attend to all of those children on a daily basis!

D. Aim at transforming lives through Christ Jesus.

All compassionate outreach ministries are aimed at helping people improve their living conditions, and as a result, know the love of Christ. Certainly not everyone will come to accept Christ as their personal Savior, but make sure they have enough opportunities to experience God's love in their lives and hear the message of salvation.

Purposeful compassion is always done in the name of Jesus (Church of the Nazarene, 2015). Let's remember that:

- Jesus is our model of compassion. In the gospels, Jesus was moved in the depths of his being to "suffer with" humanity.
- Jesus was particularly moved to compassion in loving and caring for the poor, the lost, the sick, the marginalized, and the vulnerable.
- Jesus is our model of how to live and how to love.

- We do every act of service, generosity, or mercy in the name of Jesus, and we offer efforts that reveal the love of Jesus. (Matthew 10:42)

E. Make sure God is endorsing compassionate outreach ministry.

Although the ministry began in the Müller family's own home, more children with needs to be cared for soon began to arrive. Over time, G. Müller came to care for about 10,000 children in his orphanages, whom he helped to change their lives.

When God supports your ministry, He'll show you like Müller that He wants you to move forward with that ministry. Likewise, God has ways of showing you that He has better plans than yours and can interfere with a ministry "that you consider good and proper." Remember that His plans will always be better than ours ... constantly seek His direction.

F. Don't seek personal benefits

One thing that G. Müller sought was to always apply resources with fidelity to the Ministry and not to take personal advantage of them. G. Müller comments that sometimes the offerings were personally addressed to him to meet his needs, but he dedicated it to the ministry.

George Müller even gave up receiving a salary for his ministry (Abadías, 2023). Certainly the worker is worthy of his wages. But we must learn to be good stewards. (1 Peter 4:10)

G. We'll go through trials and difficulties, but let us trust in God

In every ministry of compassionate outreach, trials and difficulties will be experienced. G. Müller himself experienced them:

- There were problems many times to meet the necessary expenses.
- Other times there were problems in having enough helpers to take care of the children.
- There were problems with the facilities
- Neighbors sometimes opposed Müller's orphanages, arguing that they caused various problems for the community.

Müller's life was also very tried personally, he lost three children and his two wives, but he continued to trust and serve his Lord. (Garrido, 2018)

4.2.4 Results of his ministry.

Below, I share with you the achievements achieved through the ministry of G. Müller. The intention is that we'll be challenged in our faith and that we'll be encouraged to implement more compassionate outreach ministries in our local churches. Lucas Abadía points out that George Müller's ministry had the following impact:

- During his lifetime, this man founded and led an organization that provided shelter for more than ten thousand orphans.
- He also led the establishment of 117 schools that offered Christian education to more than 120,000 children. (Litigated, 2023)
- More than 200 years later, his legacy continues, as this Ministry is continued by other people who took on the task.

- He achieved the distribution of approximately 282,000 Bibles and millions of New Testaments, books, tracts and booklets.

4.3 Conclusions

Pray that God will help us understand the spiritual vitality we develop by praying intentionally, specifically, and consistently.

Pray that God will show us those ministries that would most enable us to reach the unconverted in the community in which we minister. Pray that God will help us to have faith that perseveres in the difficulties we'll face as we undertake compassionate outreach ministries that go according to His plan.

Let's pray that God will provide all that is necessary. In doing so, let's not use vain repetitions as Jesus instructed us. (Matthew 6:7)

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. What compassionate outreach ministries do you think can be implemented in your local church? Choose one of them and estimate the resources needed for its implementation.

2. According to your gifts and talents, what is the compassionate outreach ministry that you could actively engage in according to your gifts?

3. What do you consider to be the three barriers that must be overcome in your local church to implement new compassionate ministries? Explain how these barriers could be overcome with God's help.

Bibliographic references

- Abadía, Lucas. (2023). *George Müller: una vida de oración y de fe (George Müller: a life of prayer and faith)*. <https://biteproject.com/george-muller/>
- Audiolibros. (2022). *Biografía de George Müller // Una vida de fe y oración (Biography of George Müller // A Life of Faith and Prayer)*. <https://www.solidariatv.com/george-muller-biografia/>
- Bello, Wendy. (2023). *Más allá de mi lista de oración. Lo que enseñan las cartas de Pablo (Beyond my prayer list. What Paul's Letters Teach)*.
- Garrido, Beatriz. (2018). *George Müller, el peso de una oración (George Müller, the weight of a prayer)*. <https://protestantedigital.com/print/44935/George-Muller-el-peso-de-una-oracion>
- Iglesia del Nazareno. (2015). *Esenciales Nazarenos. Quiénes somos. Qué creemos (Nazarene Essentials. Who we are. What do we believe?)*.
- Iglesia del Nazareno. (2022). *Reglamento de Discipulado Nazareno Internacional (DNI) (By-Laws of Nazarene Discipleship International (NDI))*.
- Pleiteado, Luciano. (2023). *Un millón y medio de oraciones respondidas. La vida completa de George Müller (A million and a half prayers answered. The Complete Life of George Müller)*. <https://lacorriente.com/un-millon-y-medio-de-oraciones-respondidas-la-vida-completa-de-george-muller/>
- Sims. A. (2009) *Una Hora con George Mueller (An Hour with George Mueller)*

Lesson 5. *He's not a burden, he's my brother*

Biblical Text: *Luke 10:33-34*

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

Competencies:

1. **Get to know** Christ's compassion through the parable of the Good Samaritan.
2. **Be moved** to practice compassion as a means of compassionate outreach.
3. **Take** care of the people who are close to you.

5.1 Introduction

In a previous lesson we studied the impact of George Muller's compassionate outreach ministry and a large team of collaborators. We saw how throughout his life he had the opportunity to impact thousands of children, whose lives were transformed by Christ.

Now we'll study how God also allows us in a personal way to influence the lives of people around us. To do this, we'll reflect on the parable of the Good Samaritan to analyze the distinctive elements of a person who has adopted compassionate outreach as a lifestyle.

So through the lesson, we'll be able to know what Christ asks for from our lives, we'll discover who our neighbor is, and what is expected of us as ambassadors of the Kingdom that Christ has called us to be a part of.

5.2 Development

5.2.1 *What we must do to have eternal life.*

The parable of the Good Samaritan is only narrated in Luke's gospel. The parable originates from the question of an interpreter of the law, probably a Pharisee. The Bible points out that in reality his eagerness, rather than learning, was to test Jesus. This very knowledgeable interpreter of the Scriptures just wanted to annoy him. But Jesus, who never misses the opportunity to leave us teachings about the life to be led that His Kingdom demands, transforms the question into a great teaching that is still admired today.

When Jesus knew that the man's intention was to test him, he answered him with two other questions:

- "What is written in the Law?
- How do you read it (how do you interpret it)?"

At this the teacher of the Law took his knowledge and answered:

- Based on the *Shema*: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind"* (v. 27).
- And he added, quoting Leviticus 19:18, *"And your neighbor as yourself"* (v. 27).

Here we find the first pillar for developing a compassionate lifestyle. We must love God and our neighbor.

5.2.2 But who is my neighbor?

a. Actions of the Levite and the Priest

The teacher of the law posed a new question: Who is my neighbor? Faced with this new question, Jesus answered with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable says in Luke 10:

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side."

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a road of about thirty-two kilometers with a descent of about 700 meters above sea level to about 400 meters below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. We must remember that in those times there were not the facilities that exist today for transportation. They travelled with pack animals and the roads were rugged.

This road was known as the "Bloody Path" because it was very dangerous. It was a desolate road, and had areas where it was easy for thieves and criminals to hide and wait for their victims. The people who had to walk that path did so very cautiously because they knew it was very dangerous.

The Parable relates that the priest and the Levite saw the man lying on the road, badly wounded, but they turned aside and walked on. Why didn't they stop to help the poor wounded man? One possible explanation is that if the man had died while the priest or Levite was providing him with help, it would have caused them some inconvenience. Priests were forbidden to touch a corpse except that of a very close relative. Even so, they had to go through seven days of purification (Ezekiel 44:25-27). The ceremonial rules were very strict.

Although more than one might think that the rule of mercy should have been applied in that case and they should have helped that wounded man on the way. The thing is that the priest in the parable didn't want to risk it. This priest didn't even come close to look at the fallen man who needed to be helped, but he saw him and turned away and walked on. He didn't have the sensitivity to even see what had happened to him; he didn't care about the situation of the individual lying on the ground naked and injured.

What would we say today if we saw a pastor or a church leader doing something similar, for example? Perhaps we would think that the church should be an example of what it preaches. Definitely being insensitive to human pain is not congruent with God's call to *"love your neighbor as yourself"* (10:27b).

The Levite would also have been unclean for seven days if the man had died while helping him (Numbers 19:11-22).

- In addition, they would have had to take many risks if they had stopped to help, because they too could have become victims of criminals.
- It seems, then, that the priest and the Levite had valid reasons for not stopping to help the wounded man. However, they ignored God's supreme commandment to love God and neighbor as oneself, which must be above all else. Recall that even Jesus healed the sick on the day established by God as the Sabbath. This is why Jesus said that these two commandments are the most important (Mark 12:29-31).
- So out of love and mercy, it was worth facing the inconvenience that might have been caused by stopping to help the wounded man. But it's much easier to look at people in need, get sidetracked, and pass by, while just praying asking God to have mercy on them.

b. Actions of the Good Samaritan

The parable goes on to say:

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. Luke 10:33

Let's remember that Samaria occupied a rugged territory that was occupied by the ten tribes led by Jeroboam, called the Kingdom of the North. This stretched from Bethel to Dan. The Northern Kingdom was conquered by Assyria in 721 B.C., who destroyed Samaria. As was customary, when they conquered them, some were taken into captivity, while others were distributed in various places occupied by that Empire. Then, the conquistadors took possession of the land and mixed with the conquered people. This caused the Samaritans to be considered unclean for mixing with other peoples (pagans). After the captivity, a hatred developed between the Samaritans and the Jewish remnant.

So, remembering this background, it's more striking that it's the Samaritan who shows mercy to the Jew who had travelled from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Mercy. This word refers to the pure love of Christ. The Greek word expresses that the Samaritan's bowels were stirred with deep inner compassion. This word is used in the New Testament to describe God's divine mercy.

- It's highlighted in the parables of the merciless servant, where the master of that servant (representing God) was *"moved to mercy"* (Matthew 18:27);
- And of the prodigal son, where the father (another symbol of God) saw his son return and *"was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him"* (Luke 15:20).

In the same way, the Samaritan represents the divine merciful Christ who suffered for our sake. It's worth reflecting on whether the great mercy experienced by the Samaritan is what we experience today in the face of the needs of others, including those who aren't part of our family or friends.

Jesus commands His disciples to love their neighbor, and in the story of the half-dead man, Jesus showed us what this love looks like in practice (Adams, 2022):

- It's seen in kindness, in justice and in mercy.
- It's seen in being compassionate towards people, not dismissive.
- It's seen in seeking the good of our neighbor, even if our neighbor seeks our evil.
- It's seen in reaching out to people the world would turn away from and spending time with people the world would ignore.

Isaac Adams (2022) describes it as "This love involves putting other people's desires before our own. This love involves going through trouble if it means getting our neighbor out of trouble."

Then Isaac Adams (2022) explains that the love of a disciple for his neighbor "is a love that is very similar to God's love for us. The more we know God's love for us, the more we'll love our enemies and our neighbors."

c. **Jesus is represented in the Good Samaritan**

Let's see below some symbolisms that appear in the parable (Welch, n.d.):

He bandaged his wounds. Some ancient Christians believed that bandages represented love, faith, and hope, "bandages of salvation that cannot be broken." To others, they represented the teachings of Christ, which bind us to righteousness.

Oil. A lotion with olive oil had been found to be soothing. Chrysostom considered it a "holy anointing," which could well refer to various priesthood ordinances, the healing of the sick (see James 5:14), the gift of the Holy Ghost (often symbolized by olive oil), or the anointing of a king or queen.

Wine. The Samaritan also poured wine on the open wound to clean it. Wine is associated with the blood of Christ, symbolized by the sacrament (see Matthew 26:27–29). This wine, the atoning blood, washes away sin and purifies the soul, allowing the Spirit of God to be with us. This helps us ponder that compassionate outreach comes with the task of sharing the gospel.

Then the parable says:

Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. Luke 10:34b

And put him on his donkey. Here we see Christ Himself carrying us, fulfilling prophecies, bearing our sicknesses (see Isaiah 53:4) and our sins, and suffering for us. The Samaritan, who represents the figure of Christ, went beyond elementary care for man fallen on the road. He took him with him and took it upon himself to take him to safety.



Let's meditate at this point on whether we have taken care to bring the sinner to a "safe place" where the sinner can be restored, when we have shared the gospel with others.

Inn. For the first Christians, the inn clearly symbolized the Church. The "inn" was "public housing open to all." A public shelter resembles Christ's Church in many ways. An inn on the road is not a heavenly destination, but a necessary aid to help travelers reach their eternal home.

So we see the good Samaritan take him to the inn and make sure he had a safe place to be restored.

He took care of him. The Samaritan remained with the wounded man and cared for him in person the first night. He didn't hand over the wounded man to the care of the innkeeper too quickly, but remained with him in the most difficult moments.

Then he goes on to say in 10:35:

The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

The innkeeper. If the inn is equivalent to the Church at large, then the innkeeper and his employees can represent all the members of the Church and the workers to whom the Lord entrusts the nurturing and care of any rescued soul who desires to be healed.

When I return. The character representing Christ, the Samaritan, promised to return again, a clear allusion to the second coming of Christ. The original Greek word translated "when he returns" appears only once more in the New Testament, in Luke 19:15, in the parable of the Lord who would return to judge the people according to what they had done with the money he had given them. Such a connection reinforces this allusion to the Second Coming.

Pay or reward. Finally, he agrees with the inn keeper to cover all costs: "I will pay you any expenses you have."

This makes us think that, if we show love to our neighbor, Jesus will also come and give us the reward: eternal life. But have you stopped to think about what the pay is if you aren't exercising this type of love for your neighbor?

Concluding the parable, we see that Jesus asks:

10:36-37: "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

We could then conclude that our neighbor is anyone who needs something that we can supply, starting with the good news of the gospel and continuing with some other need that we as integral beings usually have.

Then Jesus answered him, *"Go and do likewise"* (v. 37). Likewise, purposeful compassion flows naturally from transformed believers (Nazarene Essentials, 2015) to our "neighbors." Like this:

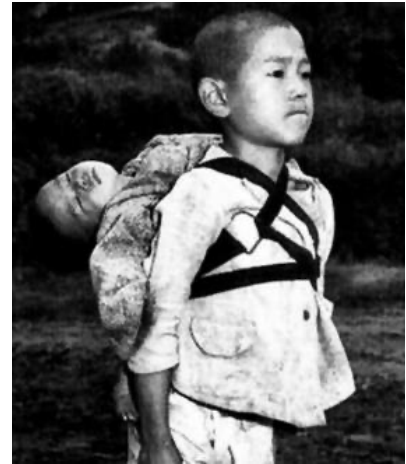
- The church is called to embody God's own love and compassion in the world.
- Compassionate work is never completed by human strength or social activism alone.
- As the body of Christ, our compassionate calling touches all areas of life in a holistic way, shaped by the life of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit transforms the hearts of believers, who in turn work to bring about the physical, social, and spiritual transformation of our world.
- Compassion aims to be integral and active in the life and ministry of each congregation.

The touching story of the boy carrying his brother in World War II

This parable reminds us of a shocking story of the Second World War. The story tells of a boy who arrived at a military detachment in Nagasaki carrying a small child on his back.

In many places, especially in rural areas, this scene would be an everyday occurrence, as older siblings carry their younger siblings in this way. But in the middle of the war, it was something that attracted a lot of attention. Especially when he discovered that the small child carried on the back of the eldest lay lifeless.

It's narrated that someone asked the boy if he was not too heavy a burden to continue with. To which the boy replied, "He's not a burden, he's my brother." Songs have been written about it. There are others who refer the phrase to similar scenes in other wars. The reality is that that brave little boy gives us Christians a life lesson for today.



Whom have we decided to "put on our donkey" to take with us and take care of them? Perhaps we should think of the closest ones to begin with:

- Do we support our parents who cannot fend for themselves?
- Do we support family members who for some reason cannot fend for themselves, at least for a while?
- Do we sustain some brothers or sisters in the faith whose maturity has not yet been reached?

Jesus is our model of compassion. In the gospels, Jesus was moved in the depths of his being to "suffer with" humanity. Jesus was particularly moved to compassion in loving and caring for the poor, the lost, the sick, the marginalized, and the vulnerable. Let's also remember that compassion aims to be integral and active in the life and ministry of each congregation. (Church of the Nazarene, 2022)

5.3 Conclusions

We have learned that to inherit eternal life, it's necessary to love God and our neighbor. We also learned that our neighbor is anyone who requires something that we can supply.

The needs of people, as integral beings, encompass both the physical, the mental, the emotional, but above all the spiritual. As people who claim to love God, we have a responsibility to be attentive to the people around us and see them with the eyes with which Jesus saw them. That is, as people in need and who need to come to the feet of Christ.

Small and large acts of love on our part will make it possible for more people to know and experience God's love for them. That will open up the possibility for them to hear the gospel message. Doing so will give us the satisfaction of knowing that we're on the right path to inherit eternal life.

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. If you were asked to be the teacher of a new disciple in church and specifically asked to teach them how to develop a compassionate lifestyle, what steps would you take to achieve this?

2. What compassionate acts have you received that have marked your life?

3. Reflect on people close to you. Who could you impact with the model of Jesus with compassionate acts, and then share the gospel with them? Detail the steps to follow. Think of family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc.

Bibliographic references

- Adams, Isaac. (2022). ***Entrenamiento: ¿Cómo puedo crecer como cristiano? 9 Marks (Training: How can I grow as a Christian? 9 Marks)***. B&h Publishing Group.
- Iglesia del Nazareno. (2015). ***Esenciales Nazarenos. Quienes somos. Que creemos (Nazarene Essentials. Who we are. That we believe)***.
- Iglesia del Nazareno. (2022). ***Reglamento de Discipulado Nazareno Internacional (DNI) (Nazarene Discipleship International (NDI) By-laws)***.
- Welch, John. (s.f.). ***El buen samaritano: Símbolos olvidados (The Good Samaritan: Forgotten Symbols)***. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2007/02/the-good-samaritan-forgotten-symbols?lang=spa>

Lesson 6. Comprehensive *Biblical Knowledge*

Biblical Study Text: *John 5:39*

You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.

Competencies:

- **Explain** the command to study the Bible.
- **Value** the importance of studying the Bible.
- **Identify** benefits of comprehensive Bible learning.

6.1 Introduction

Carl Ellis (Adams, 2022) tells us that: "A disciple is someone in the process of learning all the things that Christ commands." This implies that a disciple is a student. The definition comes from Jesus' final instructions to His disciples in Matthew 28:18-20. So a central part of discipleship is to teach the core biblical truths to the new disciple.

But how could we carry out the teaching of such truths if we didn't know them ourselves? It's in the Bible that we'll find the great truths to be part of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, integral knowledge of the Bible is the responsibility of the believer, since one cannot practice what one doesn't know. And to know the scriptures, a thorough, constant and intentional study is required.

So, in this lesson we're going to study the importance of having comprehensive Bible learning, as well as some of the benefits of permanently conducting a comprehensive Bible study.

6.2 Development

6.2.1 *The mandate of Bible study.*

God has always placed great importance on the command to know His Scriptures. We can see it from the Old Testament when it says:

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words that I command you today will be upon your heart; and you shall repeat them to your children, and you shall speak of them when you are at home, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you get up. And thou shalt bind them as a sign in thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thy eyes; and you shall write them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Here, God commands that His Word be taught in such a way as to penetrate the heart. The content of that Word should be mentioned every day. The command to tie it to the hand, on the forehead, the posts, and the door makes it clear that God is saying that the work must be done by whatever method is required. This command leads us to learn and teach His Word.

In the New Testament, we see several passages that confirm the command to study the Scriptures. For example:

You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me. John 5:39

The following passage also shows us the command and purpose of Bible study.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

We see the word "study." The Lord Jesus commanded this when He told men to "study the scriptures." The word denotes something more intense than the idea of reading. It implies investigating something in depth. Thus, when studying a passage, we usually ask a series of questions to understand the true meaning of what we read. Some of those questions may include:

- What does the passage say?
- Who wrote it?
- To whom did he write it?
- When did he write it?
- Under what circumstances did he write it?
- Why did he write it?
- What is the meaning of the text?
- How is the text applied?

By conducting a serious study of the Bible, we'll extract the great pearls contained in each passage. If we don't do so, we run the risk of having only a superficial knowledge of biblical truths.

6.2.2 Importance of comprehensive biblical learning.

Jesus placed a high priority on teaching His disciples based on Scripture. It was knowledge of the Scriptures, combined with His instructions, that shaped their knowledge of God and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Learning the scriptures through individual and group study helps disciples become more like Christ. When we study God's Word, which is active and alive, we discover who God is, how God loves, and how we're to love others. By doing this, we allow God to speak to us, mold us, and sanctify us.

Knowing God's Word is essential to Christlike discipleship.

Actively participating in the systematic study and application of God's Word facilitates spiritual transformation and growth. As we grow and learn, we begin to fully understand and obey God's mission for His disciples to go and reach out to unbelievers with God's love. When we allow God's Word to transform us, we're modeling to others the importance of learning God's Word.

Comprehensive biblical learning should lead us to:

- Understand the fundamental principles of the Bible.
- Apply biblical knowledge in everyday situations.
- Relate biblical concepts to current ethical and moral situations.
- Make informed and ethically sound decisions based on biblical teaching.
- Develop ethical and respectful attitudes and behaviors towards others.

Pastor Miguel Núñez (2022) highlights the following reasons why Bible study is important:

It's important because it's indispensable for our growth.

To grow spiritually, we need to study, understand, and apply the Word. That's why the apostle Peter writes in his first letter: *"Like newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that by it they may grow up unto salvation"* (1 Peter 2:2).

The Bible is useful for growth and there's no growth if we don't desire it and consume it. Hence, Peter exhorts us not only to read it, but to desire it and desire it with passion because that desire will lead us to the Word often, and just as often, we'll be fed by it.

It's important because to be well equipped, we need the Word of God.

God asks us to evangelize others. That requires us to know biblical truths. We're also asked in the great commission to disciple others by teaching all truths. But it's clear that in order to teach others, we need to be well equipped ourselves, and for this we need to study the Word so that we can know, understand, and apply the Word.

Miguel Núñez (2022) points out that "As believers, we need to be well equipped, and the one who equips us for every good work is the Holy Spirit, through the Word inspired by God, which is useful to teach, rebuke, correct and instruct in righteousness".

It's important because it's essential to our spiritual and emotional maturity.

In Hebrews 5:12-14 the Word tells us

In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Here, milk explained as food refers to God's Word, but at different levels of depth, so that as the believer consumes it, he matures spiritually and learns to discern right and wrong.

Miguel Núñez (2022) points out that:

Most of the time we make a bad decision, it's due to a lack of discernment. But it turns out that discernment is given by the Spirit of God and He never gives it divorced from the Word of God. The Holy Spirit uses the Word we have previously consumed to enlighten our minds and help us discern correctly.

So, in this passage the author of Hebrews is reproaching the readers for their lack of discernment and, consequently, spiritual maturity of a group of believers due to little study of God's Word.

If you want to be led by God's Spirit and have greater discernment, you must begin by studying more of God's Word. (Núñez, 2022)

6.2.3 Benefits of Bible study.

As Gerson Morey (2013) points out, one of the greatest benefits of the Bible is that it instructs us "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). That is, the scriptures help form the character of Christ and enable us to do all that God requires of us.

Ralph Mendez (2002) based on 2 Timothy 3:15-16 points out that by studying the Bible we'll have other additional benefits:

- **Teaches.** In the Bible we'll find God's will for us, our families, and our community. This includes what we're to do, as well as what God forbids us to do or practice.
- **Rebukes.** It reminds us of what we have learned from Scripture itself. It helps us feel what is wrong and creates awareness in us of what pleases or displeases God.
- **Corrects.** The Bible points out to us the specific areas where we're failing. The Bible makes it clear to us which things we practice are wrong to God.

- **Instructs.** It guides us and tells us how to do what he has taught us; it shows us the way to follow in order to put into practice what we have learned. It shows us the steps to follow to do what is pleasing to the Lord and thus fulfill his will.

6.2.4 The benefit of studying in small groups.

In addition to the personal Bible study that every disciple of Jesus should have, it's highly desirable to study the Bible with a support group. Small groups are very important here.

God's design is for Christianity to be relational and not the product of individual effort. Therefore, group Bible study is extremely valuable. Small group study is so effective that Jesus used it to train the men who would become known as the apostles (Luke 6:12-16; Mark 4:34).

In this regard, the Blog Got Question (n.d.). declares that:

When we consider God's Word together, we have the opportunity to share our different perspectives and viewpoints and they expand because of the interaction. More information is retained when there's active participation, so that knowledge of the Bible is improved. Application and responsibility bring understanding that moves God's Word from the intellect to the heart. Transformation is encouraged (Romans 12:2), and our lives are changed. When our lives change, so do the lives of those around us.

6.3 Conclusions

Just as when we go to visit a country, we seek to know the laws that govern that place and the consequences of not obeying them, so when we become disciples of Jesus, we must know the rules of the Kingdom of God.

That is why Jesus and other Bible authors have taught us that a comprehensive Bible study is necessary. In doing so, we'll know what God's will is for our lives, His plan of salvation, the importance of fulfilling the Great Commission, etc. But we'll also know the many promises that will encourage us along the Journey of Grace to continue to the goal

The ultimate purpose of the Scriptures is: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work. The Christian who is not diligently engaged in a serious study of Scripture is simply deficient as a disciple of Christ (Theology for Living Blog, 2017)

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. What is the difference between "reading the Bible" and "searching or studying the Bible"? How are the scriptures searched?

2. What is the importance of conducting a lifelong comprehensive Bible study?

3. What do you consider to be the three main benefits of studying the Word?

Bibliographic references

- Adams, Isaac. (2022). *Entrenamiento: ¿Cómo puedo crecer como cristiano? 9 Marks (Training: How Can I Grow as a Christian? 9 Marks)*. B&h Publishing Group.
- Blog Got Question. (s.f.). *¿Cuál es la importancia de los estudios bíblicos en grupo? (What is the importance of group Bible studies?)* <https://www.gotquestions.org/Espanol/estudio-biblia-grupo.html>
- Blog Teología para vivir. (2017). *El mandato Bíblico de estudiar las Escrituras (The Biblical command to study the Scriptures)*. <https://semperreformandaperu.org/2017/05/19/el-mandato-biblico-de-estudiar-las-escrituras/>
- Hilliker, Joel. (2024). *¿Le beneficia su estudio de la Biblia? (Does your Bible study benefit you?)* <https://pcg.church/articles/7686/le-beneficia-su-estudio-de-la-biblia>
- Méndez, Ralph. (2002). *La importancia del estudio de la biblia (The Importance of Bible Study)*. <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/la-importancia-del-estudio-de-la-biblia-ralph-mendez-sermon-on-faith-44054>
- Morey, Gerson. (2013). *Mandato, importancia y beneficios del estudio de la biblia (Mandate, Importance, and Benefits of Bible Study)*. <https://www.coalicionporelevangelio.org/entradas/gerson-morey/mandato-importancia-y-beneficios-del-estudio-de-la-biblia/>
- Núñez, Miguel. (2022). *La importancia del estudio de la Biblia (The Importance of Bible Study)*. <https://integridadysabiduria.org/la-importancia-del-estudio-de-la-biblia-2/>

Lesson 7. *Building Authentic Relationship to evangelize*

Biblical Text: Matthew 9:11b-13

"Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Competencies:

- **Explain** why Jesus became "a friend of sinners."
- **Explain** the importance of relationships with the unconverted as a means of sharing the gospel with them.
- **Practice** some strategies for developing authentic relationships for evangelistic purposes.

7.1 Introduction

It often happens that by coming to the feet of Christ and accepting Him as our personal Savior, we distance ourselves from people who aren't Christians. However, we must remember that we have been put into this world to be witnesses to Christ and to become salt and light.

That is why it's necessary that, as Jesus did, we become "friends of sinners" to generate the opportunity to be heard with the message of the gospel. To do this, we must strive to establish authentic relationships with the unconverted, for it's through relationships that we can reach people's hearts and share the gospel message.

To do so, it's necessary first to have an intimate relationship with Christ. That should make love for unconverted people a priority that translates into sharing the good news with them.

We live in a culture in which relationships with others are increasingly weak, due among other things to selfishness. But as Christians we must seek to be a bridge between the unconverted and Christ.

So in this lesson we'll study how to improve our relationships with the unconverted for the purpose of sharing the gospel with them.

7.2 Development

7.2.1 *Jesus, friend of sinners.*

Jesus was criticized by the religious leaders of his day for associating with tax collectors and sinners. His answer revealed both his heart and the search for the lost: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). Thus, Jesus made it clear that He "had come to seek and to save that which was lost."

By being "a friend of sinners," Jesus showed that "the kindness of God leads us to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). Jesus' purpose in befriending sinners was not to join them in their sin, but to save them from it (1 Timothy 1:15). Christ didn't come to earth to indulge in sin, but to call sinners to repentance. Likewise, as Christians, our mission is to reach out to the world around us and love people into a life-changing relationship with Christ.

The gospel is something to be communicated through personal relationships. It was not reduced to an event to be announced, but embraced the person to the point of producing a radical change in the lives of those who come into contact with Jesus. To do this, convincing oneself of the person and the message he or she announces contributes. This knowledge, which becomes conviction (knowledge by experience), has to be communicated to others so that they too may have eternal life.

7.2.2 *Ways to Cultivate and Strengthen Relationships*

In his Blog, the Church of Jesus Christ. (2018) gives us some advice about how we can cultivate meaningful relationships.

a. Learn about them.

A good place to start is to show genuine interest in them. Inquire about their life with questions concerning if they have a spouse, children, etc. You can also talk about their work, their expectations, tastes or hobbies.

You can take advantage of and share experiences about what relationships are like in your family, some principles of how to manage your family finances, what efforts you make so that the family enjoys good health, etc.

It's good to get to know the names of each family member and be aware of important events such as birthdays or when they are going to receive medical treatment. This provides an opportunity to write a note or make a call to congratulate a family member on a special accomplishment or accomplishment.

No doubt it also helps a lot to offer that we can pray for some problem that they are going through. That is a theme that allows us to give continuity to important things in the lives of the people to be evangelized.

b. Spend time together.

It takes time to develop a relationship. So, we must look for opportunities to stay in touch with them. Studies show that letting people know you care about them is essential to maintaining healthy relationships.

Take advantage and invite your friends over for coffee. To avoid overspending, you can do it at home. Then try to get not only your friend to go to that coffee chat, but also your wife if you're married. Until the point of being able to get together as families with children.

Also take advantage of church ministries such as the Men's Ministry (MIG) meeting. Take advantage of celebrations such as Father's Day, Mother's Day, Children's Day, etc. to see that the person has the opportunity to experience what the life of the disciples is like.

If it's a person you don't see often, use the various media and social networks to follow up on the friendship. If the other person seems unresponsive, don't force the relationship. Give them time to see your sincere efforts.

c. Communicate in an affective and respectful manner.

Ryan Dunleav (2022) points out that the way we say something is as important or more important than what we say. "If your tone or behavior is unpleasant, building a relationship will be difficult. But a welcoming tone can invite a new friend into your life. In all our conversations, we should strive to:

- Speak kindly and gently.
- Be authentic and transparent.
- Show compassion towards them."

We must also consider that building meaningful relationships requires us to go beyond the superficial. Superficial communication only addresses minor issues. But authentic relationships are built by sharing feelings, beliefs, goals, and concerns, which is necessary to make more meaningful connections.

Listening is a critical part of communicating that we care. When you listen carefully, your opportunity to help others come to Christ increases, as you gain understanding and understanding of their needs and as they feel loved, understood, and secure (Church of Jesus Christ, n.d.).

d. Appreciate differences as well as commonalities.

God has created each of us with personal characteristics. We see that Jesus called people with great differences from each other to be his disciples.

- He called Simon the Zealot who was a person willing to take up arms against the Roman Empire, but at the same time he called a publican who worked for that Empire.
- He called people with various occupations.
- He called people with different temperaments.
- His disciples had diverse abilities.

But Jesus showed them that they must learn to respect differences and focus on the Mission. For example, on one occasion John and James were angry because some Samaritans would not give them lodging. This led them to ask Jesus for permission to allow them to pray for fire to descend from heaven against those Samaritans. Jesus had to rebuke them and remind them that He had come to give life. Remember, it's about shortening distances, not widening them.

Loving others the way God loves us requires that we try to see others the way God sees them. "We must develop the ability to see people not as what they are now, but as what they can become." We can pray for help to see others the way God does. By treating others according to their potential to grow, they are likely to develop the full potential that Christ has placed in them (Church of Jesus Christ, n.d.).

e. Serve them.

Let's remember that Jesus left us a call to serve. That's why it's important to be sensitive to the needs of the people we minister to. We must then be willing to give of our time and talents, whether in times of need or simply because you care. Always look for the opportunity to provide comfort, support, and the help they need when there's an emergency, illness, or urgent situation.

When others feel our genuine love through our acts of service, it can soften hearts and increase love and trust. That creates an upward spiral of acts of kindness that can build relationships. (Church of Jesus Christ, n.d.)

To these characteristics we can add the following:

f. Personal Witness as a Bridge to Building Authentic Relationships

Sharing the gospel through personal relationships influences not only the message to be communicated, but also the very model of the one who constitutes himself as an evangelizer.

In dealing with the unconverted, it's of the utmost importance to keep a good personal testimony. Thus, they'll see in us the kind of person who are the true disciples who have been transformed into the image of Christ. That will inspire confidence in them to ask, for example, what we would do, or what we have done, in the face of a relationship problem in marriage, in the face of an illness or in the midst of family economic problems.

The impact of an evangelizer's witness is reflected in the following way:

- For the believer: to contribute to the other person's holiness by serving as God's instrument for his or her likeness to Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thess. 3:10).
- For the non-believer: it leads to a rich spiritual relationship, bearing witness not only to Jesus with his life, but also evidencing the authenticity of the message he shares (Eph. 4: 1-6).

Because of the believer's testimony, the unbeliever develops the expectation of hearing Jesus through his speech (Matt. 10:19-20), and considers the possibility and appeal of Jesus seeing the believer behaving in the image and likeness of Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:6). As a result, when this unbeliever comes to faith, it's easy for them to believe in the authenticity of this kind of disciple and it's easier for them to integrate into a new social consciousness.

g. For the relationship to be authentic, it requires developing trust

Trust is so important in relationships that when it's lost, the possibility of being together is also lost. For example, the Bible describes the importance of trust in a partner: "Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, or any of his male or female servants, or his oxen, or his donkeys, or anything that belongs to his neighbor."

In an authentic relationship, you should always act in such a way that you are trustworthy for the other person. When respect and trust disappear, the value of the relationship disappears as well.

In friendship we also expect our friends to act in accordance with our interests. It will always be better to seek to renew trust than to abandon the relationship. Therefore, in the midst of relationships it's difficult to share the gospel. The gospel message is so important that we target it only for our trusting relationships. The impact of the gospel message will be greater as our relationships become more sincere. Both aspects are paramount.

7.2.3 Steps to Take to Build More Authentic Relationships

a. Let's look to make new friends

Ryan Dunleav (2022) gives us a key to relationally sharing the Gospel, which is to understand your circle of influence. While we need to go out and seek new relationships, we need to examine which ones God has already entrusted to us. In an average week, where do you go? Who do you spend time with? To do this, we can take into account the following:

- Make a list of people with whom you could build authentic relationships. They can be co-workers, parents of our children's schoolmates, people we contact frequently, etc.
 - Invest more time in building relationships. For example, accept that meeting to have coffee with classmates from school.
 - Go through your list of unconverted friends and family and try to invest more time in them to evangelize them.
- b. **Pray that God will help you build those relationships and then evangelize them.**
- We must pray that God will give us the Word to evangelize them.
 - Let's also pray that God will give us the skills to build healthy relationships.
 - That God may put a burden on our heart for the lost (Mark 9:36).
 - Pray that God's Spirit will work with His prevenient grace in their hearts (John 16:7-11).
 - Pray that God will open doors for you and give you new opportunities (Colossians 4:3).
- c. **Give of yourself**
- So that your relationship with Christ may be renewed every day
 - So that God will put in your heart the will as well as going the extra mile to reach the lost.
 - Be a good conversationalist and friend.
 - That you may be sensitive to observing the needs of your neighbor and you may be moved to mercy.
 - Seek to be available to them in difficult times.
 - For God to give you creative means of how to approach new people
- d. **Share the gospel through your testimony**
- Prepare your own testimony in a compact way. Practice saying this first with someone in the church or family. Then, share your story of the difference Christ has made in your life.
 - Invite them to church or an event of one of your church's ministries. For example, organize one special day a month in your Small Group to have a celebration and invite those new friends. The same can be true in ministries such as MIG, etc.

Be sure to ask your friends if anyone has explained to them what it means to be a true Christian. Let them know how to start a relationship with God.

7.3 Conclusions

When Jesus' enemies called him a "friend of sinners," they intended it to sound like an insult. To the glory of Jesus and to our eternal benefit, He endured such offenses and became "a friend closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).

Likewise, it's incumbent upon us to be a bridge to those who don't yet know Him as a personal Savior. Developing authentic relationships with the lost will be helpful in doing this.

Such relationships will be based on our testimony, a trust to develop, the love we show in that relationship. This means having time for them, listening to their needs and being willing to do what we can to help them in their need.

When we do this, we'll achieve the first goal, which is to establish authentic relationships with the unconverted. Then we'll be ready to share with them the message of hope in Christ Jesus.

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. In what sense was Jesus a friend of sinners?

2. Make a list of friends you have who don't yet have Jesus as their personal Savior. Which of them have you still not share the gospel with? What are the main reasons for not having done so? What could you do to start sharing the gospel with them?

Reflection and practical application exercises.

3. Think about the list of people you usually have a relationship with, even though they aren't your friends, nor are they Christians. What strategies can you implement to develop authentic relationships with them, for evangelistic purposes?

Bibliographic references

Compelling Truth. (s.f.). *¿Cómo es posible que Jesús sea amigo de los pecadores? (How is it possible for Jesus to be a friend of sinners?)*

<https://www.compellingtruth.org/Espanol/Jesus-amigo-de-los-pecadores.html>

Cru. (s.f.). *Evangelismo Relacional (Relational Evangelism)*.

<https://www.cru.org/mx/es/crecer-y-equipar/comparte-evangelio/principios-evangelismo/evangelismo-relacional.html>

Dunleav, Ryan. (2022). *Tres pasos para ser más relacional en el evangelismo (Three steps to becoming more relational in evangelism)*. <https://evantellespanol.org/3-pasos-para-ser-mas-relacional-en-el-evangelismo/>

Got Question. (s.f.). *¿Qué quiere decir que Jesús es amigo de pecadores? (What does it mean that Jesus is a friend of sinners?)*

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Espanol/Jesus-amigo-pecadores.html>

Iglesia de Jesucristo. (2018). *Cultivar relaciones significativas (Cultivate meaningful relationships. Cultivate meaningful relationships)*.

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/ministering-principles/building-meaningful-relationships?lang=spa>

Lesson 8. *Relational discipleship* in the style of Jesus

Biblical Text: *Matthew 18:20*

For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

Competencies:

- **Evaluate** whether our relationships with other disciples are characterized by showing love for one another.
- **Value** and **practice** service as a way to build authentic relationships.
- **Apply** the golden rule to strengthen relationships.

8.1 Introduction

Promoting authentic relationships in the faith community reflects the love and grace of Jesus Christ because it reflects His teachings of love, acceptance, and unity. By building meaningful relationships, supporting one another, and breaking down barriers, we demonstrate Christ's love to the world and create a community that reflects His character.

Alicia Britt Chole points out that "Jesus made relational discipleship a priority because his objective was much greater than simply giving information; it was to achieve integration."

In this lesson, we'll explore and develop a comprehensive understanding of how to promote authentic relationships among Christ followers. The goal is to foster a deep sense of connection and fellowship within the faith community. The lesson will allow us to delve deeper into the topic of authentic relationships in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

8.2 Development

8.2.1 *The Need for Healthy Relationships*

As human beings we have been designed to relate to others. Many things depend on the quality of our relationships, such as:

- Developing a happy family. Healthy relationship is the foundation for family understanding. Even in the midst of natural conflicts, authentic relationships will help us emerge stronger in every conflict.
- Being successful in our work. In all work we need to relate to others. Doing it correctly will help us achieve the company's objectives together.
- Enjoying the company of friends. I can't imagine a friendship where there isn't a healthy relationship. In the Bible, we can see it in the examples of David and Jonathan, in Jesus' relationship with the disciples, among others.

- Being able to build bridges with those who don't yet have Christ as Savior. When disciples associate with unbelievers, they're obeying Jesus' command to go into all creation to proclaim the Good News (Mark 16:15).
- Being able to serve in a ministry within the church. True evangelism brings the call and commitment to enter and participate in the lives of those around us.
- Being able to reflect Christ in our lives. Compassionate outreach reveals God's love for humanity.
- Becoming better disciples. Relational and intentional discipleship helps people develop intimate, obedient relationships with Jesus. (Church of the Nazarene, 2015)

8.2.2 Every good relationship begins with a good relationship with Jesus

The Nazarene Essentials (2015) emphasizes that we must begin by leading people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

- The journey of faith begins with the confession of sins and forgiveness by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
- These new creatures in Christ are regenerated and adopted into God's family.
- Regeneration brings about changes in hearts and lifestyles, and also testimonies of God's grace to those who have been transformed.
- We immediately nurture these new believers within the faith community by teaching them from the beginning that they have been saved, not only for their own sake, but also for the sake of those they'll influence and bring to Christ. They will become disciple-makers who disciple others who in turn will become disciple-makers.
- Discipleship includes helping someone else follow Jesus more closely.

8.2.3 Jesus' Model of Relationships with His Disciples

Next, we'll study some characteristics of the relationships that our Lord Jesus developed in dealing with his disciples. Pastor Tom Holladay (2008) highlights the following principles:

a. Love as the Foundation of Christian Relationships

Matthew 22:39 - "And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Our DNI Bylaws (2022) establish that:

The core of our faith and life is to love God and love others. When we know we are unconditionally loved by God and unconditionally loved by one another, unity in the Body of Christ results. This unconditional love knows no cultural, generational, or structural bounds. This unconditional love is made possible only through the working of the Holy Spirit.

It's important to embrace differences and extend grace to promote authentic relationships because it creates an environment where people feel valued and accepted for who they are. By embracing diversity and extending grace, we reflect God's love and foster unity within the community of faith. Our by-laws state in this regard (DNI, 2022):

When we deeply care for one another, we discover just how rich our identity is in Christ, and spiritual growth results. Such loving relationships help us walk the path of holiness because we are receiving both encouragement and loving correction.

Active listening and effective communication contribute to fostering authentic relationships by allowing people to truly understand and empathize with one another. Paola Cebrián (2023) explains that active listening consists of trying to really understand what the other person is trying to communicate. Empathy, on the other hand, means understanding the other's point of view and valuing their emotions and feelings. Elisa Izquierdo (n.d.) tells us that "Being empathetic allows us to connect with others on a deeper level, which in turn gives us a sense of belonging and emotional well-being."

When we engage in meaningful conversations and listen carefully, we demonstrate our commitment to building genuine bonds and fostering deeper communion.

We must communicate with the truth, expressing what we really feel. In this regard, Paola Cebrián (2023) recommends that we always speak tactfully. She tells us:

Honesty is crucial for any type of relationship, but you have to know how to communicate it. It's not the same to say "you're wrong" as "I understand your point, but I have a different perspective." The language we use can build bridges or build walls.

b. Building relationships by serving each other.

In the midst of this postmodern culture where each one seeks his own first, it's necessary to meditate on Jesus' model of serving one another. By doing so, we'll genuinely show God's love in our hearts toward others.

Elisa Izquierdo (n.d.) tells us that:

Empathy also involves taking action and helping others when possible. Look for opportunities to offer your support and help to those who need it. This can be as simple as helping a coworker with a task or offering help to a friend who is going through a difficult time. Even small acts of kindness can make a big difference in the lives of others.

For three years our Lord Jesus lived by setting an example of service to others. But even in the final stretch he wanted to insist to his disciples the importance of service. We see it in the passage in John 13:1-20 when Jesus washed the disciples' feet.

By serving others, we demonstrate in practical ways the love God has placed in our lives. There we show the love, not only in words, we have for our brothers and sisters.

The apostle Paul encourages us to do good to others, even if we don't see the results at first.
*Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we don't give up.
Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, let us do good to everyone and especially
to those of the household of faith. Galatians 6:9-10*

c. Treat others as we wish to be treated

In order not to give so many instructions about the style of relationships we should establish as participants in the Kingdom of God, Jesus left us a standard of conduct known as the Golden Rule. It reads: Matthew 7:12 *"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."* This rule then encourages us to give other people the treatment we would like to receive.

If we were asked to make a list of some things we like, we could possibly agree on several. For example:

- We like to be loved. Colossians 3:14
- If we make a mistake we would like to be forgiven. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
- If we're going through a health problem in the family, we would like others to join us in praying for healing. Romans 12:8
- In general, we all like to be treated well. Proverbs 15:1
- We like that, when talking to another person, they pay attention to us
- We like to be supported by the other members of the house when we do the cleaning.
- We like people to respect the agreements and promises made.
- We like people to value our efforts and results when doing a job.
- We like people to respect our ideas.



Why have we made a list, which could go on for a long time? Because we want to be attentive to all the areas of opportunity we have to apply this Golden Rule.

Elisa Izquierdo (n.d.) tells us that

By applying the golden rule with empathy, we build stronger, healthier bonds with others. By putting ourselves in their shoes and considering their perspectives and feelings, we create spaces of trust and mutual understanding. This allows us to build more satisfying and lasting relationships, based on respect and reciprocity.

The Golden Rule can be applied in any context. For example, Elisa Izquierdo (n.d.) points out:

- In dealing with your spouse: If the couple commits to treating each other with the same respect and consideration they would like to receive, a solid foundation will be laid for a healthy and lasting relationship.
- In dealing with your children: As parents, we should treat our children with the same respect and consideration we expect to receive from them. This involves listening to and validating their feelings, setting boundaries and discipline fairly and compassionately, and providing them with a safe and loving environment in which they can grow and develop (Izquierdo n.d.)
- In our relationships with friends: Build a relationship of affection, trust, and loyalty like the one David and Jonathan built. It survived even after Jonathan's death when David took care of his son Mephibosheth.
- In our relationships with our co-workers: This standard can help us improve communication, foster a more positive work environment, and strengthen relationships
- With our brothers and sisters in the faith: The best example is that of the disciples of Jesus. The relationship they learned to build with Christ was so strong that it helped them take charge of the Mission that Jesus entrusted to them. Let's try to make it the same with us.

Applying the Golden Rule is surely a sign of our love for others. Certainly, we'll not always be reciprocated with the same treatment, but that shouldn't be an impediment for us to continue applying the Golden Rule in every situation, starting with the family, continuing in the church, and then with our other relationships.

In the Bible Teaching Blog (n.d.) we're advised to follow the following to better put the golden rule into practice:

- **Be observant.** Pay attention to those around you. For example, you may see someone who is having trouble carrying a bag with groceries. You may hear that a neighbor is hospitalized or that a co-worker is discouraged. If you seek "not only your own interests, but also those of others," you are sure to find opportunities to help them.—Philippians 2:4.
- **Put yourself in the other person's shoes.** Imagine that you're going through the same situation as the other person. How would it feel? (Romans 12:15). If you understand how the other person is feeling, you'll want to help them.
- **Be flexible.** Consider that we're all different. What's useful to you may not be useful to someone else. So even though there are many things you can do for someone, do only what the other person thinks is best for them (1 Corinthians 10:24).

In the end, the Golden Rule is that we treat others as Christ has treated us. For this reason, we could think that this Rule extends to (Feddes, 2018):

- Treating others as you want them to treat you.
- Treating others as Jesus has treated you.
- Treating others as you would treat Jesus.

8.3 Conclusions

Outreach is the calling of every disciple. Every disciple who lives faithfully and who loves like Jesus must commit themselves to cultivating genuine relationships with others. That's why we need to continue learning to develop healthy and authentic relationships with others in every area of our lives.

To build these relationships, it's important to see the model that our Lord Jesus left us in his dealings with the twelve disciples. Among other characteristics, love for others, serving, and in general applying the Golden Rule stand out.

If we do this, we'll truly be building a community, whose unity is in Christ, which will be able to join efforts to fulfill the Mission in a more effective way.

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. What could be examples of ways to serve your family?

Reflection and practical application exercises.

2. What could be examples of forms of service to your brothers and sisters in the faith?

3. What do you consider to be the three barriers that must be overcome to be more empathetic and to be able to practice the Golden Rule on a daily basis?

Bibliographic references

Blog Enseñanzas bíblicas (s.f.). *¿Qué es la Regla de Oro? (What is the Golden Rule?)*
<https://www.jw.org/es/ense%C3%B1anzas-b%C3%ADblicas/preguntas/regla-oro/>

Cebrián, Paloma. (2023). Cómo construir relaciones saludables: *Más allá de la regla de oro (How to build healthy relationships: Beyond the Golden Rule)*.
<https://tengolaregla.com/amor/como-construir-relaciones-saludables-mas-alla-de-la-regla-de-oro/>

David Feddes. (2018). *Tres Reglas de Oro (Three Golden Rules)*.
<https://christianleaders.org/mod/page/view.php?id=51089#:~:text=Trata%20a%20los%20dem%C3%A1s%20tal,nuestras%20tres%20reglas%20de%20oro.>

Holladay, Tom. (2008). *Principios de Jesús sobre las relaciones (Jesus' Principles about relationships)*.

Izquierdo, Elisa. (s.f.). *Cómo aplicas la regla de oro con empatía cada día (How you apply the Golden Rule with empathy every day)*.
<https://saberactualizado.com/desarrollo-personal/no-hagas-lo-que-no-te-gusta-que-te-hagan/>

Lesson 9. *Equipped for Ministry*

Biblical Text: *Ephesians 4:11-12*

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Competencies:

- **Explain** what disciple training consists of.
- **Describe** some priority areas where you need to be equipped.

9.1 Introduction

It's common to hear the expression "In my church very few people are involved in ministries." Which is true. But one might ask, do all of them abstain due to laziness or lack of time?

Have you ever wondered what percentage of the church is inactive or under involved in ministry because they haven't been prepared for it? Can you describe the training programs that are in place in your local church? How are participants selected? What have been the results of this?

In this lesson, we'll explain what intentional training is and its importance in the personal growth of each believer. We're also going to identify some priority areas in which we should train our brethren in the church. To do this, we'll review the model that Jesus adopted to train his disciples.

9.2 Development

9.2.1 Called to serve in some ministry.

In Ephesians 4:1-16, it's clear that calling and equipping disciples is the task of the Christian community. The letter lays out what it means to be "in Christ" and describes the overall dynamics of the Christian community in which the gifts of each member are recognized, called, supported, and celebrated.

However, in many calling stories we find in Scripture, there's one common factor: the person called doesn't feel equipped to do the job.

- Moses objected to his stuttering;
- Gideon felt he was the least important person in the least important clan of his tribe;
- Jeremiah was very young, and Isaiah was a man of unclean lips.
- Mary wondered how her call could be possible when she was single and a virgin.

It seems that God seeks out people who feel the least qualified, but at the same time, He's very aware of what He can do through them.

9.2.2 Jesus' training model.

Next, we'll study some characteristics of the training model that our Lord Jesus used for his disciples.

The master & apprentice model.

Our Lord Jesus used a model where:

- The Lord Jesus first showed His disciples how to do things as his disciples watched.
- Then he would invite them to help him do things, such as sharing the gospel.
- Then he sent them out to carry out the ministry. Here the role of the Lord Jesus was to evaluate performance and results.
- Then came the full delegation. The disciples should take charge of the Mission and should develop others to collaborate in it.

Training focuses on helping us develop the skills that complement our gifts and talents.

Joel Comiskey (2014) points out that "Education is a lifelong process. Equipping or training, on the other hand, touches on specific abilities, and lasts for a limited time. Education never ends. It's useful to first examine the difference between equipping and education."

Dr. Neil F. McBride (Comiskey, 2014), makes a useful clarification:

Education is an expanding activity, starting with where a person stands, providing concepts and information for the development of broader perspectives and the basis for decision-making and future analysis. On the other hand, training is a more restricted activity; Considering a person's current capabilities, try to provide specific skills and knowledge needed to apply those skills. The focus is on the completion of a specific task or job.

Equipping takes time (months or years).

For disciples to be fully trained in some areas, it's necessary to invest time that can range from months to years. We must remember that it took Jesus three years to prepare the disciples. So we cannot think that, in order to teach evangelization, discipleship or preaching to some brothers and sisters, two or three lessons of one hour may suffice.

What equipping (or training) programs exist in your local church?

Training is eminently practical.

Once Jesus taught the great truths, He then trained the disciples on how to apply them in daily life. He first showed them how, but then he asked them to do it together.

Many times the training came at a certain time, as in the feeding of the five thousand with only five loaves and two fish. This passage is described in Matthew 14:13-21. We see that Jesus didn't have to go to the "classroom" to teach them, but that he involved them in responding to the need presented by the crowd that followed them.

In each case, Jesus sought that His disciples practice what He taught them how: to pray for the sick to be healed, to cast out demons, to preach the good news, etc. Perhaps this has been a weak part in some of our local churches. We're left with only "some knowledge," but we don't get to practice.

Equipping can be formal or informal

Two main types of equipping can be distinguished:

1. Formal training, which is usually carried out in the classroom. You have a teacher who teaches a group of lessons, according to a content. For example, when the local Church invites us to take a course on evangelism.
2. Informal equipping, which occurs in daily life, taking advantage of situations that are faced at that time. For example, when the pastor or some other brother asks us to accompany him to pray for a sick person and takes the opportunity to share the gospel with that person. There we learn by seeing the teacher in action, as the model Jesus used to equip the disciples.

Jesus employed both options. He had times when he shared the great truths of the Kingdom, its values, and what role the disciple plays in it. But he also took advantage of any circumstance for new learning.

9.2.3 The local Church's task in training

1. Help people identify their gifts and talents.

A primary role of the Church is to help identify the gifts and talents of each person. This can be done through the Gift Test. Every local church should have an inventory of the major gifts of each person in the membership.

2. Then opportunities should be given to apply their gifts in ministries.

The simplest thing to do is to train under the trainer-apprentice model as Jesus did. That is, a practical model where the teacher carries out the ministry, such as teaching. At the same time, he or she is accompanied by an "assistant" who is the apprentice who observes how the trainer does it. Then, the teacher will take time and explain details of why he or she carried out certain actions while teaching the group.

They can also give a number of practical tips on aspects of what should be done in general, as well as some "don't" from the ministry. For example, if it's teaching, you can give advice such as:

- Never mistreat a child, even if he misbehaves.
- Be careful not to get into arguments (fights) with your students.
- Avoid embarrassing the student in front of others.

3. Empower them through lessons.

For example:

- A series of lessons can be prepared for teachers of children, adolescents, young people or adults as the case may be.
- A group of people who have the gift of preaching can also be prepared.
- A series of lessons should be developed for those who will exercise leadership in the church.
- Others may be prepared to counsel in some areas.
- You can prepare a group of brothers and sisters to be part of the worship team.

There will be some areas that need to be taught to the whole church. These include, for example:

- Lessons on spiritual formation.
- Personal Evangelism Lessons
- Lessons on how to disciple others
- Lessons on how to exercise compassion.

In particular, church leaders should be trained in, among other topics:

- Church Resource Administration and Management
- Strategic planning
- Ministry teamwork

Each local church should look for creative options for training to be conducted by people with at least the following characteristics:

- Good spiritual formation,
- Gifts or talents they are going to train on
- Shows evidence of fruits in what they are going to train

Obviously, it's advisable to use brothers or sisters from other churches to give such training. It's not possible and not recommended that the pastor be in charge of giving training in all areas. Technologies such as zoom and others should also be used to even invite people who aren't from the same city.

If giving an offering to the expositor is considered, we can as a church contribute a part of it, ask those who are going to be trained to contribute another part. That will make them more committed to the training they're going to receive. If funds are still not sufficient, there are other financing options, such as:

- Ask a few people (inside or outside the church) to support with the fee of one of the participants.
- Brethren from other churches may be invited to join the training. With this we'll have more resources to contribute to the offering of the one who gives the training.

4. Generate the ministries necessary so that the gifts can be put into practice.

The church must incorporate each one into a ministry according to the gift he or she has. If the church doesn't have such a ministry, it should make efforts to start a new ministry where they can develop their gifts. In this way, they'll be contributing to the growth of the church. Otherwise we would be a "factory of unemployed disciples."

Don't hesitate to join forces with other local churches to generate joint ministries.

9.3 Conclusions

In many local churches there are brothers and sisters who haven't been active in serving in a ministry. There can be various causes, such as not knowing their gifts, not feeling qualified to serve in an area, or others such as lack of time or having little commitment to the gospel.

As a church, it's incumbent upon us to provide the necessary training so that every member of the church can be prepared to serve. But it's also necessary that each of us assume the commitment to take advantage of the opportunities for equipping and then put it into practice.

This last point was essential in the model of Jesus Christ. It's about equipping to be active in serving in some ministry according to our gifts. The principle of the universal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9) reminds us that we all have a commitment in the Kingdom of God to carry out the Great Commission.

What will you do after this lesson? Do you know your gifts? Have you qualified to serve in any ministry? How involved are you in the various ministries of the local church? How are you participating in the fulfillment of the Mission?

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. According to your gifts, what ministry are you serving in? Have you encountered any problems getting involved in any ministry? What problems are they?

2. According to your gifts and talents, in what way have you received equipping in your local church, whether formal or informal?

3. Explain how the difficulties of getting more brothers and sisters involved in the ministries of the local church could be overcome.

Bibliographic references

Comiskey, Joel. (2014). *The equipping of Discipleship.*

https://jcgresources.com/es/recursos/leadership_development/es_equipamiento/

Lesson 10. *Empowered by God*

Biblical Text: 2 Corinthians 3:5

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

Competencies:

- **Assimilate** each person so that each one has the responsibility to serve in some area of the church.
- **Explain** how God enables us.
- **Check** to see if you already know your gifts and if you are serving in the right ministry.
- **Value** the reward we'll receive for serving in the Kingdom of God.

10.1 Introduction

In a previous lesson we talked about the training or equipping that the Church should give to each disciple so that he or she can better serve. However, there's initial training that comes from God. From the moment of conversion, God through his Holy Spirit gives us gifts to serve.

In this lesson, we're going to study how God empowers us through His Holy Spirit. What does He equip us for? What will be our final reward?

10.2 Development

10.2.1 All disciples should work in some ministry

In the Kingdom of God, we all have a job to do. Even God the Father and Jesus Christ are workers. This is what the Lord Jesus stated in John 5:17:

In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working."

Therefore, it's of the utmost importance to learn that God is frustrated at people who refuse to work. But he also doesn't approve of people who seek office just to gain power over others. In the church, there's no place for idlers or for the selfish ambitious. (Matthew 20:25-27; 2 Thessalonians 3:10)

Additionally, we must remember that we're called to be servants. Let's look at Rom. 6:18:

And having been set free from sin, you have become servants of righteousness.

Paul is telling us that by receiving Christ, you and I become servants of God. So we must obey His commands. And one of them is to serve others, for which we need to be trained.

In God's Kingdom, there's a great need for spiritually qualified disciples who will take responsibility in the congregation to build up disciples and to share the gospel ... people who want to serve genuinely, and aren't driven by some selfish ambition. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Therefore, we must learn that God helps us to be trained for duties in the congregation, just as He 'adequately trains the ministers of the new covenant.' As His Word says in 2 Corinthians 3:4-6:

We are sure of all this because of the great confidence we have in God through Christ. It's not that we think we're capable of doing something on our own. Our aptitude comes from God. He enabled us to be ministers of His new covenant. This is not a covenant of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but, according to the new covenant, the Spirit gives life.

So as servants, we're to be dedicated and faithful servants of Christ's church; committed to the well-being, growth, and edification of the believers in our congregation (Morey, 2021).

10.2.2 Spiritual aspects of training.

a) Serving in the Kingdom is a grace that God gives us.

Paul understood perfectly well that as a servant, being able to serve in God's Kingdom is only by God's grace. This is what he declares in Ephesians 3:8:

To me, who is less than the least of all the saints, this grace was granted: to declare to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

This should be a constant reminder in our lives, for God will give us victories in service that might cause us to think we have achieved them "on our own merits."

b) The role of the Holy Spirit in training.

Jesus promised that when He went back to be with the Father, He would send us the Holy Spirit. It's through this that God enables us to serve through various gifts. Remember that the following passages describe God-given gifts:

- 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28
- Romans 12:6-8
- Ephesians 4:7-11
- 1 Peter 4:10,11

Some basic teachings that we can highlight from these passages are:

- God gives us spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit.
- We all have at least one spiritual gift (1 Rom. 12:7)
- God gives us spiritual gifts according to His will.
- Spiritual gifts are irrevocable. (Rom. 11:29)
- Spiritual gifts are given to us by grace
- We're equipped with these spiritual gifts to contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God.
- All spiritual gifts are of great importance. There is no room for boasting or envy.
- We don't all have the same spiritual gifts. That's why we perform different functions.
- In the church, there are people qualified by God for each of the functions of the church.

Paul taught that love was the most excellent way for all believers to seek. That is, it's not much use to have gifts if we're not moved by love.

As we can see in this section, God's plans for equipping His church are also perfect. The point is that each one of us assumes the responsibility that corresponds to us. We must begin by identifying our gifts, then have an equipping plan to perfect those gifts. But above all, we must put these gifts into practice.

Then check to see if you're collaborating in the appropriate ministry. If not, talk to your pastor for help locating yourself correctly.

c) God gives us the power to serve

In addition to giving us gifts, God gives us power to serve. Sometimes we may be tired, perhaps at other times we may be discouraged for not achieving certain results. But in every circumstance, we can go to God and ask for His power to go after our goal, as Paul says. In the following passages we see how God will give us of His power to go forward:

If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:11

To this end I also work, striving according to His mighty power in me. Colossians 1:29

10.2.3 Trained for what?

The Word says that when each one carries out his or her role in the church, for which the Holy Spirit has prepared them, then we contribute to each other's development and transformation by Christ. We can see it in the following passages:

He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. And each part, by fulfilling its specific function, helps the others to develop, and then the whole body grows and is healthy and full of love. Ephesians 4:16

To equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:12

So, we should think about the great privilege we have to be part of the builders of the Kingdom of God. In doing so, we must keep in mind that our attitude of service must be the right one. Paul exhorts us to "serve one another out of love" Galatians 5:13

10.2.4 Think About the Reward

God rewards our good works and service to Him. This is how we see it:

Therefore, my beloved brethren, remain strong and steadfast. Always work for the Lord with enthusiasm, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is useless. 1 Corinthians 15:58

Every service we perform for God and for His church will be rewarded. This is what we're reminded of in the following passage:

For God is not unjust enough to forget your work and the love you have shown toward His name, having served, and still serves, the saints. Hebrews 6:10

So I encourage you to think about that day when we hear from the Lord the following statement:

His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; in a few things you were faithful, I will make you ruler over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord." Matthew 25:23

So as Paul tells us in the letter to the Philippians, let's keep moving forward to the goal.

I press on toward the goal to obtain the prize of God's upward calling in Christ Jesus. Phil. 3:14

Gerson Morey (2021) states that "When we see Christ and service as our rewards, we'll be able to persevere even in difficulty, and above all, it will help us to serve with joy."

10.3 Conclusions

Every person who has accepted Christ as their personal Savior becomes His servant. As such, God grants the privilege and responsibility of cooperating in the building of His Kingdom. In doing so, we contribute to the growth of other disciples in the likeness of Christ.

In addition, serving others will result in our own Christlike growth. To do this, God empowers us through His Holy Spirit, with gifts and power to share the message of salvation. We receive all this with grace and are asked to give freely what we have received.

In the end, we're offered the greatest rewards we can have in this life: the crown of life that will allow us to enjoy eternity in the presence of God.

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. Are you clear about your spiritual gifts? How are you using them?

2. Think of other men in the local Church, how might they agree to serve together in a ministry?

3. Imagine that the pastor of the church asks your opinion on the following: How could they start implementing a month of prayer and fasting so that God touches the hearts of the brothers and sisters and they get involved in ministries? Explain how the church could create opportunities for more people to serve according to their gifts and ministries.

Bibliographic references

- Atalaya. (s.f.) ***¿Está usted capacitado para servir? (Are you trained to serve?)***
<https://wol.jw.org/es/wol/d/r4/lp-s/1990648>
- Díaz, Moisés. (2019). ***Capacitados por el Espíritu Santo (Empowered by the Holy Spirit)*** <https://www.centraldesermones.com/bosquejos/30704-capacitados-por-el-espiritu-santo>
- Morey, Gerson. (2021). ***¿Qué debo saber antes de servir a Dios en la iglesia? (What should I know before serving God in the church?)***
<https://www.coalicionporelevangelio.org/articulo/antes-servir-dios-iglesia/>

Lesson 11. What is a *Christian Mentor*? Why have a mentor?

Biblical Text: *Philippians 3:17*

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

Competencies:

- **Explain** what mentoring consists of.
- **Explain** the main characteristics of biblical mentoring.
- **Explain** some reasons why it's good to have a mentor.
- **Value** the importance of having a Christian mentor.

11.1 Introduction

Throughout life, it's always valuable to have someone who has more experience in what is of interest to us. For example, the young professional who takes on a new job would always like to have someone who is an expert in that area to consult with their questions. In the same way, someone who wants to start a sports career would like to have a person who has already successfully traveled that path before and can advise them.

The same happens in other areas of our lives. If you are a newlywed, you would like to have the wise advice of a person who has been married for numerous years and who leads a happy life with his family. In the same way, in our life as disciples, it would be of great help to have a brother or sister who helps us with their experience and advice to walk in a more successful way on the journey of grace.

Therefore, in this lesson we're going to study, What is a mentor? What are some reasons why I should have a mentor? What biblical basis can we consider for good mentoring?

11.2 Development

11.2.1 Definition of mentoring.

Originally the word Mentor comes from Homer's play "Odyssey" due to a character called, "Mentor". This character helped Ulysses, when he had to be absent from his kingdom due to the Trojan War, to educate his son Telemachus. Its main purpose was education in the art of good government and life for Telemachus. (Be mentoring, 2021)

Later over time, the concept of mentor referred to someone who acts as a guide or advisor to another person. For example, the Blog Got question (n.d.) tells us that a mentor is defined as "a wise and trustworthy counselor or teacher."

For its part, the Cambridge dictionary tells us that a mentor is a person who provides help and advice to another younger or less experienced person over a period of time, especially at work or school.

So, a mentor is a counselor or guide who, through experience and knowledge, helps another person carry out their goals. The relationship between the mentor and the mentee is known as mentoring. Through this bond, the mentor shares their experience and knowledge with the other person (their mentee) so that they can develop successfully professionally, personally, etc.

In the book *El Mentoreo Magistral (Master Mentoring)*, its authors Osterhouse and Teja (2015) state that mentoring has been evolving. They state the following:

The mentee goes from being a passive person to an active participant. At the same time, the mentor goes from being an authority figure to a facilitator. The mentor works hard to create an environment in which learning is promoted. The relationship is determined by goals, a condition that most adults appreciate.

For Melissa Kruger (2020), a spiritual mentoring relationship is one in which a younger or less experienced believer is being counseled by a more mature believer for a time so that he or she can become stronger in their faith and be equipped for ministry.

11.2.2 Examples of Mentoring in the Bible.

In Healthy Mentoring, the Multiplication Network (n.d.) tells us that:

Many stories in scripture demonstrate the mentoring process as God's Plan, accomplished by humans, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. One generation serves another. The father teaches the son of his knowledge of God in order to create an inheritance based on Him. A leader teaches her successor about God's ways and leadership.

Let's consider some examples of mentoring in the Bible below.

a. Jesus mentors the disciples.

During his three years of ministry, Jesus put into practice in a masterful way, especially with his disciples, the various aspects of mentoring (Mobilicemos, n.d.):

- Jesus taught them the great biblical truths (principle of revelation), Matthew 5:1,2.
- Jesus demonstrated to them (beginning of the demonstration), Matthew 15:29, 31.
- Jesus imparted anointing and power (principle of impartation), Luke 9:2; 2 Timothy 1:6.
- Jesus activated His disciples (principle of activation), Luke 9:2.
- Jesus mobilized (sent) His disciples (principle of mobilization), Mark 6:7.

b. Barnabas mentors Paul.

Some characteristics that stand out in Barnabas' mentoring of Paul are (Red de Multiplicación (Web of Multiplication), n.d.)

- The mentoring relationship was initiated by Barnabas (Acts 9:27).
- Barnabas understood Paul's potential for the Kingdom of God (Acts 9:27-29).

- Barnabas found a place for Paul and shared the ministry with him (Acts 11:25-26).
- He set the example that Paul was able to duplicate (1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Timothy 2:2).
- He was able to allow Paul to take the leadership position. (Acts 13:7-46).
- Barnabas also mentored John Mark, who wrote the gospel of Mark.

c. Paul as a mentor.

Paul reproduced the mentoring he had received from Barnabas on each of the missionary journeys he made afterwards. In the book of Acts and in Paul's epistles, sixteen people are mentioned as having worked together with Him. Among them are: Barnabas, Mark, Silas, Timothy, Titus, Luke, Aquila and Priscilla, Epaphroditus, Apollo, Rooster, Epaphras, Tychicus, Aristarchus, and Silvanus.

Luke named seven other people as Paul's companions on one or more of his trips. No doubt each of them benefited from his instructions and Paul's relationship with them. Also noteworthy is the great affection Paul shows for them in his letters. Even the elders who led the church in Ephesus were the product of Paul's mentoring, as well as the leaders of the churches in Asia (Acts 19:10; Revelation 2-3).

Paul addressed letters to Timothy and Titus in which he gave clear personal instruction. Paul spoke of both as "sons in the faith," indicating that they grew spiritually alongside him.

One can examine the book of Acts, Paul's epistles, and the letters to Timothy and Titus to discover the nature of Paul's mentoring concerns with his closest and well-known mentees:

- Acts 16:1-5; 17:14; 19:22; 20:4;
- 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 19: 7:5-16; 8:6, 16-24; 12:18;
- Galatians 2:1-3;
- Philippians 2:19-22;
- 2 Thessalonians 3:1-3, 6;
- 1 Timothy 1:2; 18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2; 4:10,
- Titus 1:4-5.

Even the apostles exhort us to help others grow by example.

Do not abuse the authority you have over those in your charge, but lead them by your good example. 1 Peter 5:3

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. Philippians 3:17

Some characteristics that stand out from biblical mentoring, according to the Blog Moviliemos (n.d.) are:

- There is a personal relationship with a mentor.
- Wisdom is acquired through a relationship with God and others.
- The teaching method is through Modeling. (Follow my example.)
- You learn by doing.
- Mentoring leads to immediate action by applying what is learned to ministry
- Knowledge is important, but the transformation of one's being is more important.

11.2.3 What we can expect from Christian mentoring.

In Christian mentoring, both the person receiving the mentoring and the person providing it will grow in their faith. Proverbs 27:17 says, *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."*

Therefore, as Chelsea Kight (n.d.) affirms, God uses the mentoring relationship to strengthen the faith of all involved. God's design is for people to grow together with others. God uses mentorship to help both parties become more and more who He designed them to be.

According to Chelsea Kight (n.d.), in Christian tutoring, it's possible to conduct the following conversations and activities:

- Discuss specific areas of life in which to grow.
- Agree on a plan to study the Bible and pray together.
- Choose a book or a series of relevant articles to read together.
- Detect blind spots and opportunities for transformation in the spiritual life of both parties.
- To find and celebrate evidence of becoming more conformed to the image of Christ.
- Address areas of ongoing struggle or ungodly thinking and behavior.

11.2.4 How to find a mentor.

Chris Morton (n.d.) gives us a series of practical tips for finding a mentor. He suggests using the following steps to help you find the mentor you need.

- a. **Learn more about mentoring.** Learn more about the benefits of having a Christian mentor, what they can do to support you in your spiritual growth, and also what they can't do for you.

- b. **Ask God.** Start by asking God to provide you with the right person to mentor you. God wants to give us good things, according to His plans, and having a mentor to help us grow is part of His will.
- c. **Look for a mentor in your local church or in other churches.** In each local church, there are always members who are more experienced in the faith. So, look at the people in your church and consider who among them you can ask to be your mentor.
- d. **Ask for help.** Ask your friends and family who they might suggest as a spiritual mentor. When you find a candidate, ask them what Jesus' abundant life means to them and if they are willing to be your mentor.
- e. **Read.** Each person can be guided, even by those who don't live near them or who have already passed away. Read as much as you can about them and write by them. Consider their experiences and teachings. Imagine what direction and advice that person would give you if they knew you personally. Without a doubt, the one you should read the most about is the life of Jesus.

11.3 Conclusions

Having a person with greater experience in the faith, who is willing to advise us, is certainly part of God's design. God designed us as relational beings, and on the Journey of Grace, having a mentor is a great blessing.

Mentoring allows us to help others reach their full potential so that they can know, appreciate, and use the great heritage of faith found in Christ. We have reviewed some examples of mentoring in the Bible, with Jesus' mentoring of his disciples in a central way.

Each of us should look for a more mature believer to accompany us on our spiritual journey.

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. Why is it good to have a Christian mentor?

2. What do you consider to be the main characteristics of Christian mentoring?

3. What types of issues should be addressed in a mentoring relationship?

Bibliographic references

- Be mentoring. (2021). *¿Conoces el origen del término Mentor? (Do you know the origin of the term Mentor?)* <https://bementoring.com/conoces-el-origen-del-termino-mentor/#:~:text=El%20Mentoring%20se%20origin%C3%B3%20en,a%20la%20guerra%20de%20Troya>.
- Blog Got Question. (s.f.). *Should a Christian be involved in mentoring?* <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-mentoring.html>
- Blog Movilicemos (s.f.) *Mentoría bíblica (Biblical Mentoring)*. <https://movilicemos.org/recursos/pastores-y-lideres-iglesia-misionera-para-ensenar/mentoreo-biblico>
- Emerson, Marta. (2022). *¿Qué es o qué significa ser Mentor? Conoce sus funciones (What is or what does it mean to be a Mentor? Learn about their functions)*. <https://martaemerson.com/que-es-un-mentor/>
- Kight, Chelsea. (s.f.). *What is Christian Mentoring, and How Do I Do It?* <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/help-others-grow/mentoring.html>
- Kruger, Melissa. (2020). *3 Reasons You Can Say 'Yes' to Mentoring*. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/reasons-yes-mentoring/>
- Morton, Chris. (s.f.). *Mentores espirituales (Spiritual Mentors)*. <https://www.exploregod.com/es/articulos/mentores-espirituales>
- Osterhouse, Jim y Teja, Gary. (2015). *Mentoría magistral: El papel de la mentoría en la iglesia local (Master mentoring: The role of mentoring in the local church)*.
- Red de Multiplicación. (s.f.). *Mentoreo saludable (Healthy Mentoring)*.

Lesson 12. Can I be a *Mentor*?

Biblical Text: Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Competencies:

- **Explain** reasons why we can become mentors.
- **Develop** characteristics to become a good mentor.

12.1 Introduction

On the journey of grace, there will always be people with more experience and maturity than you, as we studied in the last lesson. But it's also true that we can have more experience and spiritual maturity than others. This gives us the opportunity to become mentors to others.

Jesus' command to make disciples is the main foundation of Christian mentoring. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus instructed His followers to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them all that He had commanded. This implies a commitment to transmit knowledge, and guide and accompany in spiritual growth those who are in the process of discipleship. This command is a call to accountability and the building up of the church through Christian mentoring.

Through his command to make disciples, Jesus made it clear that mentoring is essential to the growth and formation of believers. In addition, He Himself became the perfect example of a mentor, dedicating time, teaching and accompanying His disciples. The importance of teaching and accompaniment is also highlighted in the Bible, where the need to pass on knowledge and wisdom to succeeding generations is emphasized.

Without a doubt, being able to significantly influence others to grow into Christlike disciples should be a priority in our lives. Look around you and you'll find many people coming behind on the Journey of Grace. Remember that this journey is not about getting to the destination first, but about making sure we get there with those that God has placed around us.

Therefore, in this lesson we're going to study some characteristics that a mentor should have, some reasons to be a mentor, and we'll also study practical aids on how to become a mentor.

12.2 Development

12.2.1 Importance of Christian mentoring.

Christian mentoring is of utmost importance in the lives of believers since it provides specialized companionship to strengthen faith, promote spiritual growth, and foster disciple formation. Through mentoring, believers can receive guidance and support in their walk with God, thereby strengthening their relationship with Him and their commitment to Christian principles and values.

In addition, Christian mentoring provides a safe space where believers can share their struggles, doubts, and joys, receiving biblical direction and encouragement to face the challenges of everyday life.

a. Strengthening Faith

Christian mentoring plays a critical role in strengthening the faith of believers. Through a personal and close relationship with an experienced mentor, believers can receive teachings, advice, and support to deepen their knowledge of God's Word, develop a stronger understanding of their spiritual beliefs and experiences, and strengthen their trust in God. In addition, Christian mentoring provides an opportunity to share testimonies of faith which inspire and encourage mentees to persevere in their walk with God and to live out their faith in a fuller and more authentic way.

b. Spiritual growth

Christian mentoring is a valuable resource for promoting the spiritual growth of believers. Through the mentoring relationship, specific areas of growth can be addressed, such as prayer, Bible study, worship, and service. Mentors provide practical guidance, sharing their own experiences and knowledge to help mentees develop healthy spiritual habits and disciplines. In addition, Christian mentoring provides an environment conducive to mutual accountability, which encourages believers to maintain a constant commitment to their spiritual growth and to overcome obstacles that may arise along the way.

c. Disciple formation

Christian mentoring is a powerful tool for the formation of committed disciples. Through the accompaniment of a mentor, believers can learn to live according to Christ's principles and teachings, developing a strong Christian character and a lifestyle centered on love and service to others. Christian mentoring provides opportunities to learn from the experience and wisdom of more mature believers who guide and challenge mentees to grow in their relationship with God and to lead a life that reflects the values and virtues of God's Kingdom. In this way, Christian mentoring contributes to the formation of authentic disciples, committed to the purpose of making disciples in turn and bringing the good news of Jesus to the world.

12.2.2 Reasons Why You May Agree to Be a Mentor

The blog *Girls on the Run* (2022) shares some reasons to become a mentor.

a. Training tomorrow's leaders

In the Bible we find young people like Timothy who are growing in their faith. Like Timothy, many young people today have a longing to serve as best they can within the Kingdom of God. But they look for someone to support them in reaching their God-given potential. They need someone to support them in their decision-making and who, in times of doubt or discouragement, can help them continue to the goal. There are many who, because they didn't have that support, moved away from the faith. Others may have followed, but had to pay for making mistakes that could have been avoided by having a mentor. Become a mentor and unleash their potential!

b. Broaden your perspective and learn new things

As a mentor, you have the opportunity to step outside of your usual topics of conversation and your circle of friends and gain a new understanding of someone else's reality. For example, if your mentee is a young person, you'll be able to learn from the problems and challenges they face firsthand. You may find that even at their age, they often face mental and emotional health issues. You'll learn how they make their decisions about what career to study, who to marry, how they face their crises of faith, etc.

As the Blog Girls on the run (2022) points out, "Your mentee's world may be very different from yours, but by learning more about it, you grow as a person and gain a greater appreciation of who they are."

Giving your mentee the opportunity to teach you about a topic of their choice helps increase their trust, commitment, and most of all, their confidence. After all, they're talking about something they're interested in, and isn't that what friends do?

c. Share your experiences for the benefit of others

Use your own discoveries and experiences, whether good or bad, as learning opportunities for your mentees. By opening up and sharing the lessons you've learned throughout your spiritual life (including failures), you teach your mentees how to succeed, avoid mistakes, and think intelligently about their decisions.

An experience that may not have worked for you may be the exact advice that changes a mentee's life forever. Honestly sharing these details with your mentee will show that you trust them and that you're deeply invested in their progress, goals, and future.

d. Hone your skills

It's highly recommended that in mentoring, we prepare ourselves more and more to see how to advise in certain situations. For example, it's not good to repeat advice over and over again to a mentee because it's ineffective and will decrease their confidence and interest. That's why it's good to develop alternative ways of supporting a disciple in situations they haven't been able to overcome. This leads us to perfect our skills, and with it, we'll also have personal growth.

e. Increase your own happiness

Contributing to a person's success in every situation they face is a source of joy. Sometimes young people don't have the luxury of being part of a strong community, a strong circle of friends, or a large family. Mentors help fill in those gaps and remind disciples of their self-worth, and in the end, this process increases their own happiness.

f. Find purpose in something that really matters

Every day it's easier to get distracted by comfortable activities that, frankly, don't improve our spiritual life, such as using social networks for hours, watching programs for hours, etc. That distracts us from our goals. That's why it's highly recommended to intentionally replace meaningless activities with those that are truly important. Being a mentor will allow you to leave the kind of mark you want to leave on others.

There are also other reasons why we could serve as a mentor (Kruger, 2020):

1. Mentoring involves you, but it's not up to you; it's up to God.

Melissa Kruger tells us that "You don't have to be perfect. You don't need to have all the answers. You don't need to say all the right things. Mentoring involves you, but it doesn't depend on you. God is the one who provides spiritual growth."

2. Setting clear expectations helps both of you.

Communication is important in any relationship, especially in a mentoring relationship. It's very important to clarify from the beginning what you both hope to achieve. The purpose of a mentoring relationship is to spend time together, purposefully seeking spiritual growth. This can be accomplished by reading the Bible together, praying together, or working together on a book. Regardless of what you decide to do, it's important to discuss the focus of your time together before you begin meeting.

It's also important to establish a frequency and expected duration for your time together. Will you meet once a month? Twice a month? Where? Find out what day and time works best for both of you and commit to spending that time together.

It's also appropriate to set a deadline to evaluate the results and then decide whether or not it's appropriate to continue with mentoring.

3. There's never a better time to be a mentor.

Even if you feel very busy, you can always set aside time to contribute meaningfully to the spiritual growth of another disciple. Don't wait until you "have time."

Think about the people who are already part of your ministry or with whom you are in regular contact. Maybe it's your assistant in the small group, or your assistant in the group where you teach a class. It can also be someone you took to church, perhaps a co-worker or someone in the family. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could share your experiences to help them grow into Christlikeness?

They can learn from you how to grow spiritually by sharing with them about your spiritual disciplines. They can learn from you about how to manage one's marriage and how to raise children. They can learn how to serve more passionately through your model.

You may not feel equipped, but if you walk with the Lord, you can share what you've learned with others. The wisdom you have is the wisdom that your mentee needs. Pray with them. Memorize or read the scriptures together. Live faithfully for Jesus. (Kruger, 2020).

The effort is worth it, and the blessings will extend to both of you—you will grow together as you learn together.

12.2.3 Practical tips for effective mentoring.

Chelsea Kight (n.d.) gives us some simple principles to help us think about essential activities you could plan as you seek to mentor effectively:

- ***Cultivate a humble spirit within yourself.*** Spend time with the Lord outside of your mentoring times.
- ***Pray for the person you mentor.*** Ask the Lord what He wants you to teach them.
- ***Invite the person you're mentoring to do everyday things with you.*** Take a walk together, have coffee or dinner together.
- ***Don't underestimate the power of inviting the person you're mentoring into your home.*** This shows the person you're counseling that you care about them enough to let them see who you really are.
- ***Practice vulnerability and be the first to share your story.*** For example, if you struggle with sin in a particular area of your life, be honest about it with the person you're mentoring. This will bond and help the person you're leading know they can be honest with you.
- ***Commit to meeting during the agreed-upon period of time,*** perhaps a school year, a calendar year, or a few months. Then review your progress and commit to another time period if you want to continue.
- ***Learn to share your faith together.*** You can be part of a ministry such as being teachers in the same group, or accompanying in the visitation or evangelization, etc.
- ***Continually update your vision of mentoring and pass it on to others.*** Find out how one person can help change the world.

12.2.4 Some qualities to develop to be a good mentor.

Grisell Sordo (2022) additionally shares a series of more general-type qualities that you must develop to be a good mentor. These are:

- You are willing to give, and by this I mean to give time, support, guidance, commitment.
- You have no problem sharing the good and the bad of your spiritual life, because people learn not only from successes, but also from failures, and not everyone likes to talk about this.
- You are empathetic to the situation, the tools available to your mentee, the speed with which they learn and the ability they have to apply it in their life.

12.2.5 Overcoming challenges in Christian mentoring.

Christian mentoring can face a variety of challenges throughout the process, but it's important to be prepared to overcome them. One of the main challenges is resistance to change and fear of vulnerability. Many people may feel uncomfortable leaving their comfort zone and opening up to new experiences. However, it's necessary to remember that Christian mentoring seeks to transform lives and strengthen faith. It's important to motivate mentees to overcome their fears and allow God to work in them for meaningful spiritual growth.

a. Resistance to change and fear of vulnerability

Resistance to change and fear of vulnerability are common obstacles in Christian mentoring. Some people may feel insecure about facing new challenges and opening up to their mentor. However, it's important to remember that change is an essential part of spiritual growth. By overcoming resistance to change and overcoming fear of vulnerability, mentees can experience transformation in their faith and experience a greater level of intimacy with God. It's the mentor's responsibility to provide constant support and encouragement to help overcome these obstacles and guide the mentee to meaningful growth.

b. Conflicts and disagreements

In the Christian mentoring process, conflicts and disagreements will inevitably arise between the mentor and the mentee. However, these challenges can be opportunities for growth and strengthening of the relationship. It's essential to address conflicts in a respectful manner and seek solutions through effective communication. The mentor must be willing to listen to the mentee's concerns and viewpoints and counsel based on biblical principles. Honest dialogue and a focus on reconciliation show the love of Christ and help overcome any obstacles in the mentoring relationship.

c. Demotivation and dropout

In Christian mentoring, mentees may face moments of demotivation and consider dropping out. This can be due to different circumstances or personal challenges. However, it's critical that mentors provide ongoing support and encourage mentees to persevere in their spiritual formation process. Reminding them of the benefits of mentoring, such as faith growth and personal transformation, can help reinvigorate their motivation. In addition, the mentor must be willing to adapt the approach and strategies according to the individual needs of each mentee, to provide personalized accompaniment that fosters commitment and continuity in Christian mentoring.

12.3 Conclusions

We have learned that there can always be someone we can mentor because we have a little more spiritual maturity. They will greatly value having a mentor to help them walk the Journey of Grace together. By making the decision to serve as mentors, we'll be fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ-like disciple-making. This is because it's expected that through the mentoring relationship they'll grow in their faith and grow spiritually in the likeness of Christ.

As we take on that role, we need to think about how we can do it best, such as cultivating a humble spirit, taking advantage of opportunities to have a closer relationship, showing vulnerability, and sharing faith together.

We have also studied some difficulties that will arise in the mentoring relationship, as well as how we can overcome them.

My commitment to God.

Reflection and practical application exercises.

1. Why is it important to become a Christian mentor?

2. What do you consider to be the main characteristics that you must develop to become a good mentor?

3. What negative experiences (potential failures) would you be willing to share in a mentoring relationship?

Bibliographic references

- Blog Girls on the run. (2022). ***Seis razones para convertirse en mentor (Six reasons to become a mentor)***. <https://www.gotrmidstatepa.org/es/news/details/why-mentoring-matters-6-reasons-to-become-a-mentor>
- Kight, Chelsea. (s.f.). ***What is Christian Mentoring, and How Do I Do It?*** <https://www.cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/help-others-grow/mentoring.html>
- Kruger, Melissa. (2020). ***3 Reasons You Can Say 'Yes' to Mentoring.*** <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/reasons-yes-mentoring/>
- Sordo, Grisell. (2022). ***¿Cómo saber si puedo ser un buen mentor y/o mentora? (How to know if I can become a good mentor?)*** <https://es.linkedin.com/pulse/c%C3%B3mo-saber-si-puedo-ser-un-buen-mentor-yo-mentora-grisell-sordo>