

Principles for Spiritual Multiplication

By principles I mean Biblical absolutes, things that are universally true and applicable. This is in contrast to methods, techniques and programs, etc. that are subject to change and adaptation. These things need to be adapted and made relevant to cultural settings, to the academic background of people, to age levels and stage of life. Principles are more like a constitution that forms the basis for all of your specifics as well as a measuring stick against which you can evaluate your methods, programs, activities, schedules and structures.

Multiplication or Reproduction is one of the 5 basic characteristics of all living organisms. The 5 characteristics are:

- Sensitivity, the ability to react or respond
- Ingestion, the ability to take in food or energy sources
- Elimination, the ability to get rid of waste products
- Circulation, the ability to transport vital goods throughout the organism
- Reproduction, the ability to produce offspring

There are only three things that hinder an organism from reproducing.

- Health, disease can render an organism incapable of reproduction
- Maturity, generally some growth or development is needed for reproduction
- Union of the sexes, in the more developed organism sexual union is necessary for reproduction

The spiritual parallels to the physical world of biological organisms are rather evident. Needed for spiritual reproduction is:

- Turning away from wickedness, or the pursuit of holiness – 2Tim.2:19-22
- Spiritual growth – Col.2:6-7 see the tree illustration by going to:
Sequoiachurchdiscipleshipresource.com
- Union with Christ – John 15:5+8+16

Principle #1 Prayer:

Spiritual Children come as answers to prayer. In John 17:6 Jesus refers to his disciples as, “The men you gave me out of the world.” If this was true for Jesus, it is also true for us. Jesus started his ministry with 40 days of prayer and fasting. Then Luke 5:16 tell us that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places for prayer. Luke 6:12 tells us that he spent a whole night in prayer, before choosing the twelve. The fact that they come in answer to prayer and are gifts from God is something we should never forget. Too often we are tempted to start treating them as though they belong to us and are obligated to us. Although God allows us to participate in their growth and development we should never forget that they belong to God. Just a quick glance at the Apostle Paul’s ministry reinforces the fact that prayer is number one. In just 1 Thessalonians we see it again and again.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 (NIV) We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

He acknowledges that they are gifts by thanking God for them. And then constantly prays for the development of their faith, love and hope. Now they are at the stage where Paul is able to see evidence of faith, love and hope in their lives.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NIV) And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

This is what effective prayer does regarding people's acceptance of the Word of God. No wonder that these people stood out as a great example to God's people everywhere.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 (NIV) May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

And 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV) May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These prayers are no doubt a summary of many prayers for specific aspects of their growth, because you will notice words like "always" and "continually" in the above verses.

The book of Galatians adds an extremely important reason why prayer must be number one. Chapter 4:23 talks about Abraham's two sons, and refers to one born of the flesh and one born of the spirit. May God be gracious to us and work in us a spirit of prayer so that he can give us spiritual offspring that will multiply and not children of the flesh.

For more instructions as to the "what" and the "how" of the kind of praying that results in spiritual multiplication see, "Operation Hannah on the Sequoiachurchdiscipleshipresource.com website.

Principle #2 Love:

The Greek language has many words for love. The kind of love that brings about spiritual multiplication of disciples is the divine kind of love designated in the Bible by the Greek word, "agape." 1 Corinthians 13:7 lists several qualities of this kind of love. For example, "It always protects." This is the very quality that distinguishes the true shepherd from the hireling. It is a Christ like quality of love that is essential for disciple making.

"Agape" love also always hopes. It is the kind of love that has a vision of what the person or persons that you are discipling will one day become. This love is so clearly seen in Jesus and the way he related to Peter. **John 1:42 (NIV)** And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter). Jesus knew that he was, Simon, the unstable one. He also knew his family background which

was very likely horrible. Yet Jesus had the vision of Simon one day being Peter, the rock. I don't think that Jesus ever doubted that this would happen and was therefore able to deal with all of Peter's weaknesses and mistakes as merely temporary setbacks on the way to him becoming the great apostle. This is the kind of love enable's one to correct and if necessary rebuke strongly. But it is also the kind of love that enable's the disciple (In this case Peter) to gladly accept the correction and rebuke.

It's the kind of love that values the person so much so as to be determined to help the person be their very best for God. Paul very fittingly expresses it in **Colossians 1:28-29 (NIV)** We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Notice that "Agape" also, always perseveres. John 13 says that Jesus loved his disciples to the end or it can be translated, "he gave them the full measure of his love." He didn't quit, there was never a hint that he would get discouraged and drop them. It is easy to get frustrated, irritated and fed up with people and start complaining about them. If anyone would have had an excuse for that it would have been Jesus. Years ago, as a first year teacher, I was told by older colleagues who notice my enthusiasm and optimism, that I would be cynical long before my 40th birthday. Later, I heard that the same is true for most medical doctors. People live very unhealthy lifestyles and then expect the doctor to fix the problems when they come. Yes, the weaknesses and failures of people can be exasperating, but "Agape" sees the possibility of change and doesn't give up.

Obviously, it is only by God's supernatural empowering that we are able to love people with "Agape" Christ like love. But it is an essential ingredient if we want to have a ministry of raising up multiplying disciples.

Principle #3 Example:

Christ's incarnation had two objectives. He had to become a man so that He as a man could die for the sins of the human race. Second, He had to become a man so that, He could leave us an example, so that we could walk in His footsteps. 1Peter 2:21 The Gospel of John puts it this way, **John 1:14 (KJV)** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. Christ taught primarily by the way He lived. His life, as a man, is a complete demonstration of how we ought to live. Of course he taught verbally, but his verbal teaching was always secondary to his teaching by example. Albert Schweitzer, the great German philosopher and educator said, "example is not one among many methods of teaching, it is the only method." This is why Jesus constantly invited people to "**FOLLOW**" him.

You see this principle clearly demonstrated in Paul, Timothy and Silas's ministry to the Thessalonians. **1:6-8 (NIV)** You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia--your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it,

Paul, Timothy and Silas were imitating Christ and so they were great examples to the Thessalonians who imitated them (and in so doing were imitating Christ) they then became models to the people in Macedonia and Achaia and so the Lord's message rang out everywhere. This is true spiritual multiplication.

The apostle Paul obviously believed in this principle. Again and again he urges people to follow his example.

1 Corinthians 4:16-17 (NIV) Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NIV) Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Philippians 3:17 (NIV) Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.

Philippians 4:9 (NIV) Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Then notice how he urges Timothy to teach by example, 1Tim.4:12-16. Many stumble over the fact that they are perfect examples. It is clear in this passage that Paul doesn't expect perfection but growth. He says, "Timothy **grow!**" **be an example of someone who is growing!** Verse 15 "**So everyone can SEE your progress.**" **Not so that everyone can see your perfection.**

There is one more very important point to make before we leave this principle and that is that, **you can take someone further that you have gone yourself.** In our information age it is easy to miss this one. Your passing on of information that is not part of your life is not likely to help others. In fact it may actually hinder them, because they will very likely label you as a hypocrite.

The implication of this principle is that we need to live very transparent lives. Where we make a special effort to enable others to see how we live. Spiritual multiplication of real disciples depends on it.

Principle #4 Life on Life or "The With Him" principle

The only way that people can learn from your example is if they are able to be “**with**” you. This is so obvious that it becomes easy to miss. Mark 3:14 Jesus ordained 12 that they might be “**with**” him. The main way that we learn to **follow** Christ is by observing how those more mature than us **follow** him. The disciples were with Jesus for 3 years and every day was another day of learning from his life by being **with** him. This is also how Paul trained Timothy and many others. In Acts 16 Paul invites Timothy to be **with** him and Timothy is with Paul experiencing all of the events and activities mentioned in Acts 16 all the way through chapter 19:22. Paul clearly states how Timothy learned from Paul’s life **2 Timothy 3:10-11 (NIV)** *You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance,¹¹ persecutions, sufferings--what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. I highly recommend that you take the time to study Acts 16 – 19:22 and ask the question after each section: What would Timothy have learned by being with Paul in this situation?*

We live in the information age and so it is easy to think that we can develop people by pumping their heads full of information and not realize that the most essential lessons are learned by life on life. It may be inconvenient but we need to work on maximizing the opportunities for our “Timothies” to be with us. With us in our homes so that they can see how we live and observe our marriage and how we relate to our children. Of course they also need to be with us in all kinds of ministry situations. This takes real humility because they will see us as we are and not just how we would like them to see us. They will see us make mistakes and will see if we try to paper over them or come clean with an apology. They will also see how we don’t know everything and have a real need to learn and to grow. And they will see how we don’t have all of the gifts and how we have a need to live interdependently with our fellow believers practicing the “One anothers” with them. Of course there is much more, they will see our faith, how we practice the presence of God, how we depend on God to provide and to guide, our obedience, our willingness to serve, our willingness to pay the price, our priorities, our love, our joy, our sorrow, etc. etc.

Principle #5 Spiritual Parenting – 1Thess.2:11-12

If we take all of the verbs that are used to describe how one individual influences another and combine them we have what spiritual parents do. Here is an attempt to list them, if it isn’t complete then maybe you can add what is missing: teaching, training, comforting, challenging, exhorting, correcting, encouraging, strengthening, rebuking, admonishing, preaching, questioning (Study how Jesus used questions), sending, exposing

Some of the above are synonyms that have almost the same meaning. It is interesting to take a concordance and look up all of the references in the New Testament where these words are used. A good spiritual parent will develop a deep understanding of each person that he or she

mentors and will use the proper mix of the above so as to maximize the opportunity for transformation into Christ likeness.

Principle # 6 The Body Principle Ephesians 4:11-16

Healthy growth usually requires an environment where there are others that help your people grow. The above passage talks about how God gives specialists that play a special role in helping people grow. A good parent is glad when his or her children have good teachers, they don't try to educate and raise their children without the help of specialists and this is true also in the body of Christ. Remember that people benefit not just from those that are further along than them spiritual, they also benefit from their peers. In fact, I recommend that you work hard at creating a learning environment for the people you are discipling. See the document, "The Greenhouse Effect" in the JA ministry tool kit under Ministry Skills, Leadership.

It is also true that many qualities can only be passed on by a team. Our spiritual children will learn much from how we relate to our peers. Sometimes it may even be necessary to have a teammate take over the development of someone you have been nurturing, simply because there is better chemistry between them.

Principle #7 Individual Attention (Selection) 2Tim.2:2 The Timothy principle

Unfortunately individual attention is often given to those with a lot of problems and the healthy, those that are growing rapidly are neglected. Too often it is because pastors and other mature Christians don't know what to do with those that are healthy and growing rapidly. Usually they are quickly given a lot of responsibility and all too often this leads to burn out. By selecting those that are healthy and growing rapidly for individual attention we can create a strong healthy core in our churches. Which in turn creates a very attractive and healthy atmosphere, which is often exactly what people with a lot of problems need. Often these people need more time to grow and too much individual attention just put them under pressure. The JA ministry tool kit provides the resource one needs in order to give the healthy rapid growing ones the extra help they need to become solid fruit bearing disciples that multiply.

Principle #8 Emphasis Quality and not Quantity. 2Chronicles 16:9; Titus 2:6-8; 1Tim.4:6-16

It is easy to emphasize quantity at the price of quality. Sometimes quantity is needed to get quality. Usually it is quality that will bring quantity over time. Churches stagnate very quickly when quality is neglected. Jesus very consciously decided to limit his time with the crowds so he could get quality time with the twelve.

Principle #9 Pray and work toward Spiritual Generations – John 17:20

Jesus had the 12 and through them the 70 and through them the 500 and so on. We need to (At the appropriate time) focus more on helping our people reproduce instead of our adding more people. We want more verticle growth than horizontal growth. This means that generation A needs to help generation B grow up, but also assist generation B with generation C. And generation B with not only need to help grow up generation C but help them with generation D etc.