

Four Essentials of a Spiritual Warfare Intercessory Ministry: Discipleship

Regularity, Relationship, Training, Proclamation

By

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Congratulations in your desire to reach others who and launch into an exciting expansion of the Kingdom of God! If we do this right, we will even find ourselves reaching those whom the church has been somewhat puzzled on how to help although the answers are laid out in the scriptures. Still you must be commended in your willingness to “step out of the boat” and face the unconventional and sometimes intimidating reality of what is known as *spiritual warfare* and *intercession*. This is the work of a disciple of Jesus man or woman. It is not meant to be a particular sect or "specialization" Before we continue, it would be helpful if we clarify what we mean by the term spiritual warfare. Spiritual warfare is any situation that requires a focused clear effort on the part of God’s people to expand the impact and effect of the Kingdom of God over the Kingdom of darkness. Please note that “darkness” is not capitalized for a reason. The two are *not* equal kingdoms. The prevailing Kingdom of Christ has already won the battle. We, as his followers are simply conducting mop up against a spiritual insurgency until Jesus returns. How this is set up is the focus of this information and by means it is accomplished.

Conducting oneself in the realm of the spiritual first requires one to take the realm seriously. Unfortunately, many Christians don’t and as a result spend their lives ineffective in this battle beset with habitual sins and “buying their time” until the Lord returns counting on His grace to guarantee them a spot in heaven. We happen to think Jesus died for more than that and, coinciding with His command to “proclaim the Gospel throughout the world” as the primary focus, he meant what he said when stating “*And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.*”¹ In this proclamation many remarkable statements, including the two-primary means by which God alleviates suffering in the lives of our fellow humans occurs; He provides the authority to *drive out demons* and the authority to *heal the sick* and it is in these two arenas the church for the last two thousand years has suffered the most confusion and conflict among those who for some remarkable reason don’t take Jesus at his word! It’s always a bad idea to not take Jesus at his word as we usually end up stumbling and unable to make a difference while an unseen but profoundly real battle takes place around us. The stakes of which literally involves the vested interests of heaven and hell. That said, we can then ascertain the proclamation of the Gospel is accompanied with the signs Jesus said would accompany it.

We now turn to what exactly makes up a spiritual warfare intercession group? What is its foundation? Is this something new? Do we need to go to Bible school or seminary to acquire the tools to execute one? Many ill-informed Christians run off claiming authority in the realm of spiritual warfare and intercession and wreak more havoc than victory. It’s for this purpose we are discussing the foundational aspects of what this ministry looks like. For if these essential

¹ Mark 16: 16-18

elements are missing, your group *will not be* conducting Kingdom warfare and, in the worst scenario, may think it's doing good when in fact it's doing quite the opposite! This is a potential error which all of us are capable of and want to avoid at all costs. To echo the words of David Hogan, veteran missionary and evangelist "There is no shortcut to spiritual power."

Fortunately, the answer to the above questions are not as complicated or intimidating as it might seem. For in the Gospels themselves, that is the story of Jesus, his model for the proclamation of the Kingdom of God and in the subsequent book of Acts, we find everything we need to implement such a ministry group. We do however present the following. By following the most successful spiritual intercession group in history, Jesus and his disciples, (the 12 and the 120), four essential elements are obvious and necessary from which any ministry *must* flow to remain established. These are: **Regularity, Relationship, Training and Proclamation.**

Many of you reading this are already in established ministries. If people are coming to the resurrected Christ through your efforts, getting restored and maturing, and growing in real intimacy with the God through the Holy Spirit, chances are you already have these in place without even formally acknowledging it. However, if you find a ministry or church for that matter is in a stall, you can be assured one of or more of these elements, have fallen off the path and is being neglected. Even if you have everything in place, if we get **proclamation** wrong and what that looked like according to Jesus, which was, "*Preach the Kingdom of God. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.*"² It means there is a neglecting of the supremacy of the Holy Spirit over the ministry effort. We can go along time without the Holy Spirit, unaware of this and get stuck in a circle of flesh-based works. Its best to avoid that. Whether you are a group of two or two hundred, you'll find these four elements put in place, will help put guardrails around your fellowship to see fruit grow.

Regularity

If we use Jesus model for our starting point, a format for a intercession ministry becomes readily apparent. First, Jesus and the disciples *did all the things* previously noted about proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Since the Gospels and work of Jesus already has a successful format for SWIM ministry, we would be best advised to use Jesus and his work with the disciples as our foundation. It's readily apparent from the book of Acts this model of *proclaiming* and *demonstrating* was deliberately initiated by Jesus and *continued* to be the functional model for Kingdom advancement. But how was this done? How did Jesus take a group of 12 men primarily with an extended family of some 120 men and women from all walks of life and turn them into a supernatural force that would turn the world upside down? Through *regularity*, which is the first and simplest element by definition. This is how this is accomplished.

Why is regularity so important for an intercessory group? For one its takes time to break through the superficial nature of human relationships to feel comfortable enough with each other to open the door to the critical components of growth, trust and ministry. Jesus took the time he did with the disciples, three years (plus or minus a few months) to accomplish this while developing *relationships*. Here is what we mean by regularity. Regularity requires you to meet physically on a regular basis for the purpose of worship, sharing and seeking God together. If we think

² Mathew 10: 7-11

weekly church or Sunday and once a night during the week is going to prepare us for a intercession ministry we are greatly mistaken. Regularity is what provides the springboard for relationships to occur which is the second component of a SWIM group. The two are inseparable. The second observation is this. If we follow Jesus methods it takes time. Jesus slept with his disciples and lived with them over a period of several years *24 hours a week*, pouring into them his personality, his teaching, and his instructions for the Kingdom. One of the reasons the church is weak in westernized culture today is the issue of regularity is seen as an *imposition* on our time. We have been sold the idea that God so uses our personal uniqueness (which He does) for His work to the extent that our individuality is more important than the body of Christ! We find more time for our kids sporting events, football games, tv, shopping the list goes on. The formation of your group will have to decide what type of regularity will promote your knowledge of what God wants to do in your lives personally, in your church locally, in your nation nationally and even internationally. There is a vast difference between being a Christian social group and a group of disciples.

Considering for a moment, just how much time Jesus spent with the disciples and where this regularity took place? It took place in every possible sequence of life. Another component to regularity which is directly tied to spiritual growth is the need for the inexperienced or growing *to observe* how those with experience conduct ministry. There's a warning by Paul in the New Testament about the issues of new converts being propelled into leadership before their time, "*they must not be a recent convert, or they may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.*"³ I can't tell you over the last thirty 30 years how many solo performing Christians I've met who do more damage than good for the simple reason they think they can bypass the principles of growth and accountability based on their inability to receive counsel because of pride. We don't want to be this type of ministry, ever. Your group needs veteran, mature Christians (both genders if possible) at the leadership level, not novices. This is the format modelled by Jesus for which there's no alternative. What a veteran consists of is a topic for further discussion. If you want to heal others through prayer find those who model it, supernaturally. If you want to deliver the oppressed from demons find those who have delivered others from demons. David Hogan, veteran missionary and evangelist puts this in perspective better than most. "*If you're a prophet of God you can raise the dead, if you call yourself and Apostle you can raise the dead.*"⁴ The point is look for those who are experiencing and demonstrating the works and sings Jesus said disciples would have and make that a goal for you and your ministry members. We have a lot of working prophets across the planets these days. Please note Jesus *did not say* the disciple would manifest prophecy; he said they would preach the Kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead and cast out demons.⁵ While the journey to becoming an effective disciple for the Kingdom takes time, where we set our goals will determine our final destination. You will want to meet outside of worship services regularly, as a group and between as individuals as discipleship (learning) takes place over time. People grow differently and this fact cannot be cultivated without a *linear* time investment with each other. Does your leadership attend mission's events? Then your new members should have the opportunity to learn with them and grow with them regularly. This day and age the internet provides and incredible

³ 1 Timothy 3:6

⁴ David Hogan July 3 2019 Shiloh Baptist Edmonton Canada

⁵ Matthew 10: 7-11; Mark 16: 15-18

resource to share information, provide trainings, and share testimonies and prayer requests amongst your group.

If we are to follow the successful model of Jesus than we must begin to see beyond our weekly sacrifice and start surrendering our time. Great men and women of God learn this early in their ministries. Effective Christians *regularly meet* with other effective Christians to seek God's will for their lives and His ministry, personally, locally, even nationally. They also seek those who model the gifts (all of them, not just one focus) and ministries Jesus said would accompany His followers which to the challenge of some, involve supernatural manifestations.

Relationship

Relationship. It is perhaps the element of relationship that drives the maturity and effectiveness of an intercessory ministry more than another other component, Why? There are a few primary reasons which we'll briefly consider, that of *administration*, *maturity*, and *love*. Again, we need go no farther than Jesus model for ministry. Let's look at these three, from the simplest to the most complex.

Administration

When Jesus formed his group keep in mind the original twelve were quite diverse in their background and worldviews. There were ultra nationalist Jews like Simon the Zealot mixing with Matthew the tax gatherer who apparently had no qualms we know of to work for the Roman gentile system and administration. Some had potential issues of intolerance, after all James and John threatened to extinguish a village of Samaritans but never seemed to be equally offended by the Jewish religious hypocrites! Four of them were established tradesmen we know of and the rest, well they made up a smorgasbord of Hellenistic Jews, (Phillip), regular Jews, and average people who we will not know personally until we arrive in Heaven. One thing is obvious. From this group and the extended family of believers, we know Jesus set up and approved of an *administration* that used the skills and talents of the individuals to carry the administrative component of the ministry. Judas was a treasurer, Andrew appears as a go between for the disciples and Jesus. Peter was their leader. Many of the women recorded in the Gospels, ministered to Jesus ministry out of their own means. Mary Magdalene, was one, Joanna who husband was an official in Herod's administration and Susanna are named specifically in Luke eight. They carried and supported the efforts of Jesus practically. No one persona can carry an intercessory ministry on their own shoulders, no one. It takes people offering themselves and understanding each other's *spiritual gifts* and *talents* to dispatch these skills to support the common goal of Kingdom advancement. We are not called the "body of Christ" for nothing. We are inter-dependent and the only way a church will reach its potential is in honoring the relational aspects of administrative gifts and talents which "*God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.*"⁶ The use of such is to exhort and build the body of believers for the Kingdom of God and reach the world of those who have yet to know Him. There is no way for us to appreciate the strengths and specialties God has distributed amongst his people and then see them produce His desired fruit without *relationship*. Relationship is honoring to the gifts and talents of others, resentfulness is the opposite and jealous of them. The

⁶ 1st Cor 12:18

leadership of your group will need to seek to know each other well enough to honor this aspect asking themselves “Who brings what to the table that advances the Kingdom and builds the body?” We also as leaders might want to keep in mind the type of people and gifts God brings to a selected group may communicate the primary emphasis of the group’s ministry aspects or effect its direction more than others. This is ok as no two intercession groups are the same and *nor should they be.*

Maturity

When we speak of maturity, we are not speaking of gaining knowledge. While knowledge is important, we’re speaking of the supernatural maturity that comes from working together *relationally*. Jesus knew the disciples so well through the process of his mentoring he could always speak to the people that they were. Consider how well he knew Nathaniel even before they met? “*Truly this is an Israelite in which there is no guile.*”⁷ Jesus knew Peter’s temperament so well he interrupted him to check his arrogance telling him it was he (Jesus) who prayed for him that his “*strength would not fail.*”⁸ We find Jesus incensed by Phillip’s comment around the table requesting Jesus to “show them the Father” Jesus’ correction of Phillip assumes Phillip knew Jesus well enough to not make such a comment! “*Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’*”⁹ The extended family of Jesus knew Jesus and knew each other well. John and James’ mother made her special request for her sons because she knew they had a special *relationship* with Jesus.¹⁰ Perhaps no other place in the Bible relates this relationship aspect of Jesus and his followers more than the two Marys’. Mary Magdalene was the first to see the risen Christ because her soul and spirit couldn’t fathom being without him. That’s why she was at the tomb with the others. This incredible disciple of whom Jesus cast out seven demons was known *personally, spiritually* and *emotionally* by her master. The little Bethany family of Martha, Mary and Lazarus was loved and adored by Jesus! Each one of them possessed a differing personality and *relationship* with the Lord that rises off the pages of the Gospels. One of the most entertaining, humor laden relationships in the New Testament is the relationship of Jesus and Martha. It’s conducted with devotion, patience, exasperation, confrontation, investment and love for each other. Whatever else one thinks of Martha and her complaining about her sister not helping with dinner, later in the Gospels she hits a home run of faith when she tells Jesus “*Yes, Lord,*” she replied, “*I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.*”¹¹

No one who prayerfully reads the pages of the New Testament and examines the *relational* nature of the first warfare intercessory group can miss the human relationships that permeate the pages of the Gospel narratives. The relational maturity that occurs in love for each other, indignation at times, offense and apology, joy and repentance, occurs as Jesus and those he served live together as unique people whom Jesus repeatedly exhorts in their uniqueness! No disciple was to overwhelm one another by opinion or status or power of religious conviction.

⁷ Jn 1:47

⁸ Luke 22:32

⁹ Jn 14:9

¹⁰ Matt 20:23

¹¹ Jn 11: 27

How God made them unique was to be cultivated to becoming whom they were meant to be in the Kingdom of God! Effective ministry *will not flourish* unless people *feel comfortable enough* to be themselves with each other, learn to respect each other's differences, and then make the final step into investing into the development of others above themselves through the process of agape driven relational love. Consider the observations of Dallas Willard who writes "There is very little occasion for openness in most of our gatherings because we fear it"¹² One of the main reasons personal Bible studies fail regularly to have impact that changes the lives of those who attend them is because they fail to develop relational maturity, or, intimacy if you prefer that term. One of the reasons whole churches miss their calling in the Kingdom of God is because the person in charge is so fixed in their own beliefs and perspectives, they can't utilize anyone else to cultivate the Kingdom. Instead these leaders often assemble around themselves a group of like-minded "yes men" who think as they, do as they say, and thus never is the diversity required and needed to build Kingdom principles established.

Love

No matter what you may accomplish or what programs you might initiate, your group must cultivate an atmosphere of love. We are talking of love on God's scale not mans. Love on man's scales is conditional and when it fails to receive what it anticipates, it either withers away or is abruptly stopped. When we consider the type of love Jesus conveyed towards His disciples, we see something unearthly. Jesus knew the necessity of seeing humans for who they could be in the Kingdom of God verses who they were at the time! This was the ultimate love investment. When Judas was betraying him John's Gospel tells us Jesus still called him "*friend*."¹³

The type of love that enables us to see others as Jesus did is crucial in any intercessory ministry. For one, it keeps us from being presumptuous about the folks God cares about. Its supernatural, there is nothing earthly about it all. It's formed from the transformation of the human heart into the type of heart that God intends to give us for purposes of His ministry and His relationship with us. We know it isn't a heart of human concerns because God promise to us is "*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh*"¹⁴ Notice this heart is accompanied by the Spirit of God in us as well. The litmus test for our faith according to the disciple group of Jesus wasn't an earthly type of vow to each other. We don't do that well when it comes to love, particularly in the church. Competitiveness, comparison, criticism and jealousy, and spirits of recognition are more likely to be the emotions that describe the local church as opposed to the spirit of love. We also know that this type of love is forged in the atmosphere of *committed relationships* as one of the most memorable things Jesus told his disciples the night, he was being betrayed, the night they would all run from him, and the night they were again jostling for personal recognition was this: "*They will know your my disciples*" (please underline the "my disciple" part) *by how you love each other.*"¹⁵ It is in this agape love of the Father the supernatural love of Jesus, living in us through the Holy Spirit that we operate as the church and represent Jesus. If we can't grasp the love of God as disciples in relationship, we will be hard pressed to reach the world with Jesus. Instead,

¹² Willard, D. "*The Divine Conspiracy*," New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, (1997) 202.

¹³ Matthew 26:50

¹⁴ Ezekiel 36:26

¹⁵ John 13:35

we might be in danger of selling a Jesus for the purpose of producing converts without even knowing it. I would go as far to say as one of the greatest barriers in the evangelical or charismatic church today isn't a lack of knowledge or programs, or even money. It's a lack of the supernatural love of God that puts everything else in perspective. This concept is so important that above all, it's worth it to take the time and figure out how to promote and protect this atmosphere *prior* to implementing ideas and strategies for ministry. The members of your group, as intercessors will have moments of extreme joy and potential difficulty as they engage in reaching the lost, bringing deliverance and ministering to those requiring healing. They may last for a while on the adrenaline rush or even the charisma of their leader. Eventually though these things fail. What will keep them engaged and focused is a supernatural love cultivated between your members that's wise enough to care for your members all along the course of your ministry so they continue to grow and deepen their relationships with one another. Men and women who learn to trust each other implicitly are the ones who become great men and women of God. Leaders who fail to realize this usually end up being the type that run through members like a packaging line. People get hurt, disappointed or legalistic and miss the relational nature of what makes us Christians.

Let's now consider for a moment how this issue of supernatural love affects in particular the issue of *intercession*. After all this is one of the reasons for an intercession group!

I can't think of any better examples of how this supernaturally enabled agape form of love occurs in a portrait of intercession than Moses intercessory prayer for Israel in Exodus 32, Daniel's intercessory prayer in Daniel chapter 9 and Jesus intercessory prayer in John 17. Please note the following, these prayers are *self-sacrificing, weight bearing authority* backed prayers motivated out of a love for others. It's worth noting the similarities in these prayers:

1. They press into the promises of God to people. Even people who have drastically rebelled against Him! Moses prays "*You swore by Yourself and said to them 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens'*" Daniel acknowledges the "*Awesome God, who keeps His covenants and lovingkindness for those who love Him.*" Jesus prays the ultimate promise for us in "*Father I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am.*"

Ask ourselves "Are we basking in these eternal promises of God in our prayer life?"

2. They intercede for those who need intercession. In Moses situation he was interceding for a particularly stubborn people "*Alas this people has committed a great sin, they have made a god of gold for themselves*" Daniel pleads "*We have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled*" Jesus prays "*I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.*"

Ask ourselves "Are we praying for those seemingly beyond hope as much as our current brothers and sisters?" Do we know our people and our communities well enough to know how to intercede for them? Some people are more certainly easier to pray for!

3. They interceded sacrificially. How Moses makes such a statement as to say, "*But now, if You will, forgive their sin-and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have*

written!” is quite extraordinary. Daniel uses the phrase “we,” “us,” and “our” 23 times in his intercessory prayer aligning himself with the people’s rebellion before asking God for a return to favor. Intercessors carry the weight of those around them and identify with people as Jesus carrying the cross was the most intimate identification with our most crucial need. Intercessors do this not because they realize a spiritual superiority but because they see God’s love in a different way and understand the cost of this supernatural “agape love.” The whole prayer of Jesus in John 17 is the intercessors prayer aligned with the ultimate intercessors sacrifice. It is intercessory prayer for those who are immediate *and* those yet to come. It not only anticipates *promise*, it anticipates *harvest*.

We would be well advised to review these prayers drawn out of love and contemplate them. I want you to ask yourselves a question. How many relationships like this can you point to in the church? How many church programs are built on this type of love? Finally, if this premise is one of the key components of a Spirit guided ministry as opposed to human efforts, how many of the programs and projects which make up our church can we say have been truly were born out of this type of love? If not, what are they based on?

Training

Now let’s consider the aspect of *training*. It’s possible to miss this when we read the Gospels but it is very clear from Jesus ministry with the 12, to the 70 to the 120, Jesus had a definite intent that involves the spiritual maturity of his followers of which their *training* was important to Him.

Training for your group needs to incorporate your goals and the specifics of the community and spiritual circumstances you are addressing. Because of this, training can be the most diverse aspect of your SWIM group and novel as compared to others. However, don’t make the mistake of jumping into training without seeking the Spirit to reveal your mission or the focus or direction God provides. We may think God wants us to start in one place when God wants us to move in another area! Barnabas and Paul fasted in response to the Spirit prior to being sent out on the first missionary voyage.¹⁶ If you jump into training without a vision of what the Holy Spirit wants to do through your ministry, you could wind end up with a bunch of programs, even well-meaning ones, that struggle never getting off the ground.

Part of the training that Jesus did, in fact probably more than any other was he *bathed his disciples in the Word of God*. This is partially because Jesus himself was the *living Word of God*. Regularly, Jesus used the Word to teach or emphasize spiritual principles and to proclaim the truth of the Kingdom of God. We also are part of this exciting ministry as well! It was *his disciples* the sermon on the mount was primarily addressed too and running throughout this sermon is repeated emphasis on the *Word of God*, the *principles inferred* and how they were to impact the life of the disciple and the world around them. It has never ceased to amaze me how difficult it is to get professing Christians to read the Word of God! They will claim they are prophetic, speak over people, attempt healings and when you ask them how much time they spend in the Word of God its negligible! George Barna, Christianity’s most well-known assimilator of Christian trends and statistics, (himself a powerful believer) tells us pastors spend

¹⁶ Acts 13:2-3

on average 15 minutes of a day in the Word of God! I don't care how charismatic an individual is, *you* are responsible to ascertain whether or not what others speak over you or to you or to the people you are ministering to is grounded in the Word. Well-meaning believers will form committees, start impressive mission projects or donate to local charities before they will learn the spiritual necessity of leaning into a *deep reliance* on God's Word and the Holy Spirit as the teacher and revealer of that truth! There are 60 to 65 quotes from the Old Testament used by Jesus for teaching in the Gospel of Matthew alone! Jesus used the Word centrally in his mission. Any ministry that does not have a handle on the importance of a continuous subsiding on the Word of God will become unhinged from God's purposes eventually. Your group should involve the use of scriptures, particularly scriptures related to prayer, or deliverance and healing if that is your groups focus. You will have to have a "theology" or a "framework" regarding your ministries focus that is based upon the Word of God, not personal opinion or impulses.

Additionally, your group needs to consider how to *impart training knowledge in a relational* format and decide what format serves your immediate purposes. Today the advent of publications and the internet provides unlimited ways to convey knowledge to support your ministry. There is considerable value in providing knowledge. Jesus readily was always explaining to his disciples the difference between what the Word actually meant and how it had been misinterpreted and misapplied. When he imparted teaching, it was grounded on God's promises and intents for the world, hope for the lost and struggling and, a wake up for the complacent and hostile. Find methods to grow together in your understanding and don't be afraid to find something new! While you grow together, be prepared to experience the inter-relational nature of discipleship in a way that takes you and your fellow intercessors to amazing new level of spiritual intimacy, growth and impact!

This literature also assumes your group has a Bible based balanced knowledge of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and what the New Testament teaches specifically about the *Baptism of the Holy Spirit*. While there may be reasonable disagreement with what that looks like in practice, one thing is clear, Jesus commanded, to do *his work*, the infant church was to wait for *his anointing* and it would be accompanied with *supernatural power*.¹⁷ This would accomplish the work of Kingdom expansion, or *proclamation*. That's not opinion. That's the words of Jesus and anything less is contradicting his words. This author spent nearly thirty years as an evangelical with no power until the doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was realized correctly, and the result was *everything changed*. If we think we are prepared for a supernatural ministry of healing or delivering people from demons and we don't have the person, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit right in our lives and theology; be prepared for few results other than what men can do in in the flesh. We might also find ourselves receiving a seven sons of Sceva treatment!¹⁸ On the same token and to be fair to more evangelical assemblies if we think we are ready for supernatural ministry and haven't cultivated a strong personal devotional life in God's Word, we will just as likely miss the ministry God has for us. None of wants to miss God's ministry, even more, none of us wants to hurt someone unintentionally by having something broken in our own lives we should of remedied prior to spiritual warfare ministry!

¹⁷ Acts 1:8

¹⁸ Acts 19

A belief in the Holy Spirit's ministry also means a belief in spiritual gifts. Contrary to some conservative teaching Jesus *nowhere* taught the ministry of the Holy Spirit would *diminish* in his followers. Neither did *any* of those who followed him! However, it's interesting Paul and Peter both reminded us as time progressed there would be more people *in the church* promoting erroneous teaching? Much of that erroneous teaching I believe is centered around the Holy Spirit, almost equally I might add in evangelical and charismatic camps! That's because the Holy Spirit is directly associated with God's glory. The person of the Holy Spirit exists in power. He works in tandem with Jesus and God the Father to advance the Kingdom of God uniquely. All hell is afraid of Him and so is their master. Yet the enemy has fostered more difficulty in this area than most. The teaching on the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the abuse of the Holy Spirit's ministry has caused more grief in the church than perhaps any one topic. Your group will need to cultivate an atmosphere that promotes the use of spiritual gifts, all of them mind, you, and not just those who are attached to the most vocal members of your group as well as a healthy ministry that promotes the worship and acknowledgement of the Holy Spirit's intercessory role. This will help your members deepen their intimacy with God and discover the unspeakable joy! The whole body of Christ is meant to be a supernaturally functioning, interceding, living breathing reality in the world that is supernaturally empowered. Anything less runs dangerously close to perceiving and attempting to cultivate the body of Christ, intended to be supernatural on the "doctrines and precepts of men."¹⁹

Jesus trained his disciples by *observation* as well as *experience*. It's one thing to know the Word and know spiritual principles, it's another thing to know *how to apply them* to the situation accordingly. Consider how the exact same principle of love taught in the parable of the prodigal son²⁰ would have been received by the differing members of Jesus' audience? The religious rulers were offended by it while those who felt removed from God's were comforted by it. Some of the most tender moments of Jesus' interactions were reserved for the lost while the Lord used rather incendiary arguments at times for religious folks deceived by pride. The disciples were observers of all this. Your group will need to consider how to help your new members and boldly train for the application of spiritual truths to *diverse* circumstances. This is done incrementally, just like Jesus did. If you conduct treasure hunts or street evangelizing, growing members will need to observe and participate in telling others about Christ. There must be enough grace for the Holy Spirit to work with these individuals and they just like us will need latitude in how they grow! They may bungle it at first and as leaders it's your job not to emphasize the perfect but the "*compelled love to reach others by which we can always improve in and probably never master.*" Perhaps your group conducts frequent healings either at a central location or part of an outreach ministry. SWIM members need to watch how healing is *practically* conducted by experienced believers and be allowed to participate in the process themselves. One of the best environments for your group to grow and excel is to involve them in missions' projects and short-term mission trips. Getting each other out of our comfort zone helps us rely on God more as opposed to ourselves!

Before sending out the 12 disciples on what was probably a two to three months ministry without him, Jesus told his disciples to "*Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out*

¹⁹ Matthew 15:9

²⁰ Luke 15

*demons, freely you received freely give.*²¹ The disciples had already witnessed Jesus performing these exact miracles. Before this event there are some 17 *recorded* miracles the disciples had witnessed which prepared their perspective for a proper view of the Kingdom's advancement and how it occurs. By the time the 70 were sent out,²² the feeding of 5000 and the 4000 had occurred for which the disciples, probably more than just the 12 were responsible in assisting. Just as Jesus provided a *hands-on training* element of ministry, your group will need to promote hands on experience as well. This is why relationship and trust are so critical to an effective intercession ministry. Only three disciples experienced the transfiguration which remarkably is often overlooked for its training component. Not everyone needs to receive the same training as people are different! Really, would you want to minister to 12 different people on a growth trajectory that were just like you?

Your training and how you develop ministries of healing and deliverance or service will offer you the chance to be creative and spontaneous. God desires our *whole skill set* of gifts, talents, and supernatural gifts to be brought to bear for the Kingdom's advance. Avoid formulas, really, they are a spiritual death trap. If someone isn't immediately healed avoid the temptation to "pray harder" as a knee jerk response. Don't always default to asking someone to try something right after a prayer. Sometimes it's appropriate sometimes it may not be. Its ok if you do, provided the intent is Spirit driven exhortation, not a formula response. If you rely too heavily on what someone else has done you will find yourself stalled. One thing, regardless of how you implement your interactions it should be evident Jesus is the healer, not us. What we do should reflect Jesus. By the time the disciples were released to themselves after the Lord had returned to His Glory, they were equipped supernaturally, saturated in the presence of their master Jesus, and those who saw them could not help but "*recognize them as having been with Jesus.*"²³ Whatever we do for the people we minister to, pray for, and help in deliverance, and invite to the Kingdom of God in Jesus, if they don't recognize the life of Christ living in us we need to re-evaluate the "why" of what we are doing!

A final note for leaders. Training takes a personal investment of your time, often more than we initially envision. *Training is an inherent part of discipleship.* It was three years before the disciples were ready to carry the mission. You will have to be prepared to invest significant time in the people God brings to your ministry in equipping them praying for them and training them. I would suggest looking into a regular mission's ministry you can participate in or initiate one yourselves. Pray about this. You need early on, to consider who you will training to lead others. You will have to be selective. Not everyone grows at the same rate and there are personality issues that make us all unique that affect how some people work better together than others. As you train you will not be able to remove yourself far from the *relational* aspect of your ministry. You will need to know your disciples well enough to intercede for them, pray on their behalf and even fast for them. Don't be the type of leader that falls into the trap of assuming and bypasses the relational aspect of the body of Christ that relies on position and authority more than personal investment. These leaders burn people out and seem to endlessly chase the fellowship they desire and never foster the "unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."²⁴ Mark this; it may be one

²¹ Matthew 10:8

²² Luke 10

²³ Acts 4: 13

²⁴ Ephesian 4:3

of the most important things you discover, there is a huge difference to controlling people and leading people. Controlling individuals use “authority” on their side to foster loyalty. Jesus used modeling and compassion. There’s a world of difference.

Finally, if you yourself are going to select a mentor I would suggest the following. Make sure your mentor is grounded in the Word of God, and its active. Just because they have a degree from seminary doesn’t mean their present relationship is vibrant and guided by the Holy Spirit. They need to have a mature prayer life. The twenty-minute devotional Christian is not going to be a mentor of any circumstance. I would never select a mentor who had not developed tithing fasting, and a vibrant devotional prayer life. There’s a reason why the great men and women of the Bible are found to be practicing these spiritual disciplines. There’s also a reason these three issues come up remarkably in the Sermon on the Mount which was given, according to the Word of God, primarily to Jesus disciples.

Proclamation

“Because God has made Christ sin for us, because God is not reckoning to men their trespasses, therefore there is a word of reconciliation, a message of good news that can and must be proclaimed to men and women”²⁵

Whatever area or atmosphere your intercessory group operates in we must never be far from the issue of *proclamation*. Every single parable teaching that Jesus utilized in His ministry was accompanied by and unrelenting focus on the reality of the Kingdom of God and what that Kingdom is as a spiritual and practical reality. The Kingdom is the very nature of God as God he is not separated from it as its Creator. This means in the aspects of the Kingdom, its existence, and its progression and consummation, the Kingdom is also an expression of the actual Glory of God. This Kingdom reality is expressed in us who follow Christ, “*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.*”²⁶ Everything we know of, or are exposed to, proclaims His glory as “*The heavens declare the Glory of God the skies proclaim the work of His hands.*”²⁷ “We must remember, this kingdom manifests *in the heavens, on the earth* and the *earth below* as part of who God is! But in the work of *proclamation*, the greatest expression of God’s glory occurs in Christ summarized in the following:

God will... because of who He is... *manifest all aspects of His Glory*, the greatest of which is Himself in Jesus Christ on the cross, and His resurrection.

Your probably glad that was so simple right? We should be! As the central component of our ministries we must *proclaim* the Glory of God in Christ on the cross. One cannot proclaim God’s glory *without* the cross at the center of ministry. Whether it be the homeless shelter in the urban center or the Christian farm cooperative in a foreign country. The two are inseparable. Any ministry that fails to understand this will become “unhinged” from the Gospel. Paul writes about this in Galatians chapter five when he speaks of Christians falling away and returning to

²⁵ L. Morris. “The Apostolic Preaching of The Cross” Grand rapids MI: William Erdman Press., 1965: 232.

²⁶ 2 Corinthian 3:18

²⁷ Psalm 19:1

the law for their spiritual affirmation and assurance of salvation. He writes “*You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*”²⁸ This verse applies to any ministry that derails or deviates from the Glory of God displayed through the cross and, why it was required, and, how it demonstrates the tremendous Glory of God; and what it means for the reconciliation of people back to God through Christ.

Proclamation, Centers on The Cross. The Ultimate Expression of God’s Glory

Now while that sounds all very theological, possibly even technical, the reality is in these principles there is a rich *supernaturally empowered* basis of reconciling people to Jesus from which we can communicate in. For the unsaved, the message is rather simple but must center on the cross and reconciliation. We must not get in the way of how God reveals the individuals need for Jesus by trying to remove the sting from the conviction of the sinful state of people and the need for Christ. At the same time if we are not able to convey the cross without the promises, the kindness, the goodness and love of God that is attached to it. If we separate these two truths (which is the historic problem in the church), we most likely are operating in knowledge without partnership with the Holy Spirit. We don’t remove the cross and rob God of His glory because we feel uncomfortable talking about His holiness. Nor do we overemphasize the justice of God and terrorize people into the Kingdom! Understanding, the simplicity of the cross is a non-negotiable. Let’s not assume telling about God’s love and glory in this manner gets “old” or is “too offensive” or “out of touch with the times.” That’s a lie from the enemy! We speak from grace. What’s insulting is to talk of God’s love and glory separate from the cross!

Be bold in proclamation! Don’t fall into a trap of talking only about the love of God separate from the cross, Jesus didn’t “*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*”²⁹ It is so crucial we understand as Jesus was saying this He was moving towards the ultimate Glory of God, the cross! You might ask. “is *proclamation*, salvation and the Glory of God all wrapped up so tightly together? Notice how Jesus completes this discourse with the prayer “*Father the hour has come; (the cross) glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You!*” (by going to the cross). Consider the situation in which this is said. It was made the night he was betrayed before his passion in a discourse that focuses on Jesus himself and the call to proclamation when Jesus says “*No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.*”³⁰ It’s here we must grab what Jesus meant when he said “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” The connection between love and sacrifice is *not us*. It’s the love of God (His glory) which will take place in Jesus sacrifice for His friends meaning *you and me*. God’s glory, demonstrated in Jesus on the cross is the greatest love which has been made known to us, who are now friends of God. This releases us to proclaim to those we minister to the glory of God, not only in the truth of Jesus death on the cross, but in power! Until we can get comfortable talking about this, we are going to struggle in proclamation.

²⁸ Galatians 5:4

²⁹ John 15: 13

³⁰ John 15: 15

Proclamation, Through Us in All Aspects

Proclamation isn't simply regurgitating knowledge. As we "preach" or convey the Gospel of Christ (a command from Jesus mind you)³¹ and his life, death, and resurrection, we are proclaiming the *Glory of God* by how we live and how our belief expresses Christ in our lives. Both our practical living and faith (belief) demonstrate *proclamation* through Jesus who is the demonstration of God's glory, "*and the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father,*"³² lives in us. Its critically important we understand the relationship between the glory of God in Jesus, the work of Kingdom expansion through us and the empowerment to proclaim. *Proclamation* is never intended to be conveyed separate from *power*. In fact, it can't because God's Glory is not separate from His demonstrated power... it is intrinsic to it. Proclamation involves God working through us in power to manifest Kingdom priorities, Kingdom impact, and Kingdom change as part of *proclamation* process. This is why Jesus says his followers who proclaim his Kingdom will "*drive out demons; speak in new tongues; place their hands-on sick people, and they will get well*" and "*the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*"³³ All of the work of proclamation, i.e. the proclaiming the word, the demonstration of the supernatural through signs and wonders and the way we live our lives is the work of *proclamation*. As Jesus life demonstrated God's Glory, and Jesus lives in his followers, we can do nothing but manifest and express the glory of God in similar fashion. This is why the work of proclamation stays very close to the cross. Remarkably, this is not new revelation. It was the core teaching of Jesus to his followers and a critical component of their understanding of who they were in relationship to God's glory, His power and His Kingdom which now lived through them.

*"For thine is the Kingdom the Power and The Glory forever"*³⁴

We want to make sure as leaders forming SWIM groups that we are presenting a complete portrait of what it means to flow in the work of the Kingdom of God. If we miss or neglect the relationship between, proclamation, Kingdom, power, and God's glory our ministry will be deficient and show itself in some form one way or another. We are called to *proclaim* in the same form as the model proclaimer of the Kingdom, Jesus himself, with all the tools at our disposal, in understanding of the mission and the stakes at hand. If we do and humbly bow ourselves to the proper work of the Kingdom without diminishing either its message or power, we cannot help but manifest God's Glory to the world!

³¹ Mark 16:

³² John 1: 14

³³ Mark 16:1`7 & John 14:12

³⁴ Matthew 6:13