

The graphic features a green square on the left containing the text 'TUTORIAL 9.19' in white. To the right of the square, the words 'Real-life applications' are written in a large, green, sans-serif font.

TUTORIAL 9.19 Real-life applications

This tutorial looks at the second question under the area of *Discipleship*: 'Are they being helped to apply the general truth from God's Word to their own specific real-life situations?'

1 Corinthians 13:2: If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing.

Last time

We looked at the first question from the WILD outline in the area of Discipleship. We talked about how all other ties, loyalties and commitments are increasingly defined by the primary relationship; disciples of their master, Jesus Christ. In this tutorial we will discuss the second question in the WILD outline in the area of Discipleship.

Are they being helped to apply the general truth from God's Word to their own specific real-life situations?

There's an obvious link between the verse above from first Corinthians and this question that we're asking. We're wanting to see people have truth and be disciples of Christ, not just digest knowledge. Love is not just the ability to stand in front of others and impart knowledge. In a religious setting, that could even be accepted as being okay and all that's needed. Real life, though, is reflective of Christ. We know that Christ didn't just speak words and impart knowledge and truth. He actually lived a life of serving and loving others and the way He cared for others and the way He spoke to their hearts met their needs. It was more than just words.

We saw the relationship Jesus had with His immediate disciples, the twelve. We saw so many times that He would speak to increasingly large crowds then spend time with the disciples talking about how to apply it in real life. His love for them is echoed in first Corinthians thirteen; it's the same love. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud...love never gives up. It never gives up, never loses faith. It's always hopeful and it endures in every circumstance. If we're going to be good disciples, that's what we've got to be, haven't we? We've got to be hopeful of those who stumble and act like idiots

sometimes. We all do. The Lord is like that with us, isn't He? He believes in us. He is hopeful, regardless of what we do so many times.

The disciples were often boasting and arguing, even up to the end. It says, "Love is not boastful" but they're boastful and wondering who will be the greatest in the kingdom of God. He's patient with them and He continues to love them to the end. He models discipleship for us.

As church planters, we'll see people who don't know Him yet and they'll be acting like people in darkness. Yet, as we get to know them and live in their community, we have to have that hope. Again, that love and hope comes only from Him. Picturing them as believers, as coworkers, as people who are going to be disciples of the Master and what their lives can become can help us keep trusting for that.

As they read, study, or hear God's Word being taught, do they see it as communication from a real Person who's always there and vitally interested in their daily lives, or is it more a religious activity they're participating in?

Dave talks about what practical discipleship looked like in the culture there where there the Spiritual was part of everyday life:

Once they became saved, we continued with the regular public teaching meetings. We weren't teaching five and six days a week like we were initially. Still, we would have regular teaching meetings generally at least two days per week. They would come in from their gardens and everyone would be there. Along with the public teaching meetings, we wanted to continue to spend time with them in their daily lives as different things came up, as they faced various questions in life. We wanted to help them work through those and know how to apply God's Word to everyday life. Honestly, there are some ways that it's perhaps easier for them than it is for us in our culture because we tend to make more of a strict dichotomy between the spiritual elements of our lives and the everyday physical or just the common daily elements of our lives, such as work and family. There are a lot of people in our culture who have times where they're just really focused on their work or other aspects of just living in their home. Then they redirect their focus and now they're more specifically focused on God and their spiritual lives.

The people we worked among historically never separated the spiritual realm from the physical. In some ways, it was almost more natural for them to just keep the spiritual elements of Biblical truth intertwined with just the normal affairs of their daily lives. Sometimes, if someone in our culture is facing a particular question and we quickly spiritualize it, it can even feel a little bit awkward or forced.

That's never the case with these people. It's just very natural to talk about God and about spiritual truths along with just normal everyday life because to them, they have never made any kind of distinction between the spiritual side of life and the physical side of life.

Is there a conscious effort being made to evaluate and, where possible, adjust the form in which Truth is taught to the gathered church so that it encourages discipleship in the body?

Palava explains that they prioritize equipping young people for the time when they have to go out into the world, to school, to find work, etc.

Something very important to us is helping our children who have put their faith in Christ. Particularly, when they finish school and begin to be involved in the wider world. There are many challenges for them out there related to their understanding of God's Word. Our encouragement to them is based on God's Word that they have already heard in the church. We don't want to give advice that is founded in anything other than that. We want them to understand God's purposes for them. We want them to be able to make good choices about what things are profitable and what things are not because some of the things they learn out there are helpful, but other things are very destructive. We say to them, "Yes it is good for you to go and God is with you as you go. But the important thing is that you learn to evaluate everything based on what you have been taught from God's Word because that is the source of real understanding that you can count on." That is how we try to help our young people in their lives.

Greg describes how discipleship of younger believers is a priority for the church:

As these guys have begun to reach out into their community and as they've begun to reach in and draw new life into the church, one of the aspects that they've wanted to do is to multiply as a body and to bring this understanding of God's Word and how to understand God's Word and how to describe it to themselves. Taking time to disciple and to mentor young believers in the Word of God, to invest in their lives, has been a big part of the church. Because of the ability and language that they have, they have extra-curricular materials that they can bring in to understand things as well. They can bring it out of books and study it. They're also learning just to take God's Word as it says and understand it, to read it, to teach from it, and to impart it into their lives.

Are there opportunities made for smaller groups (including one-on-one scenarios) to process, discuss and make relevant, practical applications from the teaching that is being given to the whole church?

Bill explains how the church planting team was conscious of strengthening family life as they taught and he describes the results of that:

I think early on, when the church was born, one of the things that we stressed was the whole idea that God expects every man to be a teacher. That meant that every man needed to learn Scriptures so that he could teach his own family. We put the responsibility of teaching the family not just on the main church service, but as a whole for the community that they were each to meet as a family somehow. Whether that meant just husband, wife, kids, or clan, however that was going to look. It's interesting. About five or six years later if you look at the church, you see the ones that are growing and are strengthened are the ones that have continued to do that. A couple weeks ago I was actually in the village visiting. There are two elders that live side by side. Each evening they get together with their families and they read through some Scripture and just explain it to their children. That is one way that it's not just in the church service but it's in those ones that have taken on this idea of training their family in their life in general and they are the ones that are definitely growing and understanding the Scripture more.

I sat and listened to them as they were in the evening training their children and teaching their family. Because it's more conversational, they were able to talk about things in a conversation. Whereas when there's teaching going on, you usually have one person teaching and then two or three hundred people sitting there listening to them teach. Whereas in the family, there's a lot of discussion going on and the two guys were sitting there asking their kids questions. Their kids were ranged from really small to older. They were just asking questions and talking through what they were studying, rather than just simply one guy just teaching it. That is definitely something that they are continuing to do. It's something I wish more than anything that more people in the church would do because definitely the result of that is just very clear. It's clear to everybody actually; the ones that take the time and effort to do that are just growing.

Kelley adds some more information about the elders meetings, teachers' meetings, ladies meetings, etc.

Early on we called them reading classes. They were like glorified Bible studies where we had the lessons. Like Bill said, we stressed the fact that every man needs to be able to teach because every man needs to be able to teach his family. It was open for all men. Early on there were quite a few people that came to that. That was a really good time to teach them how to read and to increase their literacy skills, to talk about the lesson, to know how to ask questions and give them some points of conversation that they could have with

their families later. Over time what you saw is that it gets down to those faithful ones, right? It slowly diminished and then you have this faithful group of pretty much what is now our Bible teachers and our elders and our deacons. They meet on Thursdays, just kind of themselves. Then it's an open meeting as well. They meet and then it's in an open-air building. Others can come and they just plan out the week.

They plan out what issues they need to take care of, disputes in the village that they're accountable to give some input into. Anything that was coming up in the church or functions that they're going to get together and do. They plan all that out on Thursday. Then they talk about the lesson. They assign some things for Sunday and then they meet again on Sunday. The ladies are meeting once a week and going through a book of the Bible. They're going to redo the Creation to Christ teaching for their kids. They've seen that as a need.

We began this tutorial with the question, "Are they being helped to apply the general truth from God's Word to their own specific real-life situations?"

In each of the examples above we saw that discipleship takes intentionality. It takes a real commitment to being a discipler in order to see discipleship happen. As believers we need to be intentional. We need to have the conviction that this is what God would have us to do. We need to get to the place where it is a natural thing to bring others on into the work and to instill values of being part of the work of the church. We need to remind ourselves not to let that commitment go and to remember that it is a vitally important part of what we're doing. And we must remember that just because we have taught something doesn't necessarily mean that we are discipling.



DISCUSSION POINTS

Real-life applications

1. As you watch the video, make note of any examples given of God's Word being applied to day-to-day life in the different contexts. In your own words describe how discipleship might have contributed to these positive outcomes in the churches.