

CHURCH.

LESSON 31

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray and commit your group and this course on building Christ's Church to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] LUKE 22 - 24
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Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (Luke 22 - 24).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [KEY VERSES IN JOHN] (11) JOHN 11:25
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Review two by two.

(11) John 11:25. I AM the Resurrection and the Life, He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?

4	TEACHING (85 minutes) [CHURCH BUILDING MINISTRY] MULTIPLYING CHRISTIANS AND CHURCHES
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Introduce. This teaching is about the multiplication of the followers of Christ and the multiplication of Christian communities (congregations or house fellowships)". We will consider the principle of spiritual multiplication in the Bible. And we will learn from the Bible about the multiplication of Christian converts, Christian disciples, Christian workers and Christian churches (house churches, house fellowships).

A. THE PRINCIPLE OF SPIRITUAL MULTIPLICATION IN THE BIBLE

Introduce. In order to multiply people, you first need to win people.

In order to multiply disciples, you need to make disciples.

1. The ministry in the Old Testament was a multiplying ministry.

Introduce. Spiritual multiplication means increasing the number of believers in Jesus Christ that believe in the God of the Bible and obey his Word.

Discover and discuss. How did spiritual multiplication take place in the Old Testament?

Read Psalm 78:3-7; Joel 1:3.

Notes. Spiritual multiplication in the Old Testament consisted of passing the knowledge of God and his will on to the next three generations! From the time God called Israel to be his people in the Old Testament he commanded them to multiply spiritually.

(1) Psalm 78:3-7.

This Psalm records how the people of Israel passed on to their next three generations everything their fathers had told them about God and his will. We read, "God established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers (1st generation) to teach their children (2nd generation), so the next generation (3rd generation) would know them. ... and they in turn would tell their children (4th generation). Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands". God gave the forefathers the responsibility to pass on the knowledge of God and of God's wonderful deeds and commands to their next three generations: their own children, their children's children and their children's grandchildren! In this way every generation of people in Israel received the opportunity to know God and his wonderful deeds, and to obey his commands.

(2) Joel 1:3.

The Lord commanded Joel (1st generation), "Tell it to your children (2nd generation), and let your children tell it to their children (3rd generation), and their children to the next generation (4th generation)". The responsibility and practice of every generation in Israel was that the knowledge of God and his will should be passed on to the next three generations. This happened when the great-grandfathers, grandfathers, fathers and the prophets passed God's words on to others. The children of every generation are both one's own children (Deuteronomy 6:1-9) and the children of other people (Psalm 78:71-72).

2. The ministry of Jesus Christ was a multiplying ministry.

(1) Jesus and evangelism.

Discover and discuss. How did Jesus Christ win people to himself?

Notes. Jesus Christ won people to himself. He began his public ministry about December A.D. 26. He won people by either involving them in his own life (“Come and see”) or by getting involved in their lives (the wedding at Cana).

- **Read** Mark 1:15; John 1:39-43. Jesus involved people in his own life and ministry. He went into Galilee and proclaimed the good news of God to people, saying, “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news”. He involved people in his own life by preaching the gospel to them and by challenging them “to repent or convert and to believe the gospel”! He invited people “to come and see” (how I live) and “Follow Me” (in what I am doing in this world).
- **Read** John 2:1-2. Jesus involved himself in the ordinary day-to-day life of other people. For example, he went to a marriage festival, to the Jewish Festivals in Jerusalem and to the ordinary meetings in the synagogues. He went into people’s houses and ate with them. He spoke to the ordinary people on the street and to people in their normal daily situations of work, like fishing or tax collecting. During this period, his disciples often came to listen to his teaching, but they still maintained their daily work as fishermen, tax collectors and other work.

(2) Jesus and training.

Discover and discuss. How did Jesus train his disciples?

Notes. Jesus Christ trained his disciples by establishing them in the Christian faith and by equipping them for a task. After about one year, Jesus called twelve men to follow him fulltime for the purpose of equipping them.

- **Read** Matthew 4:19. He said to some of his disciples, “Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men”.
- **Read** Luke 6:12-13; Mark 3:13-14. He prayerfully chose twelve people whom he trained as his disciples. He trained them by keeping them “with him” much of the time so that they would observe his life and ministry, hear his teaching and answers, and experience how people were changed and helped. They were deeply influenced by being with Jesus!
- **Read** Luke 10:1-16. He trained them by sending them out two by two to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, to teach people, to help the needy and to heal the sick. It was from that time onwards that his disciples followed him full-time.
- **Read** John 11:54. During the last two years of his public ministry, Jesus spent very much time alone with his disciples in order to teach and to train them for their future ministry.

(3) Jesus and sending.

Discover and discuss. For what purpose did Jesus Christ train his disciples?

Notes. Jesus Christ sent disciples as workers or missionaries into the whole world.

- **Read** Matthew 24:14. Just before his death on the cross. Jesus said that the gospel of the kingdom of God would be preached to all the nations in the world.
- **Read** Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8. After three and a half years of teaching and training (practicing), and setting an example to his disciples in preaching, teaching and healing the people, Jesus Christ died on the cross and was resurrected. After his resurrection he gave his disciples the Great Commission. All four Gospels record the Great Commission and show that Jesus repeated the great commission several times to his disciples in different settings. In Matthew 28:18-20 he commanded, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.
- **Read** Acts 17:6-7. This little band of disciples went everywhere and literally turned the Roman Empire upside down!

3. The ministry in the New Testament was a multiplying ministry.

Discover and discuss. How did spiritual multiplication take place in the New Testament?

(1) Jesus multiplied Christian converts, Christian disciples and Christian workers.

Read Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus Christ taught spiritual multiplication in the New Testament to his disciples and all the following generations of disciples! Jesus commanded his own disciples to make new disciples and teach these new disciples to obey all his commands, including the Great Commission! Every new generation of disciples had to make disciples and teach these disciples to keep all the commandments of Jesus Christ, including the Great Commission! In this way, never ending generations of new believers, disciples and disciple makers came into being!

(2) Peter multiplied Christian converts, Christian disciples, Christian workers and Christian churches.

Read Acts 4:13. Peter was one of Jesus Christ’s disciples. Peter in his turn preached the gospel to many people and taught the new followers to become disciples of Jesus Christ. In the beginning, he worked mainly in Jerusalem, but later he travelled, planted new congregations, visited congregations and wrote letters to the congregations. His ministry was directed to:

- the large group (the thousands)

- the small group (the team of apostles in Jerusalem)
- the individual (Barnabas and Mark)

(3) Barnabas multiplied Christian converts, Christian disciples, Christian workers and Christian churches.

Read Acts 11:19-26. Barnabas became a follower of Christ in the ministry of Peter. In his turn, he preached the gospel to many people and taught the new followers to become disciples of Jesus Christ. He travelled to Antioch in Syria and helped the new Christian church there to grow. Also his ministry was directed to the large group, the small group and the individual (Paul).

4) Paul multiplied Christian converts, Christian disciples, Christian workers and Christian churches.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8; 2 Timothy 3:10-14. Barnabas fetched Paul from Tarsus in Turkey and involved Paul into his ministry at Antioch in Syria. In his turn, Paul preached the gospel to many people and taught the new followers to become disciples of Jesus Christ. He travelled much, made at least four missionary journeys and planted new Christian churches in Asia and Europe. He visited the Christian churches, trained new Christian workers, sent them to make disciples and wrote letters to the churches.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8 he describes how spiritual multiplication took place at a city called Thessalonica. Paul together with his co-workers Silas and Timothy preached the gospel at Thessalonica. They became examples when the people heard how they preached the gospel with power and conviction and saw how they lived as Christians among them. So the Christians in Thessalonica became followers (imitators) of Paul, Silas and Timothy when they received the Word amidst much opposition from their fellow-citizens. Then they in turn became examples (models) for the believers in Macedonia and Greece. Their faith became known everywhere.

(5) Timothy multiplied Christian converts, Christian disciples, Christian workers and Christian churches.

Read 2 Timothy 2:2. In the beginning, Timothy learned much from his grandmother and mother (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Later, he learned most from the apostle Paul as he followed him and worked with him for about 14 years. In his turn, Timothy preached the gospel and taught the new followers to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

At the end of his life Paul commanded Timothy to multiply himself spiritually. “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others”. The apostle Paul says that Timothy is responsible that the knowledge of the gospel is passed on to the next generation! Timothy had to pass it on to reliable (faithful) men who are able to pass it on to the next generation!

Note how spiritual multiplication takes place: Jesus involved Peter. Peter involved Barnabas. Barnabas involved Paul. Paul (1st generation) passed it on to the next three generations: He involved Timothy (the 2nd generation). Timothy passed it on to reliable and able men (the 3rd generation). They passed it on to “others” (the 4th generation).

In this way the gospel has come to us! Now it is our turn to tell the gospel with power and conviction to the next three generations of reliable (faithful) and able people!

4. The kind of people that must be multiplied.

Teach. What kind of people should be multiplied in these multiplying Christian ministries?

- Matthew 28 teaches that Christians should multiply disciples of Jesus Christ. Disciples are not simply converts, but mature, functioning and persevering Christians. They walk with Christ and obey his commands and teachings in the Bible.
- 2 Timothy 2 teaches that Christians should multiply reliable (faithful) Christians that are also qualified or able to teach others.
- Psalm 78 teaches that Christians should multiply new believers from among their own children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
- 1 Thessalonians relates that Christians multiplied disciples in their own province and even in their neighbouring provinces.
- Matthew 24, 28 and Acts 1:8 teach that Christians should multiply disciples in every nation and every group of people in the whole world: for example, taxi drivers, hairdressers, factory workers, students, asylum seekers, etc. (Greek: ethné) (cf. Revelation 5:9).

B. THE MULTIPLICATION OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES (CONGREGATIONS)

Introduce. Spiritual multiplication means increasing the number of Christian churches (congregations or house fellowships) everywhere.

Discover and discuss. How do new Christian churches (congregations or house fellowships) come into existence?

Notes.

1. God takes the initiative to establish a new Christian church.

Read Acts 13:1-4. The Holy Spirit may set apart certain people in a local Christian church for a special work. Thus he called Paul and Barnabas to go and proclaim the gospel to other cities, provinces and countries. He also commanded the local Christian church to set these workers free (from all others duties and tasks).

2. The Christian workers win converts and make disciples.

Read Acts 13:5,13-52; Acts 14:1-22. Paul and Barnabas proclaimed the Word of God. They proclaimed Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection. They proclaimed forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ, that is, justification by faith in Jesus from everything people could not be justified from before by keeping the law. When they were persecuted, they fled to other cities and continued to preach the Good News there. They challenged people to turn from their worthless idolatry to the living God. And they won a large number of disciples in several cities. In Acts 14:21, we read that after some time, during which these new followers of Christ had the opportunity to grow, they returned to these groups of Christian disciples in order to strengthen them and encourage them.

3. The Christian workers appoint elders in each local Christian church (congregation).

Read Acts 14:23.

(1) The planters of new congregations.

Paul and Barnabas, who evangelised and discipled these new groups of Christians, appointed or installed elders for them in each local Christian church and then committed or entrusted them with prayer to the care and protection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The words “appointed” and “committed” do NOT mean “to choose by means of democratic voting” or “to ordain them by means of other pastors or bishops). From then onwards, these elders as a group or body of elders (Greek: presbuterion) (1 Timothy 4:14) were together responsible to lead the local Christian church. Most of these local Christian churches met together in houses and were genuine house fellowships or house churches (Romans 16:5)!

(2) The elders of the new churches.

The elders (Greek: presbuteros, plural) were probably the most spiritual mature disciples and able men within the community. Although they were appointed to the leadership office in the local Christian church, they were generally not fulltime and also not paid (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17).

(3) The tasks of elders.

The tasks of elders were (3x s and 1x t):

- to be shepherds (pastors) and overseers of the people in the church
- to be stewards (managers) and leaders of the activities and property of the church
- to be teachers of the Word of God in the church
- and in all this as the servants and not as rulers lording it over people

The elders were directly responsible and accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 13:17), who is the Head of every local Christian church and the Head of the worldwide Christian Church (Acts 20:17-35; Ephesians 1:22; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

Who are your “leaders”? Hebrews 13:7 says that your leaders (plural) are:

- the people who speak the Word of God to you
- who obey the Word of God in their own lives (who live it)
- who are an example of faith that can be followed

4. The Christian workers continue to have influence in the new Christian churches.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:14-16; 1 Timothy 5:17.

Paul continued to visit the churches he planted. He also sent some of his co-workers to visit these churches to encourage and to serve them, but not to rule over them. He wrote letters to the churches that today have been incorporated into the Bible. But Paul did not try to unite all the churches into one denomination (organisation). He also did not appoint an umbrella organisation (as a council or synod) over them! He did not interfere in the organisation of the church, except that he clearly taught them what the required qualifications and tasks of elders should be. 1 Timothy 4:14 and 5:17 teach that the local elders (as team or council) led the church.

5. The Christian workers give a report of their work.

Read Acts 14:27. When Paul and Barnabas had completed their work, they gathered their own local Christian church together and reported all that God had done through them. Notice that they did not simply report what *they* had done, but what *GOD* in grace and power had done through them. They gave all the glory of their work only to God!

C. THE MULTIPLICATION OF CHRISTIANS (FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST)

Introduce. Spiritual multiplication means increasing the number of disciples of Christ and Christian workers everywhere. In Matthew 9:35-38 Jesus says that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few! According to Jesus Christ, the number of *Christian workers* in his harvest must be multiplied! How should they be multiplied?

- According to Matthew 9, God increases the number of Christian workers through prayer!
- According to Matthew 10, God increases the number of Christian through training
- and sending out of Christians into the world!

1. Multiplication of new believers in Christ (through evangelism).

Read John 4:35-38.

Discover and discuss. How are new believers in Christ (converts) multiplied?

Notes. The number of new believers in Christ (converts) are multiplied by *evangelism*.

Jesus teaches that there are different kinds of Christian workers needed in evangelism. He says, “One sows and another reaps”. Sometimes the work of evangelism consists of much sowing and sometimes it consists of reaping.

(1) The sowers.

The sowers of course were Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Jesus had won the soul of the Samaritan woman. She in turn went to win the souls of the people living in her town.

In the mean time, Jesus spoke to his disciples and said, “Do you not say, ‘Four months more and then the harvest?’” Now the ordinary grain harvest in this region took place in April. Therefore, the time during which Jesus met the Samaritan woman was December. In December the grain was not yet ripe for the harvest. But the spiritual harvest of people who will believe in Jesus Christ does not have a specific season! In this case, there was hardly any time between the sowing of the seed of the gospel and the reaping of the crop of new believers for eternal life among the Samaritans! Jesus saw the procession of Samaritans coming from the town across the unripe grain fields towards the well and said, “I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.”

(2) The reapers.

The reapers were the disciples of Jesus. Jesus clearly implied that he was sending his disciples to harvest these people into his kingdom. In John 4:38, Jesus says, “I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour”. Both Jesus and the Samaritan woman had been working among the Samaritans. Jesus worked directly with the Samaritan woman and she worked directly among her townspeople. Now the Lord Jesus Christ sent his disciples to reap the crop of new believers from among the Samaritans.

(3) One sows, another reaps.

In the spiritual realm the usual pattern is that “one person reaps where another person has sown”. In John 4:37, Jesus says, “The saying, ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true”. Each worker in the kingdom of God is at the same time a reaper and a sower. He reaps that which has been sown by others and others reap what he had sown. Therefore, in God’s sovereign plan, there will always be a harvest!

Some Christian workers mainly sow. They spread the message of the gospel by all possible means. Other Christian workers mainly reap. They help people to receive Christ into their hearts and lives. In God’s sovereign plan it is not important who sows and who reaps, because there will always be a harvest! And the workers in God’s kingdom may always rejoice because their labour in the Lord is never in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58)! God’s Word will never return empty to him, but will accomplish what he desires and will achieve the purpose for which he sent it (Isaiah 55:11)!

2. Multiplication of disciples of Christ (by disciple making).

Read Matthew 28:20; 1 Corinthians 3:5-11; Ephesians 4:11-16.

Discover and discuss. How are disciples multiplied?

Notes. The number of Christian disciples is multiplied by disciple making. New believers in Jesus Christ are growing to spiritual maturity by teaching them to obey all that Christ has commanded.

(1) The Worker and his fellow-workers.

The apostle Paul teaches that there are different kinds of workers in God’s kingdom: God assigns some workers to plant the seed of the gospel, that is, to evangelise. And he assigns other workers to water the plants, that is, to care for the new converts, that is, to disciple them. But in all these different works, it is only God who assigns the different tasks and only God who makes believers grow into disciples of Christ! Therefore, God only is the Worker and Christians are his fellow-workers. God gives new life through regeneration. God causes new Christians to grow through the indwelling Holy Spirit and follow-up of other Christians. And he assigns the different tasks to each Christian worker.

(2) The layers of the foundation and the builders on the foundation.

Although these Christians are all God’s fellow-workers, they do not all have the same task. Some workers are assigned to lay the foundation (which is Jesus Christ). They proclaim the gospel by sowing and reaping. Other workers are assigned to build on this Foundation. They make these young Christians to become mature and functioning Christians. They help these new Christians to maintain a continuous personal relationship with Jesus Christ, to have thorough

knowledge of the Bible and develop healthy biblical convictions, to become more and more Christ like in their character and behaviour, and to serve Christ.

3. Multiplication of workers for Christ (by equipping).

Read Ephesians 4:11-12.

Discover and discuss. How are Christian workers multiplied?

Notes. The number of Christian workers is multiplied by equipping disciples of Christ for works of service so that the Body of Christ may be build up.

Paul teaches that Jesus Christ gave certain Christian workers a special spiritual gift and task (to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers) to equip all the other Christians for their works of service in some area in the church and so have a share in building up the worldwide Church of Christ! They equip certain Christians in evangelism and others in disciple making, or is preaching, teaching, pastoral care, etc. or equip a few Christians to equip others. Every city ought to have an equipper! Ask God whether you should be such an equipper!

In every church there ought to be many different kind of services. Besides the above mentioned services (evangelism, disciple making, equipping): ministries towards children, ministries directed to the youth, the sick, the poor, the oppressed, ministries in organising and administration, and ministries directed to have influence in society and missions in the world.

The important thing is that the elders have the responsibility to see to it that all the members of the church become disciples of Christ, that is, mature, functioning and persevering Christians and are equipped for some work of service in the church (house church), in the neighbourhood (society) and in the world.

D. THE ESSENCE OF A DISCIPLE MAKING MINISTRY

1. A disciple making ministry multiplies the number of disciples of Christ and the number of workers for Christ.

Teach.

The essence of a disciple-making ministry is to make disciples who in their turn will make new disciples!

It is to reproduce (multiply) both Christian disciples and Christian workers (disciple makers)!

It increases (multiplies):

- the number of new believers in Christ
- the number of new disciples of Christ
- the number of new workers for Christ (disciple makers and equippers)
- and finally the number of new Christian churches (house churches)

Why is multiplication so important? In Matthew 9:36-38 is written, “When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field’.”

2. A disciple-making ministry becomes a movement.

Teach. A ministry that multiplies both new Christian disciples and new Christian workers becomes a movement!

This movement will spread inside families, friendship circles, churches (house churches), at workplaces, and even spread to other cities, provinces and even other countries, cultures and religions!

Jesus commanded, “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Jesus Christ has been given all the power in heaven and on earth to accomplish this task! Jesus Christ calls his worldwide Church to spiritual multiplication in every country of the world! And with the grace and power of Jesus Christ, they will do it!

The Bible does not promise that this will be an easy conquest. Many Christians have suffered persecution and even martyrdom in this spiritual battle since the time of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the ultimate victory is certain!

- That is the message of the letter to the Romans. “We are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:28-39)
- That is the message of the book of Revelation. “They (the kings of the world together with their religious prophets) will make war against the Lamb (Jesus Christ), but the Lamb will overcome them because he is the Lord of lords and the King of kings (Revelation 17:14; cf. Revelation 19:11-21)!”

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[REACTIONS]</i> PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD
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Take turns in the group to pray short to God in response to what you have learned today.
Or divide the group into two's or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. **Preach, teach or study the teaching** of "Multiplying Christians and congregations" together with another person or group of people. Encourage every follower of Christ to be a part of a disciple-making ministry, which multiplies the number of new converts, the number of new disciples and the number of new workers.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of Titus 1 - 3 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** Meditate and memorise the new Bible verse. (12) John 12:32. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. John 14. Make use of the five steps method.
6. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. **Update your notebook** on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on personal time with God, your memorisation notes, your teaching notes and this preparation.