

Teams and the New Testament: Jesus' Team

By Bob Young [adapted]

"...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Building a good team is a key to the success in any endeavor. This is especially true in the Lord's work. Some find it amazing to learn how much the Bible says about teams. (The biblical text doesn't use the word, but we can easily see team principles as we read the text.)

Jesus built an inner team of three who would be his closest advisors and confidants. He chose twelve individuals to continue his work when he was no longer physically present on earth. Jesus' team had individuals of various talents and backgrounds. Peter, James, and John were fishermen. Matthew, a tax collector, and Simon the Zealot came from opposing ends of the political spectrum. Matthew came from an industry famous for its corruption. Jesus chose those with a certain kind of heart and certain skills. His ministry with them and to them helped them change into the kind of team members who could advance his cause. Jesus mentored each one.

Jesus' team underwent change. One team member got involved in treason against the team and dropped out. (Literally, he hanged himself and fell to the ground according to Scripture.) This occurred after Jesus had left the earth, and another team member was chosen to take his place. The team members had various strengths and weakness. One who started weak ended up strong (Peter). Later, a team member who didn't fit the original mold was added (Paul). He ended up being a very important part of the work of the team, uniquely qualified to work in an area where the others were less inclined and less gifted.

Later, Paul was part of a team that worked together in the early stages of the mission work of the church, and then broke up because of a disagreement (Paul and Barnabas). Two teams were formed as a result and even more good was done. New team members were added and more workers were trained and became involved. Timothy was added and was eventually left in Ephesus by himself to advance the work in that city.

From this brief overview, we can observe that a good team needs team members with different viewpoints as well as those who are specialists in particular areas. Once the original team formed, Jesus molded them into a cohesive unit to operate in unity. He corrected them when needed. He taught them what it meant to support and to love one another. He served them by washing their feet, teaching them the kind of self-sacrificing love that would be necessary for them to stay together. He taught and modeled servant leadership.

Jesus' team and the teams that formed out of the original team changed the world, turning it upside down. Can it happen again?