

Special Lecture for 2009 European Directors Conference

EFFECTIVE ONE TO ONE MINISTRY (Dr. James Suh, Kyungsung UBF, Korea)

Word: John 21:15-17

Key Verse: Luke 12:42

The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?”

Praise and thank God for giving me this opportunity to share God’s grace with the precious missionaries in Europe at the beginning of this year 2009.

The topic given to me for this special lecture is “Effective One to One ministry.” I do not feel fully qualified to discuss this topic in a comprehensive manner.

Rather, the focus of my presentation is to share the lessons God has taught me over the years in the course of living as a Bible teacher.

In the course of prayers and reflection, it dawned on me that God has been very gracious to this unworthy sinner.

While preparing this lecture, God helped me to repent me to restore my first love for Christ Jesus overcoming the lukewarm spirit of this generation.

Most of all, may God grant all of us faith, love, strength and wisdom to serve this challenging generation. May God bless each of us to be a very faithful and fruitful one to one disciple-maker in 2009.

[1] God prepared me to be a one to one Bible teacher

First, “Do you truly love me more than these?” (John 21:15-17).

I met Jesus Christ personally in my third year of the Medical School at Seoul National University, Korea. So it was a late start for me.

I was quite ignorant of the Bible. God trained me to study the Bible and even speak at various Bible academies and summer conferences with the texts from Genesis, Exodus, and Romans.

This was hard and burdensome; somehow God helped me to do so. In this way God prepared me to lay a good foundation to be a Bible teacher.

My initial Bible study experiences were not so good. Almost all of those who studied with me stopped even before coming to the third chapter of the book of Genesis.

Probably, without ever hearing about Satan in Genesis chapter 3, they fell into the temptation to quit. Sheep without a shepherd is pitiful as well as a shepherd without even one sheep.

God in his good purpose trained me in this way so that it was clear to me that my own diligent and sincere effort alone is not sufficient to raise any disciples for Jesus.

Anyway, while experiencing sheep that studied for a while and fell away like falling leaves in the fall, I lost the meaning of shepherd life.

My body and spirit became very tired. Out of desperation I sought advice from Dr. Samuel Lee to understand how to serve God's mission.

He gave me two specific advices. One was to learn faithful intercessory prayer and the other was to learn to co-work, instead of trying to do it all by myself.

This spiritual counsel has become a very important foundation for my shepherd life. Afterwards, God allowed me to be a shepherd without a sheep for almost ten years before starting a new pioneering ministry for Kyunghee University in Seoul. This was the period when I received humility and faith training.

By God's grace, my wife and I established a house church. Since my coworker had already finished her preparation to leave for America as a missionary doctor, she left for her mission field six months after our marriage.

I stayed in Korea and became a man without his wife, which was so-called 'Hudson Taylor Training' in that Hudson Taylor, renowned English missionary to China, lived many years in his mission field without his wife. Throughout this period of training, God molded me as an independent servant who depends on God, not on any people whom I easily count on.

However, my sheep showed no mercy to this man without his loving wife. Many of them left one by one finding whatever reason they could think of.

In the year I was receiving 'Hudson Taylor Training', I invited sheep wholeheartedly for the Summer Bible Conference in Jeju.

Even at the conference they were not interested in God's words at all, but missed meetings to go fishing and swimming whenever the chances allowed them.

I wondered why God gave me such bad sheep all the time. I complained to God. I condemned myself for not being faithful to my family.

I despaired with the sense of failure as a shepherd, too. I prayed in tears,

"Lord, I sent away my wife as a missionary in obedience to you. I am now receiving this 'Hudson Taylor Training' by faith. Why then don't you send me even one good sheep?"

At that time, through one of the conference messages the Lord came to me, "Jintae, son of Hagyun Suh, do you truly love me more than these? Feed my lambs"(John 21:15).

I had nothing to say before these words. God exactly pointed out my sin problem and challenged me to repent. Jesus wanted me to love Him the most, not worrying about the outcomes of my sincere shepherd life.

He wanted to grow in my love relationship with him first. I was a sinner who merely struggled to feed sheep even for my small glory and satisfaction. In the name of feeding sheep I loved myself and this world more than my Lord.

When I served sheep with this attitude, they somehow recognized it and left me with no regret. God had compassion on me, helping me repent.

I resolved to be a good shepherd that loves the Lord and feeds his sheep for his glory and for their wellbeing. In this way, this conference was a truly memorable one, since I learned what it means to be a good shepherd for Jesus and his sheep, not for myself.

Second, Bind up the testimony (Isaiah 8:16)

When I developed this absolute love relationship with Jesus and renewed the spiritual order with him, my 'Hudson Taylor Training' was over.

My coworker returned to Korea from New York. God blessed us to be a wonderful family of mission. Through the fruit of this precious training, both of us have learned the independent and responsible life before God.

Besides, God has established the solid routines of daily bread and intercessory prayers together for God's flock before the end of each day.

With my firm decision to feed sheep based on the love of God, many sheep all of a sudden attended the Summer Bible Conference of that year.

My fellowship grew very big. At that time, God sent my house church from Chongro Headquarters to Anam Center. It was to pioneer Korea University with Shepherd Mark Yang.

However, even with the passing of time, my fellowship had no college students from Korea University. Those who had joined with us for the pioneering ministry all except one left for one reason after another.

Once again, I merely complained and despaired in deep disappointment over my unfruitful shepherd life.

At that time, Dr. Samuel Lee gave me Isaiah 8:16, “Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples.”

This was God’s word for the prophet Isaiah who was despairing over the wicked Israelites. Dr. Samuel Lee urged me to grow up and become a servant of God’s word first—being fit to raise disciples of Jesus.

I had no real word of God that was deeply planted in my heart. Instead, I served his sheep with my own will and hard work. Naturally, many sheep neither tasted any real joy nor experienced God’s grace through my ministry.

In reality, I was driving them away with my legalistic and moralistic demands. God’s training was to help me accept God’s words deeply in my heart. I repented my useless sense of despair.

Instead, I made up my mind to do first things first: constantly reading the Bible, doing Daily Bread, prayerfully meditating weekly message and faithfully writing testimonies.

Around that time, I was serving a three year military duty as a medical officer. For the last two years I was assigned in Pusan area which was about four hours away from Seoul by train.

This was a very precious period for me to meditate and store God’s words in my soul deeply. During the weekdays, I stayed in Pusan; during the weekends, I came to Seoul to participate in Anamgol pioneering ministry.

While I was alone, I wrote testimonies deeply and read the Bible prayerfully. Gradually God helped me to taste the power of God's words and help me prepare one-to-one Bible materials. With no sheep I did not waste my time by indulging in vain thinking.

Rather, I took it as the most precious "wilderness" opportunity to prepare myself as an independent and responsible Bible teacher.

While spending more than these ten long years without sheep I learned to be content and rejoice in the Lord. Therefore, I was able to provide comfort and hope for anyone who struggled without any sheep.

Through this period of training God taught me the essence of faith—it is to keep absolute faith in God with great patience, even though there might be neither real visible fruit nor tangible rewards.

The lessons are very clear to me: God prepares his servants to be responsible and capable Bible teacher first before they experience any fruitful work. God trains his servants to love him most and devote to the ministry of God's word and prayer with great faithfulness.

[2] God helped us pioneer Kyunghee University

First, God raised up one father of faith

After completion of my military duty God led me to the Kyunghee University Hospital as a faculty. At that time, we had an earnest prayer topic to raise up "Peter" team brothers who might bless the faithful "older" sisters who need to form Christian families. God graciously answered with our prayer and sent Abraham Han to us as one-to-one sheep.

He was a somewhat older student in his fourth year at the Medical School and already completed his army service.

Amazingly, he even said that he was praying to find a good bible teacher for a long time. God answered both my prayer for one-to-one sheep and Shepherd Abraham Han's prayer for one-to-one teacher.

God led us to meet together dramatically, which was the beginning of pioneering ministry for Kyunghee University.

God accepted our earnest and sincere prayers for the "older" sisters and used them as our 'five loaves and two fish'(i.e., a concrete instrument of God's blessings) for Kyunghee Campus Ministry.

The fruitful one to one ministry in Kyunghee University was possible as God blessed our shepherd heart for even one person. God called one person, Abraham, and served him one-to-one for a long time, to accomplish the world salvation purpose.

Eventually, Abraham became the man of faith and obedience. God blessed Abraham, so from him, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Through the pioneering ministry of Kyunghee University, we experienced that God sends many sheep through one father of faith.

Second, “Who will give them their food allowance at the proper time?” (Luke 12:42)
It was not easy for busy medical students to find time for intensive Bible studies. However, when the Holy Spirit worked, many medical students came to study the Bible. Then, sheep invited their friends.

At the Summer Bible Conference of that year, there was a great work of God among students from the school of Medicine, Dentistry, Oriental Medicine, and Nursing.

We called those who grew to be shepherds as ‘Lions’ Team, named after the symbol of Kyunghee University--Lion. This pioneering ministry grew year after year and many pioneering leaders were raised for each year.

Among them, Missionary David Cho, now pioneering North Western University in Chicago, invited many students for Bible study and helped them faithfully. But all of them said good-bye to him without completing even three lessons. He also probably needed a similar training like me.

One day he invited one student for Bible study thinking that he was a medical student. He was in fact a student from Kwangwoon University.

Fortunately, he moved beyond the “impossible” first three lessons of Genesis and continued to engage in one to one regularly. We encouraged Shepherd David to bear fruit in one-to-one ministry no matter what university the student was from.

But the student, as a non-medical student from another university, felt somewhat uncomfortable with the center environment where many “smart” medical students were studying the Bible. Therefore he did not want to come to the center.

So Shep. David went to the campus of Kwangwoon University and studied the Bible there instead. For the sake of Kwangwoon University, we acquired a Bible center nearby the campus and many students came for Bible study, rest and fellowships.

In this way, the pioneering ministry of Kwangwoon University started. We just encouraged Shepherd David to serve one sheep and bear fruit in his shepherd life. It was God who blessed his shepherd heart to begin the pioneering ministry at Kwangwoon University.

Following the Kwangwoon ministry, the work of the Holy Spirit spread to Dongduk Women's University as well. The sheep from Kwangwoon University were mostly brothers.

Our leaders were concerned about their marriages in faith. So, we prayed for pioneering Dongduk Women's University that located nearby Kwangwoon Campus. We prayed to find one woman of God from this campus and many leaders went to the campus for one to one invitation.

God was certainly pleased with our prayers and raised up many great full-time shepherdesses as the mothers for many nations through this campus.

We also praise God who began his good work at the Medical School of Catholic University of Korea. One pioneer shepherd in the 'Lions' Team' volunteered to pioneer the Medical School at Catholic University of Korea after graduating Kyunghee Medical School.

He applied for the resident program at the Catholic University Hospital. At that time, my oldest daughter Jin-soon entered Catholic University Medical School. With this, God granted this school as our third pioneering field.

Building on the pioneering ministry at Kyunghee Medical School from 1981, God granted us very prosperous ministry within 7-8 years extending our tents of mission and raising up the faithful prayer servants for each campus.

At the beginning of pioneering ministry for "Lions' Team" we simply did not have enough shepherds to feed the sheep. A few leaders had to bear many students who wanted to study the Bible.

Since I have been a shepherd without sheep for many years, I thought I should give God's words to all of them. I tried to help them in groups—instead of several one to one studies.

At that time, Dr. Samuel Lee advised me that we should focus on disciple making ministry through one-to-one bible study. He gave the name of our center to be 'Kyungsung', which means 'stay awake,' which has become the spiritual direction for us to serve the pioneering ministry for Kyunghee University.

I was concerned about how to serve disciple making ministry since I had been a lay shepherd and not received any formal shepherd training.

Then, Dr. Samuel Lee gave me Luke 12:42, “The Lord answered, ‘Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time?’” Based on this, he planted faith in God and inspired me to feed sheep with conviction that God’s people will grow if I live as a faithful and wise servant to give God’s word to his people at the proper time.

By this word I was free from the unnecessary burdens of doing something special for his people. Rather, I decided to present myself as a servant of God’s word and trust God for the results of my work. I changed the direction to devote to one-to-one Bible study, not group studies. I served two teams of one to one in the early morning and the other two teams in the evening each day.

One early morning in the winter, I left home for one-to-one Bible study. There was so much snow and no taxi was available. I thought that the sheep would not come to have a Bible study in such a cold and snowy day, and I planned to return home.

All of a sudden I remembered Luke 12:42. I thought that even though the sheep might not come but as a shepherd I should go to the center to pray for the sheep.

Then, I saw a taxi just coming toward me. To my surprise, there was the sheep in the taxi who promised to have one-to-one. He said that he also hesitated to come, wondering if I would really come in such a bad weather. But he decided to come anyway thinking that he should keep the Bible study appointment. In this way, God helped me obey to Luke 12:42.

Giving the spiritual food allowance at the proper time does not require any special know-how and techniques. Neither was it about outstanding ability nor smart methods that mattered. But I experienced that the sheep would grow when I feed God’s words to them responsibly, as a faithful and wise manager.

Our leaders did not know what and how to serve the pioneering ministry. But we prayed for the sheep God entrusted to us three times a day. And we worked hard to be the faithful managers to give them their food allowance at the proper time.

Indeed, God himself raised many leaders and missionaries and then sent them to pioneer three chapters in Korea and sent out 70 missionaries to 17 nations.

Third, “You give them something to eat” (Mark 6:37)

Medical students are very busy. At the ordinary time they were faithful to one-to-one study. But at the time of exam they would stop all other things and only concentrated for their exam preparations.

When they did well in the exams, they came again for the Bible studies. But when they did not do well in their exams, they blamed for the time investment they made for Bible study and then quit studying the Bible as of first importance.

While trying to live by faith according to God's words, they have little time with their "old" friends. They felt alone and alienated. As their minds are filled with worries and concern for their future, they stop being open to God's words.

To overcome this challenge we came up with some special measures. We were seeking a practical way to help these students overcome their stress during exam periods and further develop good love relationships.

Our women leaders and full-time shepherdesses prepared gourmet foods--lunch set, whole baked chicken, and hamburgers before the exam week. We also had special prayer meeting every day to support them and feed them physically as well.

Then, not only those who were doing one-to-one studies but also many hesitant sheep attended the meeting and shared Daily Bread, enjoying the gourmet foods. Shepherds gave them God's words and students shared their prayer topics and prayed together.

In the course of such serving life sheep experienced God's grace. They developed trust and love relationships with the leaders who love them with sincere and pure love of God.

They saw how eagerly these Bible teachers fed them with good food and prayed for them in spite of their own financial and practical needs.

In this way, many students tasted the grace of God and opened their hearts. They shared their life issues, asked for help and grew in faith through sincere and mature Christian fellowship.

Many students grew in faith just as little children are happy in the environment of love, continuous prayer support, active fellowships, regular meetings and close friendships based on love of God. After all, faith, hope and love remain but the greatest of these is love. Amen!

Fourth, United prayer (Matthew 18:19)

As the number of sheep grew, the number of people suffering from various problems in lives increased, too. When we were not sure how to help all of them with various life

issues, we decided to pray. We had engaged in early morning prayers. Fulltime shepherdesses had united prayer meeting in the every morning.

On every Friday, we had prayer all night, depending wholly on the prayer. In the evenings on Sundays, staff shepherds had team conferences to discuss and pray for spiritual needs of key leaders. We were seeking God's direction holding onto their prayer topics.

After having the united prayer, the night was gone and there was a bright early morning. God listened to our prayers and blessed our ministry with the returning work among those who had left before. God helped us to have prayer support for the missionaries sent out from our chapter and beyond.

We earnestly prayed with the prayer topics that our missionaries provided, calling each and every name in the early morning prayer and Friday vigil prayer. When we did so, God answered our prayers and accomplished great salvation ministry in the foreign mission field.

Fifth, the ministry of special bible study program, 'The Lecture Hall of Tyrannus'

Medical students had no rest in their heart and usually felt tired and weary because of constant exams and tests. To raise them up as Bible teachers, we had to use the school break periods. We followed the example of Apostle Paul's ministry at the Lecture hall of Tyrannus.

When the summer or winter school break time came, we organized the special Bible Study teams, we had various group Bible Study to teach students Genesis, John, Romans, and Exodus. We set up an overall schedule to finish the study during the school break periods.

We also helped them have in-depth Bible studies and had them prepare Bible study materials. Through these focused Bible studies, they could have confidence and conviction to be Bible teachers of fishing and teaching the bible to the students. And we are praying to raise up 300 capable Bible teachers till 2010.

In conclusion, God raised up the Fathers of faith—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob--through one to one follow-up care for many years.

One to one ministry is the beginning and the very foundational work of gospel ministry. God has also granted us the spiritual wisdom and faith to adopt one to one ministry for the world campus pioneering work.

However, this work does not necessarily bring about magical and desirable results; therefore, some people question about its continuous effectiveness. Many are very

concerned about the increasing challenges and even poor state of disciple-making ministry among us. Some even feel about a real sense of crisis of our work.

However, in the course of preparing this lecture I am convinced again that most effective and powerful ministry of God's word is through one to one ministry. I deeply repent of my lack of dedication to one to one studies.

The lack of recent growth in my ministry is mainly about lack of one to one studies. The primary reason is that I, as the chapter director, has not been faithful to this main work. Like a fire fighter it is easy for us to try to go after many "urgent" problems among us.

Instead, we must restore our first love, richly store the words of God in our hearts and faithfully provide the words of life in season and out of season.

May God help us to devote ourselves to the ministry of God's word, not merely involve in many activities of busy work. May God bless our one to one ministry abundantly this year—even here in Europe and around the world.