

# **Breaking Growth Barriers**

## **3 Skills of Master Builders**

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**Dedication to**

**Constantine and Alexandra Lysakov**

**Emerging Master Builders of the Russian**  
**Evangelical Church**

# Introduction

Moscow Bible Church is resilient. The Russian winters and soil are hard. Yet, through many storms, God's perseverance is on display in this church. The church quickly grew to over 400 people in the early 1990's and today serves between 100-150 people. God opened the door for this free church in Moscow to meet at 3 PM every Sunday in the Lutheran Cathedral in downtown Moscow that seats 600 people on the first floor.

"Rick, what can we do to grow our Sunday worship attendance?" With the credibility of serving as pastor from 1993-1997, repeated visits through the years and a mutual coaching relationship with the pastor whom I have known for over 20 years, they asked.

The church has a solid pastor and wife, a contextualized purpose driven church strategy, godly elders, committed members, and attractive worship service for young couples, singles, and families in Moscow. Observing the church in 2017, I identified **three master builder skills** still needed in leadership. In 2019, we returned to Russia to continue the training with the staff and elders and we expanded the dialogue to leaders from four sister churches in Moscow.

- apprentice everything
- birth one new ministry each year
- concentrate on Sunday

God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:7). At the same time, leaders plant and water God's field. Paul referred to himself as a wise master builders (1 Corinthians 3:10). The only foundation is Jesus Christ. The building materials can be wood, hay, and stubble like division (1 Corinthians 3), license in morals (1 Corinthians 5), ignorance about spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12), and worst of all a lack of love (1 Corinthians 13).

The wise master builder uses gold, silver, and precious stones like Christ-centered unity (1 Corinthians 1-3), faithfulness with money and morals (1 Corinthians 5), knowledgeable use of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 11-13), genuine love for one another (1 Corinthians 13), and gospel first preaching in the resurrection power of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15).

Many church leaders need these three master builder skills. If you would like for me to cover this same ground with your staff and or elders I would consider it an honor.

# Apprentice everything

“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And 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” (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

“An apprentice is a person who learns a job or skill by working for a fixed period of time for someone who is very good at that job or skill.” Webster’s Dictionary One way to put it is “every Paul needs a Timothy.” To introduce “apprentice everything” we looked at Acts 16:1-5. **“What are the qualities of an excellent apprentice that we see in the character of Timothy?”**

I worked with the leaders of Moscow Bible Church to make a list of all the ministry tasks in the church from individuals making disciples to worship team members, to children’s ministry, to the youth, to small groups, to elders. We focused on the elders to encourage and challenge them to identify one young leader they could apprentice.

They spend over an hour in the next elder’s meeting working on one potential leader each of them could meet with for a few months-not promising an elder role, but developing leaders. Apprentice every task. Never ask one person to do a new ask, always ask two, one to lead and one to be the apprentice.

Dave and Jon Ferguson are pastors of Community Christian Church in Chicagoland. Our son, Derick, worked at the Naperville campus as a worship leader for one year. The first responsibility in the job description for all staff is to have apprentices. Derick took the challenge. He found a few musicians and began to teach these volunteers to be worship leaders. It was amazing to see the change in our son. Derick soon enjoyed empowering new worship leaders more than personally leading thousands of people in worship. There is joy in training apprentices. This needs to happen with every task.

- Disciples commit to have apprentice disciples
- Small group leaders commit to have apprentice small group leaders
- Creative arts directors commit to have apprentice creative arts directors
- All staff commit to have apprentice potential staff
- Campus pastors commit to have apprentice campus pastors
- Pastors commit to have apprentice pastors
- Movement leaders commit to have apprentice movement leaders

*Who do you choose for an apprentice?* New Thing teaches leaders to look for a Timothy who has spiritual velocity in the right direction; not perfect people, but people making rapid progress in following Christ. The old acrostic FAT helps. Derick looked for people *faithful* to Christ and to practicing the piano, the guitar, or another instrument, who were also *available* to use their skills to serve the body of Christ. They needed to be *teachable* to learn from Derick how to lead God’s people in worship. Someone with an arrogant, “know it all” attitude cannot be an apprentice.

*How do you work with an apprentice?* Dave and Jon Ferguson give a clear path that works for most tasks:

I do. You watch. We talk.

I do. You help. We talk.

You do. I help. We talk.

You do. I watch. We talk.

You do. Someone else watches. (Ferguson and Ferguson 2010, 63)

I met with a small group leader who was frustrated that no one would share the leadership. I asked Fred, “How do you eat an elephant?” “One bit at a time.” So, we broke Bible study leading into bit sized pieces. First, find an apprentice. Then, him to develop two good crowd breaker questions. Then, ask for two excellent questions to guide the group into the passage. Then, him to summarize the theme of the passage. Next, Fred asked his apprentice to cross reference a key word in the next passage and bring two insights. Then, read two commentaries on the passage and bring two insights. Finally, the apprentice prepared an outline of the passage with the big idea at the top of a page and the verses broken into three sections with a supporting point for each section that tied back to the larger theme. Finally, the apprentice developed a dialogue questions for each section including final questions leading to application.

How much we give to an apprentice depends on their maturity in that task.

The Situational Leadership theory developed by Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges have refined the terms in *The Servant Leader*. When members have low maturity in the needed task, the leaders needs to do more *telling* of what exactly needs to be done (*directing*). That was the case with Fred and his apprentice. As the experience of the apprentice increases, the leader moves from *telling* to *selling* to *coaching* to *delegating*.

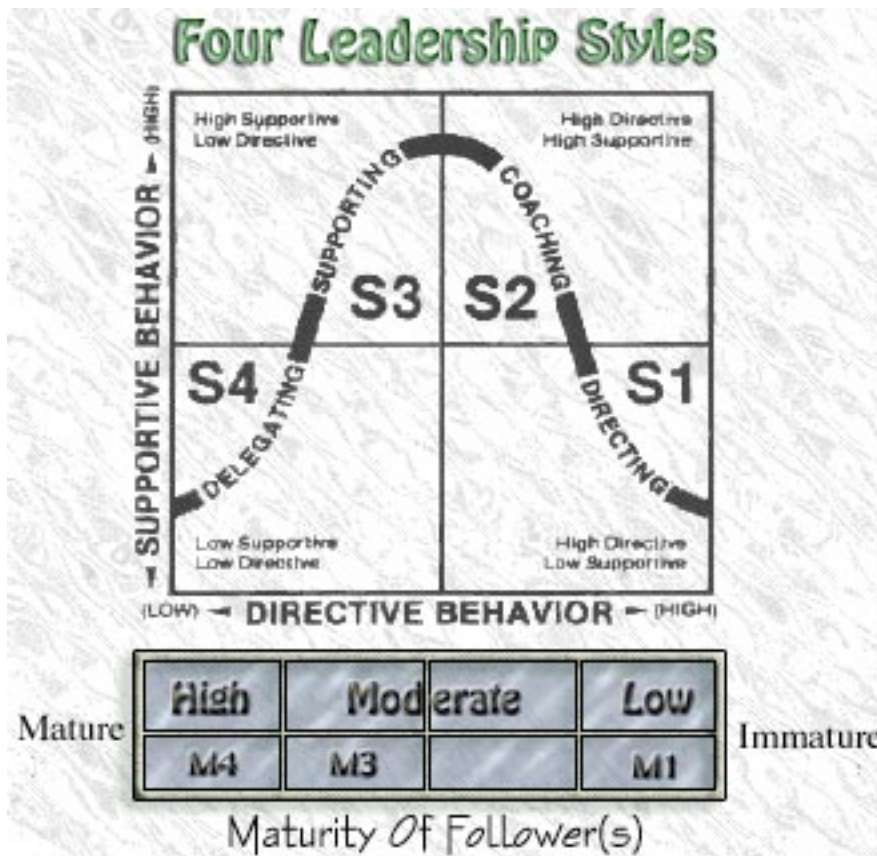
Leaders also need to understand “Situational Leadership.” Ken Blanchard explains it in *The Servant Leader*. “There are four basic combinations of directive and supportive behaviors that a leader can use.”

*Directing-high direction, low support* Leaders provide specific directions about roles and goals and closely track performance in order to provide frequent feedback on results.

*Coaching-high direction, high support* Leaders explain why, solicit suggestions, praise progress that is approximately right, but continue to direct task accomplishment.

*Supporting-high direction, high support* Leaders facilitate interaction with others, listen to people, draw them out, encourage and support them, but provide little direction.

*Delegating style-low support, low direction* Leaders empower their people to act independently with appropriate resources to get the job done” (Blanchard 2003, 73).



I prefer to use the word *coaching* where they use the word *supporting* and I prefer the word *apprenticing* for where they use the word *coaching*. For instance, when I lead a Bible study I have an apprentice. When I work with a church planter, I am a coach. The best coaching support for a church planter is a non-directive approach like Bob Logan.

We apprentice new people to new tasks. We coach new leaders in complicated tasks. Church planters need **a coach** in this hard assignment. In an established church, the person who takes on the responsibility of starting and leading a new ministry needs to be coached. Dr. Charles Ridley did the 1990 qualitative research and Bob Logan popularized it in his book *Coaching 101*-the five "R" approach to the coaching.

Bob Logan in **Coaching 101** (Church Smart) develops five components to coaching.

**Relate:** How are you? How is the family? How is your walk with the Lord?

**Reflect:** What is God doing? What are you celebrating? Where are you challenged?

**Refocus:** Where is God leading you? What are your top three goals for next month?

**Resource:** Who can help? Coaches point toward "on time" people, tools, and help.

**Review:** How are we doing? Our next appointment is: \_\_\_\_\_.

**For a look at the skill of coaching as seen in the life of Barnabas see Appendix 1.**

# Birth a New Ministry Every Year

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. (Acts 11:19-22)

## Birth a New Ministry by Coaching the Ministry Leader

We apprentice new people to new tasks. We coach new leaders to lead a new ministry. Coaching is different from coaching a basketball team where you are barking out plays, constantly training, constantly reproving, constantly encouraging throughout the game. This kind of coaching is more non-directive. We help them reflect on how God is leading them. Bob Logan in **Coaching 101** (Church Smart) develops five components.

**Relate:** How are you? How is the family? How is your walk with the Lord?

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Barnabas in Antioch in **Acts 11:19ff** parallels and pictures these five "R"s of coaching.

### **Relate**                      **How are you?**

"The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch."

Coaches care and share (Acts 4:36). Coaches dare (Acts 9:36). Coaches are rare. Coaches have to be highly relational. Good coaches give not only the Gospel but our own lives. We have to be honest, open, transparent, and vulnerable. We welcome people into our presence, make them comfortable, communicate, and ask questions.

- How are you doing?
- How is your time with the Lord? (spiritual health)
- How is your spouse? Your kids? (relational health)
- What do you want to address today?

### **Reflect**                      **What is God doing?**

"When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad..."

“Coaches come alongside the people they are coaching and they do not tell them what to do... Gaining perspective is the central task of the reflect stage; “Where am I?” and “What am I dealing with here?” is answered by the individuals themselves, not their coaches (Logan, *Coaching 101*, 40-43). Together they reflect on what God is doing.

## **Refocus                      Where is God leading?**

“... and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.”

Leaders set clear goals. They can also lose focus and the mission can become unclear. After rejoicing with them, Barnabas refocuses the church on Christ. “Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God’s agenda.... *Spiritual Leadership*, 20). Coaches help us see the difference between the trivia and the true task; to see small, well-focused actions that can sometimes produce significant impact (*5th Discipline*, 64)

## **Resource                      Who can help?**

“Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”

Good coaches point us in the direction of the resources we need. People resources are the hardest to find. Barnabas went all the way to Tarsus to recruit Saul.

## **Review                      How are we doing?**

So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts 11:16).

Luke’s review of the progress of the church in Antioch is impressive. The community of Antioch gave these people a new name: Christians. The goal is Christ-likeness, not someone just like me. Barnabas coached toward Christ-likeness.

- How do you feel about what you have and have not accomplished this month?
- What are some things I could do differently? (Logan, *Coaching 101*, 94)
- Do you feel I am pushing you enough, too much, or not enough?

It is hard to ask, “How are we really doing” and “How can we change,” but it is much harder if we do not ask these questions.

## **Birth a New Ministry with Acts 6 Principles**

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews[a] among them **complained** against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit



and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

Notice how the leaders decided on the needed new ministry—a truly needy ministry (the care of the Greek widows) identified by **complaining**. The twelve apostles did not overlook the needs underneath the complaints. They did not try a quick fix to the problem by turning the situation over to a few trusted friends. The twelve had a core value of honoring the priesthood of all believers, so they gathered together over 3,000 believers and made a clear proposal that found favor with the whole group.

### **What is an under current of complain in your church you need to address?**

This is the responsibility of an elder board to identify the ministry teams needed and equip people to serve the needs of others, here widows. Some other examples:

- missions team
- youth ministry team
- children’s ministry team
- small group team
- newcomers team

My goal as a pastor for thirteen years was to birth one new ministry every year as our church grew from 50 to 250 over 13 years. According to Gary McIntosh, only 3% of churches have an assimilation team that takes responsibility for closing the back door of a church (McIntosh’s *What Every Pastor Should Know*). The most needed new ministry for Moscow Bible Church in 2017 was a newcomer team.

When we came into the worship service the first weekend nobody noticed. While friends chatted, people wandered into the sanctuary. Something needed to be done. Jan met with a team of six energized Russian leaders and cast the vision for a warm welcome. They met at 1 PM and they went to work. Someone opened the door. Someone greeted them inside the door. Someone asked them if they needed help in getting their children settled. And, the team also began lunch with the leaders. Once a month, every guest was invited to become a newcomer by coming to a lunch with the leader immediately after the worship service. The goal is new brothers and sisters. “Therefore, my brothers and sisters,[a] make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus...” (2 Peter 1:10,11).

# Concentrate on Sunday

Moscow Bible Church has a great location in the center of the city. Many people travel an hour or more. A pattern I noticed was ministries scheduled meetings for Saturday. So, people were coming to marriage seminars, ministry teams, Bible studies, baptisms, on Saturday. They ran out of energy to come Sunday too. So, I encouraged them to move everything to Sunday-before and after the worship service at 3 PM. They did. They moved the celebration of the awards from their amazing VBS and Summer Camping meeting and they are working on this list:

- Public School Teacher Appreciation Sunday in September
- Grandfather and Grandmother Appreciation Sunday
- Mother's Day or Woman's Day/Father's Day/Singles Sunday
- Firefighter, Police Officer, and Military Appreciation in February
- Friend Day
- Advent, Christmas, and New Years Sunday Celebrations

Larry Osborne's observation in American culture is that people will give the church two times a week. The first and foremost commitment needs to be for Sunday/Weekend worship services. Here people learn the Word of God in the preaching and teaching ministry of the pastor. At our worship services we learn to be filled with the Holy Spirit in songs, hymns, and spiritual songs, we learn to give, we learn to love different people, and we celebrate the Lord's supper and baptisms together. We have an opportunity to serve Christ. Let us not forsake the weekly worship service (Hebrews 10:24,25).

The second time each week is the small growth group that also has a target of community service. Larry Osborne's Sticky Church lays out the strength of the "lecture-lab" approach to organizing the church. The weekend worship is the lecture and the small group is the lab. For over twenty years, 80% of the worshippers are in groups.

The average size of a church in America is around 80 people (half are larger and half are smaller). British anthropologist Robin Dunbar studied 21 tribal peoples worldwide - average size of a tribal group was just over 148. This led Dunbar to formulate the rule of 150. Time Magazine said the average size of Facebook Friends is 148. 150 is a natural barrier. Simplistically years ago Gary McIntosh said that 80% of the churches in America are under 200, 10% are between 200 and 400 people in worship attendance, and 10% are over 400.

How do we break growth barriers? Every church and context is unique. There are special considerations here for every church as we keep in mind first and foremost, it is God who gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3). At the same time, we are called to be a skilled master builders (1 Corinthians 3:10). In my experience, leaders in every size church need to master these skills to break growth barriers. This is simple, but I hope these ABC's will catalyze you.

# **Appendix 1**

## **Coaching**

**Insights from the  
best-Barnabas**

**Dr. Richard Gentry  
Thompson**

# 5 “R” Coaching

Bob Logan in **Coaching 101** (Church Smart) develops five components to coaching.

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**Refocus:** Where is God leading you? What are your top three goals for next month?

**Resource:** Who can help? Coaches point toward “on time” people, tools, and help.

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Barnabas in Antioch in **Acts 11:19ff** parallels and pictures these five “R”s of coaching.

## **Relate                      How are you?**

“The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.”

Coaches care and share (Acts 4:36). Coaches dare (Acts 9:36). Coaches are rare.

## **Reflect                      What is God doing?**

“When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad...”

“Coaches come alongside the people they are coaching and they do not tell them what to do... Gaining perspective is the central task of the reflect stage; “Where am I?” and “What am I dealing with here?” is answered by the individuals themselves, not their coaches (Logan, *Coaching 101*, 40-43). “At the root of malfunction is the fact that the manager is not a learner and is not reflective...he malfunctions in the same ways, over and over again, without knowing it.” Coaches celebrate and challenge.

## **Refocus                      Where is God leading?**

“... and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.”

“Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God’s agenda.... *Spiritual Leadership*, 20). Coaches help us see the difference between the trivia and the true task; to see small, well-focused actions that can sometimes produce significant impact (*5th Discipline*, 64)

## **Resource                      Who can help?**

“Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”

Good coaches help to recruit and point us in the direction of the resources we need. Luke’s review of the church in Antioch includes a powerful new name for the people.

## **Review                      How are we doing?**

## 5 “R” Coaching

Bob Logan in **Coaching 101** (Church Smart) develops five components to coaching.

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Barnabas in **Acts 11:19ff** parallels and pictures these five “R”s of coaching. **Let’s Read**

### Coaches Relate      How are you?

“The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.”

Coaches care. Barnabas was generous with his possessions and generous with his time because he cared. We cannot coach from a safe distance or with emotional detachment. Coaches have to be highly relational. Good coaches give not only the Gospel but our own lives. We have to be honest, open, transparent, and vulnerable. We welcome people into our presence, make them comfortable, communicate that they are significant, and build trust over time because we care.

Coaches dare. In Acts 9:36, when the apostles were afraid of Saul, Barnabas cared so much about people that he was willing to risk himself and even his closest friends because he cared about one individual. Some people will teach hundreds, but they will not spend their energy on one person. Coaches do.

Coaches are rare. Paul would later say of Timothy, I have no one else who will genuinely care about your interests, because most people seek their own private agenda. Good coaches understand the importance of not just coming in with their own perspective and their own program and they care enough to really listen, learn and love.

Consistently, as we meet in a coaching relationship, we ask caring questions:

How are you doing?

How is your time with the Lord? (spiritual health)

How is your spouse? Your kids? (relational health)

How are you doing emotionally? (emotional health)

How are you doing physically? (physical health)

What do you want to address today?

## Coaches Reflect    What is God doing?

“When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad...”

When Jerusalem needed to send a coach to the new church in Antioch they sent the Son of Encouragement who knew how to build personal relationships and help leaders be reflective. “Coaches come alongside the people they are coaching and they do not tell them what to do” (Logan, *Coaching 101*, 40). They know that though Jesus out of sight, He is still in our midst! He will guide, govern, and guard us. The Holy Spirit is our greatest coach who leads us on the wild goose chase (explain).

“Gaining perspective is the central task of the reflect stage; it helps us understand the reality of our situation. “Where am I?” and “What am I dealing with here?” The individuals answer themselves, not their coaches (Coaching 101, 43).

What causes a religious manager consistently to malfunction? At the root of malfunction is the fact that the manager is not a learner and is not reflective. He does not reflect on his experience, there he malfunctions in the same ways, over and over again, without knowing it. (Shawchuck, *Managing the Congregation*, 18) Here, first, coaches prompt us to gain new perspective on what God is doing.

Second, coaches help us to celebrate wins. *When he ... saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was **glad**...* (Acts 11:23). Mentors who lord it over others are mean. You feel like you never get it right, you can never do enough, you never measure up, and you feel hurt. I can see what I am doing wrong much more easily than what God is doing. I prepare, I over prepare, but I need help in just praising the Lord.

Third, coaches challenge too. *When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and **encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts** (Acts 11:21-23a). This leads to the third “R.”*

Discover & explore key issues:

What can we celebrate?

What challenges are you facing?

What is your progress on your goals from our last meeting?

## **Coaches Refocus     Where is God leading?**

“... and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.”

As ministries grow, groups lose their focus and the mission can become unclear. After rejoicing with them, Barnabas refocuses them on being true. Christ refocused the church of Ephesus on their first love (Revelation 3:1-5). Paul refocuses the Corinthian church on “a sincere and pure devotion to Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:3).

Coaches do not have their own agenda. Servant leaders align to God’s agenda; their ambition is to follow God’s agenda. We are servants of the living God who will accomplish all that he desires and we need to reflect on him and refocus on his plans.

“Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God’s agenda....

God has the vision of what He wants to do. God does not ask leaders to dream big dreams for him or to solve the problems that confront them. He asks leaders to walk with him so intimately that, when he reveals what is on his agenda, they will immediately adjust their lives to his will and the results bring glory to God.” (Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*: 20, 130).

### ***What are the areas that generally drift and need clarity and new focus***

Coaches help us to see the difference between the trivia and the true task. Coaches help us to see the next steps that lead to our God-given goals. Using systems thinking they equip the team to discover “small, well-focused actions that can sometimes produce significant, enduring improvements” (Senge, *Fifth Discipline*, 64).

Determine priorities & action steps

What do you want to accomplish?

What are possible ways to get there?

What are your action steps (who, what when, where, how)?

What are your top 3 goals for the next month?

How will you measure your progress?

## Coaches Resource Who can help?

“Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”

Resourcing as a coach does not mean that we solve the problem or fund the financial need ourselves. We give them something much more valuable. We point them in the direction of the resources they need. If the need is financial, rather than point them to a pot of gold, we point them in the direction of teaching their churches to be generous. When we were missionaries in Russia, many young churches were unwilling to teach their people to give. Many of the pastors received western money and they thought that they were helping their people by not putting financial pressure on them. Interesting, I wish I would have known Acts 11 and how the Holy Spirit sent Agabus to teach this young church to give rather than to try and get.

Our focus is never money, but one of the areas leaders must teach on is the use of God's resources-our time, our treasure, and our talents. If a church planter will never teach on money, then we should not be surprised that our people learn about it on the street from television teachers who use the word of God for the sake of gain.

Barnabas resourced the church by recruiting a gifted leader that they needed. Barnabas went to Tarsus, we often go to TEDS. Coaches Support and Encourage  
What resources do you have to accomplish your goals?(people, money, technology, knowledge)  
What resources will you need?  
What resources are missing?  
How will you obtain the resources you need?

## Coaches Review

Luke's review of the progress of the church in Antioch is impressive. The community of Antioch gave these people a new name-not Paulists, Lutherans, Calvinists-Christians.

Evaluate, celebrate, and revise plans:  
What's working? What's not working?  
What are you learning?  
What training would be helpful?  
How can I help?  
How can I pray for you?

### Option

### Break into Groups of Four and Interact:

Have you had a coach? Is God calling you to be coached?  
Is God calling you to be a coach?