

THE SECRET MINISTRY OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION

Yes, Jesus did have a secret ministry. Almost all of us know about his public ministry. How He spoke to the crowds. How He healed people, and how He did different things publicly. But over the two thousand years of church history, the church by and large has forgotten about the secret ministry of Jesus. And now we just want to take a fresh look at what the secret ministry of Jesus was.

When we think of the public ministry of Jesus and of all the things He did, and the glory he had, the reputation, we may initially think, "Oh, it was wonderful, very successful." Yet when we really look close, we come to realize that at the end of three years, everything was finished. We see at the end of three years the people that he was blessing and was ministering to, were the very people that killed him. Actually when we look at the earthly ministry of Jesus, from a human perspective, we would conclude that it was a fiasco. It looked great, but they killed him. It was all over, it was finished. It was a failure.

However something was happening that nobody knew about. Something that even His enemies were not aware of. Jesus was very quietly working on the basis of a very specific principle. His principle was to make disciples. To train people, not only to teach them about the faith, but to train them so they would be just like Him. Then when He left this earth, He instructed His disciples to do the exact same thing with other people.

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)

Note this: He trained the disciples very quietly and secretly. Even His enemies did not recognize the secret ministry that He had. They forgot that He had prepared a special group of seventy followers. They forgot that He had trained a special group of twelve people. They forgot that He had built up special relationships, very intimately, with three of His people. They did not know that He had specifically poured His life into one person so that that person could become like He was. Who was that person? Who has given us the most beautiful picture about who Jesus really was? Yes, it was John, wasn't it?

Other disciples wrote about His travels, about His healing, about His preaching, but John wrote about the inner character, the inner life of Jesus. For most of us the Jesus in the Gospel of John is the real Jesus. The Jesus from Mark is nice; He is good. But the one from John, that is the real Jesus, the way we would like to be, the way we would like to meet Him in heaven. Did His enemies know about that? No. Did they think it was important? No. They sent a bunch of soldiers to Gethsemane. And they said, "Capture Jesus and bring back Jesus as a prisoner to us. We want to get rid of Him." And they did just that and they thought, "Oh, wonderful, now it is all finished. Jesus is destroyed, now life will be nice again."

Later on in the book of Acts we read of a group of people doing miracles, preaching and teaching people to follow Jesus. They captured two of these people, John and Peter, and brought them in front of the judge. And they found out, "Not very intelligent people. They do not have university education. They did not grow up in a big city. They are lower class kind of farmer people, fishing-type people." Then they realized, "But they were with Jesus. That is the problem. We made a mistake. They were all together in the Garden of Gethsemane. If we had just taken all twelve of them and killed them right there it would be all finished." At that time, in the book of Acts, the leaders in Jerusalem realized the secret of Jesus.

They realized that He had carried on a very quiet, humble, but successful ministry. Humanly speaking we must say that the public ministry of Jesus was a failure, and that without the secret ministry of Jesus there would be no church and we would not be here today. The success of Jesus was in the secret of discipling. That is what we want to study today.

I. ASPECTS OF JESUS' SECRET MINISTRY APPROACH

Matthew 28:19 is of course our key verse. We all know that verse.

“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Not just preach, not just do evangelism, not just get people to repent of their sin. But make them disciples, followers of Jesus.

Look now at Mark 1:14-20. “As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him.” We want to learn several lessons from these verses, (Mark 1:14-20).

A. Jesus took the initiative.

His words in Mark 1:17 were “I will make you.” What beautiful words they were. Jesus came to make, to build up, to help, to encourage, and to save. He came to **make** people, you and me, successful in every area of life. Salvation is His initiative. Are you making people? Are you imitating Jesus? Are you providing salvation?

B. Jesus had the priority of evangelism in discipling his men.

He began by telling them immediately what He wanted them to do. He wanted them to fish for the souls of men. To bring others to Jesus and make them His followers also. Jesus has a priority for you. His desire is that you would gather in a great harvest of souls for him.

C. Jesus chose willing men.

Men with a teachable attitude. These men immediately left their work and were willing to follow Jesus. *“At once they left their nets and followed him.”* (Mark 1:18) His calling has not changed. His priority is still the same. Is he calling you? Are you willing to follow? Where will you be next year? Ten years from now?



D. Jesus showed sensitivity to these men.

In verse 17 He showed an ability to identify with them. Can you imagine Jesus talking to some fisherman and saying, *“Why do you not follow me and I will make you farmers? Or why don’t you follow me and I will teach you how to work in a car factory.”* They may not have been very excited about that. So He said, *“Come, follow me, ...and I will make you **fishers** of men.”* (Mark 1:17).

E. Jesus had a plan.

He had a goal that He set before them. Again in Mark 1:17. He said, *“Come, follow me, ...and I will make you **fishers** of men.”* (Mark 1:17). We say this in our Training Sessions. Follow what we are doing, follow our suggestions, follow Christ’s example and you will become a successful trainer of your people.

F. Jesus chose only a few to disciple.

In verse 14 we see that He chose a very few men.

“He appointed twelve -- designating them apostles -- that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14). He fed 5,000. He healed hundreds of people, but He chose only a few to work closely with Him.

G. He prayed before He chose those people.

In Luke’s account we see that Jesus prayed before appointing His disciples. “Jesus went out to a mountain-side to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles” (Luke 6:12-13).

H. Jesus had three purposes for His disciples.

“He appointed twelve -- designating them apostles -- that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.” (Mark 3:14-15)

1. *Jesus’ first purpose was for the disciples to spend time with Him.*

Verse 14, “...that they might be with him” (Mark 3:14). He wanted to spend time together. Not to study the Old Testament, not to read books, but to spend time with Him, and just learn from His character and from His personality, from His way of doing things.

2. *His second goal was to send them out.*

He wanted them to go and do things. He wanted them to go and work independently, away from Him.

So it was first to be with him, then to go out, to be sent away. Generally speaking, they were with Him for three years, then when Pentecost came they were apostles, or sent out ones. The word disciple means follower, and after Pentecost the word apostle is used, which means sent out ones. After Pentecost they were no longer following. Pentecost was the graduation service. It was at Pentecost that they received their diploma. After that they went out. Until Pentecost they were learning, training. After Pentecost they had their diploma and they were sent out.

3. *His third goal was to give them power, or authority.*

The disciples received this power also at Pentecost. This power was their special mark as disciples. The whole Book of Acts testifies of this power.

I. Jesus chose His disciples on the basis of their potential.

I believe Jesus chose His men on the basis of what they could become (Mark 3:16-20). We see that He chose Simon to become Peter. He saw that he was going to be Peter. There was Simon the fisherman, but Jesus saw Simon the builder of the Jerusalem church. There was Matthew, a tax collector, but Jesus saw in him an author who would write a book that would be read for two thousand years. Jesus selected them on the basis of what they could become, on the basis of their potential.

J. Jesus, to a degree, chose by using the principle of natural affinity.

Natural affinity is natural relationships. We see that He chose by family relationships. He chose men with occupational relationships. They had the same occupation. He chose men that were friends like Phillip and Nathaniel. He chose men from the same town or region as well.

K. Jesus took His men with Him.

Wherever He went, He took them with Him. Sometimes twelve, sometimes three, but He taught them by example.

L. Jesus knew His Bible well.

In Mark 1:22 we read, “*The people were amazed at his teachings, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.*” One thing you can be sure of is that Jesus had studied His Bible. He knew His Bible. He did not just have it memorized. He did not just quote verses, but He knew how to use the verses in daily life.

M. The needs of His men were number one priority to Him.

The needs of His men were number one priority. Jesus had had a busy day of evangelism. He had been preaching in the church, then healing people, and in the evening preaching to people, and then He saw that Peter’s mother-in-law was sick and He cared for her. Mark 1:29-31 says,

“*As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.*”



Bible

N. Jesus demonstrated an attitude of availability.

He made himself available to people early in the morning, late at night, and at difficult times. We see that in Mark 1:32-34a, "That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases."

O. Jesus showed concern for their problems.

Here in Luke 5:2-11 Jesus knew that they had been unsuccessful that night. He said "Try again." When a need arose Jesus was always there available to help. Meeting needs was His big ministry. Helping others with ordinary things in life. Solving their problems. Making them successful in every way. Peter knew that Jesus didn't know anything about fishing but that He always brought success and he answered "When you speak we will obey." Peter understood the principle of Jesus' care for them.

P. Jesus taught spiritual truth by spiritual example.

Mark 1:35, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Jesus taught the men the priority of praying early in the morning.

Q. Jesus continually attempted to stretch the faith of His disciples.

We see that in Mark 1:35-39, he took them with Him to new places to minister.

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: 'Everyone is looking for you!' Jesus replied, 'Let us go somewhere else -- to the nearby villages -- so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.' So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons."

R. Jesus never rebuked His men for lack of ability, only lack of faith.

S. Jesus sent His men out on evangelism.

We will be talking more about that.

T. Jesus held His men accountable for their assignments

On several occasions He assigned them special tasks of going out and practicing what they had learned. Upon their return He required a report of what they had done and accomplished. Mark 6: 30 and others.

U. Jesus had retreats with them; special quiet times.

Mark 6:30-32, "The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place."

II. APPLICATION OF JESUS' SECRET MINISTRY

Now that we have a general picture of the secret ministry of Jesus, I want to share with you some of the details. Details that are particularly interesting to the church, and that are very specifically the ministry of a Training Ministry. Principles that were very specifically followed by John Wycliffe and by John Wesley. Both of those men brought a great revival that lasted many, many years throughout England.

A. Choose men to be with you.

Again we begin by looking at Mark chapter 3, verse 13. *“Jesus went up on a mountain and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him”* (Mark 3:13). Jesus chose these men to be with Him. That is a main part of your ministry. That is why we emphasize that the students study at home, but come to a discussion seminar so you can disciple them. They are together with you and each other. They learn from one another. That is why we insist that you are present thirty minutes before class time and stay thirty minutes after class ends, so that before and after class you can disciple people individually. Just like Jesus did with John, or with the three men that He was working with. Then during the discussion seminar time you disciple them as a group.

From the very beginning God has blessed our training ministry in a very special way. And God has blessed the local church based leadership training ministry in a much greater way than many other forms of Christian training. The blessings have always come and rested on two poles. One of them is doing the practical assignments, doing the church ministry assignment each month in each lesson or lecture that you are studying. That is the whole secret of your ministry. If you can motivate your students to practice what they have studied, you will be blessed, they will be blessed, and the people in the churches will be blessed.



B. Select from among them men with potential, and send them out.

The other part that God has been blessing uniquely through the New Life lectures and courses is the passing on of the lecture or course to another group. It is your job, half way through a course, to start selecting the best students that have potential and motivate them to begin thinking of starting new groups. Then at the end of the course, you give them a leader's guide and some booklets and you send them out to do a group in another church that maybe further away, or that is more difficult to reach.

For two thousand years the church has by and large forgotten about these two key principles of Jesus. This is the whole basis of the New life ministry.

C. Pray and go!!! Pray and go!!!

I would like you to turn to a special passage, Matthew 9:35-38. *“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he 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.’”*

Now all of us have heard sermons on this passage. The pastor says, “Brothers and Sisters we need to reach out. The people are lost. We need to do evangelism. The harvest is white, but we have few workers. Some of you need to work for the Lord Jesus. Now let us stand up and pray.” Then the pastor prays for the workers. And that is all. The congregation sings a song, the pastor goes outside and shakes hands with everybody, and what happens — NOTHING. Why? Because our deacons have not been reading the Bible right. They see there at the end of verse 38 a big sign, a great big number 10, for chapter 10, and they say, “Oh, that is the end of the chapter, that is the finish.” But it was not the end. In the original Bible there was no chapter 10. The numbers were written in, in the 15th century. For 15 centuries there was no chapter 10. Matthew did not write verse 38, then chapter 10. He was just writing, writing. So let us read it again. And we will begin reading with Matthew 9:37 and 10:1&5.

“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. He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.’ And in verse 5 we read, ‘These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions...’ Oh, now we have a completely different picture. We see that Jesus was going through all the towns and villages. And He was overwhelmed with the needs. He felt sorry for these poor, poor people. He was full of compassion. He was broken hearted. He was just like Abraham Bible. He was very tired, His voice was sore, and He was saying, “I cannot do this all alone. I cannot do this all the time by myself. This is not working. We have got to find another way to do this.” So, in order to communicate a new method, He began talking to his disciples, not to the crowds, but to His disciples, His trainees. He said, “Have you noticed, the harvest is white, there are lots of people out there. Did you notice that? And we are going to have to do something about this. Let us pray first, and ask God how, and to bless us.” So that is what they did first. Ask the Lord to send out some other workers.

So, Peter falls to His knees and says, “God, please send some other workers.” And then he asks Thomas, “Thomas, you pray.” So Thomas starts praying, “God, send some other workers. Then Jesus said, “Come to me, I want you all to come here. Sit down, I want to talk to you.” *“He called his twelve disciples to him”* it

says in Matthew 10: verse one. He said something like, "Now you have all been praying about sending people out there, and you know, while you were doing that, I was thinking about this, and I think **you** ought to be the ones to go and do that."

D. Specific training given:

"ME!" "Yes, you." "But I have never done this before. But I do not know how to do this. Oh this is terrible. I cannot do this." And there were all these different comments. And Jesus said, "Just a moment." And He raised His hand and He says, "I give you authority." And He gave them authority. He appointed them to be successful. Then we see that He sent them out. What did He say, "Well, Peter, it has been very nice knowing you. I wish you good success, God bless you." "Now Thomas, do not doubt. You go and do a good job out there." This is not what He did. He sent them out with **instructions**. The whole of chapter 10 is instructions. Go and do this, preach that, if people accept you, stay there. If they do not want you, go to another city. He gave them a whole list of instructions. He probably had 6 months of conferences, who knows. He trained them and He gave them specific instructions and then sent them out. He realized that He could not do it alone and He enlisted others to help Him. Then He trained the others that He chose; He trained them how to do it. His lesson continued through the whole of chapter 10. The men actually leave in chapter 11 verse 1. So the whole story goes from chapter 9:35 to chapter 11:1.

E. Sending students out to do practical ministry assignments

Throughout the Gospels we observe Jesus sending out various groups repeatedly to do practical assignments. This did not just happen one time. It is clear that Jesus did this on numerous different occasions. Apparently it was His regular custom to send them out. After His burden in Matthew chapter 9 we see His secret ministry of Mark 3:12 in action and bearing fruit. It was ministry multiplication in action. It was the secret that He would later formulate into the "Great Commission." What the disciples learned now later became their pattern in the Book of Acts. It became their ministry pattern and lifestyle.

F. Holding His team accountable

Now we are going to look at the results. Mark 6:30-32.

"The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place."

Now here we see several interesting things. We see in Mark 6:7 that they were sent out, "*Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.*" Then in verse 8 He begins giving His instructions. Now this was not just one time. It is clear that Jesus did this on different occasions. So here they come back. And Jesus says, "All right, now it is exam time." "You have finished your practical assignment **work**. Now we are going to have an exam. Matthew what did you do? How did it go? What were your problems? What are the results? What are you going to do better next time?" And He gave them an exam. It is very, very clear. They had to report to Him: this was not done with the crowds, this was done privately. This time was Jesus' seminar time with his men. We see the priority that Jesus had. This was so very important to Jesus, that He had private time with them. This was not for the crowds, this was not for everybody, this was for His special group of trainees. He had selected them to follow Him and He was now preparing them to send them out.

G. We see that Jesus therefore had a plan and a system.

Luke 9:1-2. "*When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.*" Then Jesus proceeded to give them an assignment. They had been with Him, learning from Him. They had seen what He did. They had learned to understand the Bible better through His teaching. So there was academic growth through the Bible teaching. And their character development was through being with Jesus. Now Jesus had a practical assignment for them.

Jesus gave them practical assignments, so they would be trained to go out. In Luke 9:10 we read about them coming back again. "When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida..." Now notice they are not called disciples here. They are called apostles, the ones that were sent out, and they are coming back with a report.

We are holding you accountable. You need to hold your coaches accountable. You need to hold your students accountable. Jesus had them make a report and explain how they had used their time and how God had blessed them.

Now let us look at Luke 10:1 *“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.”* And then He repeated His instructions. He told them to pray. The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, therefore ask the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers. And then he said, “Amen. Are you finished praying?” “Go.” It is very plain here in verse three that He says, *“Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.”* (Luke 10:5)

Now this was a different group of disciples. It was not the same group. But He repeated His instructions for prayer. And immediately He insisted that they would go out and do it. This was the **secret ministry of Jesus. This is where Jesus had success.**

H. Let us look at the secret purpose of Jesus and its success

In Luke 10:17 the 70 returned with joy. Jesus had made them successful. But even in their success they were still short sighted. Jesus replied, “Great, but I saw satan fall like lightning.” Jesus got a mental glimpse of building the Kingdom of God, establishing the church. He said, “Yes, this is it. We are successful. This is the method to defeat satan.” That concept of sending out disciples, that image of success got a hold of Jesus and he got really excited. He did a jig, he jumped up and down, he danced for joy. He almost could not contain himself. We read in verse 21 that he was **“full of joy.”** If you are full of something, you show it. You can’t just keep it down inside. This is the only time we read about Jesus being full of joy. And what was the reason for this exuberant joy? Because God had hidden His secret ministry from the wise and the learned and thus also His enemies. Jesus was full of joy because His ministry of multiplication worked. Jesus knew that His secret method of training 12 men and sending them out to make followers from unbelievers was the foundational rule for the establishment and expansion of His Kingdom and He coined the Great Commission: **“Make disciples of unbelievers and train new leaders.”** Jesus knew that this method of discipling and sending out was **undefeatable** and would over the centuries establish millions of churches until the world would be full of them and the kingdom would be established fully.

This is exactly what happened. When His public ministry failed, when everything looked dark, when He was dead, when He was not there, when nobody saw Him, then the Holy Spirit brought to fruit all the things He had trained in the hearts and lives of these disciples. We see these seventy together in one building, and with them are the others together. One hundred and twenty of them who had been with Him and who were sent out with power and authority. The kingdom began with a big bang and the book of Acts is full of it. When the enemies eventually did find out about the secret ministry of Jesus in Acts 4:13, it was too late. Satan had fallen and the Kingdom like the stone from the mountaintop in Daniel’s vision was rolling on to eternal victory. And nothing can stop it now. Hallelujah. Amen.

It was through them that the church was built and the church today here in our country is the direct result of Jesus’ secret ministry. You here today are the ones benefiting from His secret ministry. Praise God; hallelujah, amen! Are you glad Jesus had a secret ministry? Will you join Jesus in this work? Will you do what Jesus did and disciple others? If you do you will be as successful as the men He trained. All their blessings will be yours. Amen! Glory to our precious Lord Jesus.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

We are happy to present the video, audio and paper materials that have been prepared by **New Life for Churches**. You have the privilege *upon completion of your practical assignment* to use this lecture with others.

Practical assignment

Completed

- During the small group discussion, you named one aspect that you could adopt for yourself right now. What was it? _____ ☐
- What steps will you take now to make sure that aspect becomes part of you?

1. ☐
2. ☐
3. ☐
4. ☐
5. ☐
6. ☐
7. ☐
8. ☐
9. ☐
10. ☐

➤ Pick four people to begin a 'secret' ministry with.
(If you are a man, you should only pick men. If you are a woman, only pick women.)

1. Write down their names.
2. Begin praying for them.
3. Start to spend informal time with them regularly.
4. Observe what their physical needs are.
5. Observe what their spiritual needs are.
6. Address these needs in prayer.
7. Begin to meet these needs with some concrete action.

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