

Eighteen Biblical **REASONS** (in Four Parts) for Serving on a **T.E.A.M.** of Laborers  
*(moving from independence to interdependence)*

Clay Miller

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*(red letters are for emphasis)*

**T**estimony

**E**ffectiveness

**A**ccountability

**M**ission

**T-TESTIMONY** (Biblical Models & Examples); these emphasize scriptural precedents and divine patterns which were part of our Lord's and the early disciples lives:

- 1) **IT WAS CHRIST'S EXAMPLE.** And we are called to follow Christ's example (see **Luke 6:40, 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 2:21**).
  - i) **Mark 6:7a** "And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out **in pairs...**"
  - ii) **Luke 10:1** "Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them **in pairs** ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come."
- 2) **IT IS THE SPIRIT'S METHOD.** The Spirit of God (Who is the Spirit of Christ – see **Romans 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11**) chose to continue to send them out in pairs after the Resurrection.
  - i) **Acts 13:2-4** "While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas **and** Saul for the work to which I have called **them.**" Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on **them**, they sent **them** away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, **they** went down to Seleucia and from there **they** sailed to Cyprus."
- 3) **IT WAS PAUL'S EXAMPLE.** It was Paul's example to build and use teams of laborers and elders (look for the likely author of Acts, Dr Luke, in the "we" in the book of Acts).
  - i) First Missionary Journey (**Acts 13:1-14:28**): Paul, Barnabas, John Mark
  - ii) Second Missionary Journey (**Acts 15:36-18:22**): Paul, Silas, Luke, Timothy, Priscilla & Aquila, Gaius, Aristarchus
  - iii) Barnabas and John Mark's separate missionary journey (I wish I had their account!)
  - iv) Third Missionary Journey (**Acts 18:23-21:17**): Paul, Timothy, Esastus, Gaius of Derbe, Aristarchus, Sopater of Berea, Secundus of Thessalonia, Tychius, Trophimus of Asia
  - v) Paul's voyage to Rome (**Acts 27:1-28:16**): Paul, Luke
  - vi) Fourth Missionary Journey: Paul, Titus
    - (1) **Titus 1:5** "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders **s** in every city as I directed you..."
- 4) **IT'S IN PAUL'S LETTERS.** Most of Paul's letters were addressed from himself PLUS others on his team, usually Timothy – his most faithful man (see **Philippians 2:19-22**).
  - i) **Romans 16:21-23** "Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen. I, **Tertius**, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord. Gaius, host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer greets you, and Quartus, the brother."

- ii) **1 Corinthians 1:1** “Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and **Sosthenes** our brother...”
  - iii) **2 Corinthians 1:1** “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and **Timothy** our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia...”
  - iv) **Philippians 1:1** “Paul and **Timothy**, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons...”
  - v) **Colossians 1:1** “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and **Timothy** our brother...”
  - vi) **1 Thessalonians 1:1** “Paul and **Silvanus** and **Timothy**, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.”
  - vii) **1 Thessalonians 2:1** “Paul and **Silvanus** and **Timothy**, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ...”
  - viii) **Philemon 1:1** “Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and **Timothy** our brother, To Philemon our beloved brother and fellow worker...”
- 5) **THERE IS ALWAYS A PLURALITY OF OVERSEERS.** That’s the pattern we find in the New Testament: (**Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2f; 20:17-18; 21:18; 1 Timothy 4:14; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1**).

**E – Effectiveness** (Fruitfulness & Function); these highlight the practical outcomes and benefits of working together:

- 6) **PROVIDES A GOOD RETURN.** Which means we will be more productive and fruitful if we labor with another.
  - i) **Deuteronomy 32:30a** “How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight...”
  - ii) **Proverbs 11:14** “Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory.”
  - iii) **Proverbs 15:22** “Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed.”
  - iv) **Ecclesiastes 4:9** “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor.”
  - v) **Ephesians 4:16** “...from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”
- 7) **IT SHARPENS LABORERS.** Sharpened tools work better, which means we will be more effective and more efficient in our labors...which is how we will get “much” fruit.
  - i) **Proverbs 27:17** “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”
  - ii) **John 15:8** “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear **much** fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”
- 8) **PROVIDES FOR A VARIETY OF GIFTS.** If the goal is help someone become like Christ (Who had all the spiritual gifts), then it make sense to disciple someone in the context of a variety of disciple-makers.
  - i) **Romans 12:4-5** “For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

- ii) **1 Corinthians 12:18-20** “But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body.”
  - iii) **2 Timothy 2:2** “The things which you have heard from me **in the presence of many witnesses**, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”
  - iv) **1 Peter 4:10** “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”
  - v) **Teaching Tool:** Watch the movie, **THE FORGE**, and see how Isaiah Wright is chiefly disciplined by Joshua Moore, but also by ALL the older men on The Forge.
- 9) **IT IS A MARK OF A DISCIPLE.** One of the six marks of a disciple is that he or she loves others in the Body. By serving on a team, the world can frequently witness this love.
- i) **John 13:34-35** “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
  - ii) **1 John 3:14** “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.”
- 10) **CHRIST WANTS FRUIT WHICH WILL REMAIN.** Christ’s disciples were expected by Jesus to bear fruit which would remain (**John 15:16**), not fruit that would disappear after they died. Fruit only remains when it dies to self and then regenerates and multiplies. Pride keeps us from the team and pride keeps us from training to be replaced (see **John 3:30**). We are called to humbly serve alongside others and to seek generational fruit.
- i) **John 12:24** “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, **it remains alone**; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”
  - ii) **1 Corinthians 3:8** “Now he who plants **and** he who waters **are one**; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor.”
  - iii) **1 Peter 5:2-3** “...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”

**A – Accountability** (Protection & Growth); these focus on spiritual safety, mutual care, and growth:

- 11) **WE ARE DESIGNED FOR COMPANIONSHIP.** It was God’s observation that it was not good for Adam to be alone.
  - i) **Genesis 2:18** “Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.””
- 12) **IT IS PROTECTION AGAINST BURN OUT.**
  - i) **Exodus 18:17-18** “Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.””
- 13) **WE ARE WARNED AGAINST ISOLATION.** We easily make **self-centered** and **foolish** decisions by ourselves.
  - i) **Proverbs 18:1** “He who separates himself seeks his own desire, he quarrels against all sound wisdom.”

- ii) **Hebrews 10:23-25** “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, **as is the habit of some**, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”
- 14) **PROVIDES ENCOURAGEMENT AND SPIRITUAL PROTECTION.**
- i) **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.
- 15) **PROVIDES PROTECTION OF THE FLOCK.** We avoid the “cult of personality” when we serve together on a team and make decisions together, collaborating with each other as we each are led by the same Spirit. This helps prevent us from leading others astray with false doctrine. It serves as a form of “checks and balances” with the Scripture being the foundation of our Truth, like the noble-minded Bereans in **Acts 17:10-11**.
- i) All examples in the Bible of spiritual overseers (elders/bishops) and laborers are in the **plural** or **connected to a team** in the Bible (e.g. Phillip, who led the Ethiopian to Christ by himself in Gaza (**Acts 8:26-40**) was on a **team of seven** (**Acts 6:3-6**); Paul who preached alone at Mars Hill (**Acts 17:16-34**) was on a **team of three** at this time (**Acts 17:14**).
- ii) **Act 20:28-30** “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and **from among your own selves** men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”
- iii) **Real Life Example** – 2015 video with Francis Chan explaining why he left the megachurch. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzp-pg-xoOI>

**M – Mission** (Unity & Co-Laboring); these speak to our shared calling and unity in purpose:

- 16) **WE ARE GOD’S FELLOW WORKERS.** There are no “teachers, fathers or leaders” – we are all co-laborers...fellow workers, with the Lord and with each other. There is no “pope,” no thrones, no palaces, no gold rings, no guards, no hierarchy, or no fancy titles (e.g. “Most Reverend,” “Your Holiness,” etc.). Just servants.
- i) **Matthew 23:6-12** “They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men. But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”
- ii) **1 Corinthians 3:9** “For we are God’s **fellow workers**; you are God’s field, God’s building.”
- iii) **Philemon 1:23-24** “Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my **fellow workers**.”

- iv) **1 Peter 5:1** “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, **as your fellow elder** and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed...”  
 {Peter was most certainly **NOT** the first Catholic “Pope!”}
- 17) **IT HELPS US TO BECOME ONE.** Christ’s goal for His disciples is unity, around Him. The Shepherd trains the sheep to become shepherds, like Himself, not to remain sheep. There are no clergy-laity in the Body of Christ, no professional class.
- i) **John 15:15** (ESV) “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.”
- ii) **John 17:20-21** “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.”
- iii) **1 John 1:1-13** “What was from the beginning, what **we** have heard, what **we** have seen with **our** eyes, what **we** have looked at and touched with **our** hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and **we** have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to **us**—what **we** have seen and heard **we** proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship **with us**; and indeed **our** fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”
- iv) **Luke 6:40** (ESV) “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.” (**This works both ways – if our teacher is independent, then he or she will reproduce a spirit of independence, rather than interdependence, in their disciple.**)
- 18) **IF MARRIED WE ALSO NEED TEAMMATES, BATTLE-BUDDIES.** Of course, we co-labor with our spouses (e.g. Priscilla & Aquila), but Jesus sent Peter out with John, not with Peter’s wife (**Mark 1:30**). Men pair up and co-labor with other men. Women co-labor with other women (e.g. **Matthew 27:55-56; 28:1; Mark 15:40-41,47; 16:1-8; Luke 23:55-24:10; John 19:25**), David had Jonathan (**1 Samuel 18:1-5**), Paul had Timothy (**Philippians 2:19-22**).
- i) **Luke 22:8** “And Jesus sent Peter **and** John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it.””
- ii) **Acts 3:1** “Now Peter **and** John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.”
- iii) **Acts 4:13** “Now as they observed the confidence of Peter **and** John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.”
- iv) **Titus 2:1-8** “But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.”