

## 9. Learning to Lead a Part of the Flock

Our Bible Institute board chairman for many years, spent his early years growing up on the Navajo Reservation herding sheep. About thirty years ago, I asked Charlie Begay, “Why is it that some people lead sheep, but most people drive sheep?” He replied, “If you want to lead a sheep, you start spending time with that sheep, talking to it and playing with that sheep from the time it is a lamb. As that sheep grows and matures, you continue to spend time with it. When that sheep becomes an adult, it will follow you wherever you go. If you do that with each of your sheep, they will all follow you wherever you go.”

Christ said a similar thing, in John 10:4-5, where we read, “And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” Then, in John 10:11, Christ added, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” Here, we see that Biblical leading is learning to give of ourselves for the sake of the sheep, rather than seeking our own personal gain.

Then, in Exodus 18:21, Moses was told, “Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.” Here, we see that Moses was to select qualified men to lead groups of various sizes. However, the basic unit was ten. Biblical leaders must learn to lead a small group before they will learn to lead a larger group.

Christ demonstrated this same principle in His own ministry when He chose His disciples in Mark 3:13-14a. “And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him...” In this case, we see that Christ chose a group just larger than the basic unit of ten. Some of the twelve had already been in contact with Christ for about twenty-one months (John 1:37-52). Christ gave us some very important principles from the way He became the leader of these twelve.

When Christ first met people, He invited them to spend time with Him. Some responded (John 1:40-46) and some did not (Luke 9:57-62 and Mark 10:17-22). However, those who responded were invited to go various places with Christ, so they could spend more time with Him. They went with Christ to a wedding in Galilee – John 2:1-12. They went with Christ into the land of Judea – John 3:22. They went with Christ through Samaria – John 4:1-42. They went with Christ as He taught in synagogues throughout Galilee – Matthew 4:23-25. During this twenty-one-month period, Christ usually had a group of people with Him. Sometimes, these were large groups, and other times, they were smaller groups.

However, after twenty-one months, Christ moved His focus to a small group of twelve because He was going to begin to teach them how to serve. Christ knew that they had to spend time with Him in a small group so they could get their questions answered, grow in godly character, and become equipped for ministry to others. In other words, Christ chose to invest His time in a small group that would become equipped to multiply, rather than focusing on adding to the large group. We

learn several principles about developing others to lead a small group from the principles Christ demonstrated.

First, we see that Christ spent the entire night in prayer before He chose the twelve. Luke 6:12-13 tell us, “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to *Himself*; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles...” Christ was choosing to invest His life in a small group of people, and He spent the entire night talking to the Father before making that decision.

This was in addition to what He had already noticed about those who followed Him. In Mark, we notice certain things were already true about the twelve who were chosen:

- They were workers (all in Mark were called while they were working) – Mark 1:16-20, 2:14.
- They were responders – Mark 1:16-20, 2:14.
- They made themselves available to spend time with Christ – Mark 1:35-39.

However, even though Christ had already noticed these characteristics about these men, He knew that the most important thing to do was talk to the Father about those in whom He should invest the remainder of the time He would be here on the earth.

Second, we see that Christ chose the twelve in whom He was going to invest the second half of His ministry. Christ did not ask for volunteers. Luke 6:13b says, “He called His disciples to *Himself*; and from them He chose twelve”. Often, the people who have the most problems, and the least desire to serve, will volunteer to spend time with you, because they want help in solving their problems, not in learning how to be equipped for ministry. Christ did help people with their problems, but He did it with the twelve following Him, so they could observe how Christ solved problems.

Third, we see that Christ chose to invest a large amount of time in this small group. Mark 3:14a says, “Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him...” Just as a shepherd spends a large amount of time with a sheep before it will follow him, Christ knew the importance of investing a large amount of time in this small group of men. This made it possible for them to observe the godly character of Christ and observe Christ as He ministered to others. True leadership is investment of time in the lives of people.

Fourth, Christ showed, by example, how to develop the group into ministry teams. In Mark 6:7, Christ sent out the twelve two-by-two. In Luke 10:1, He sent out the seventy disciples two-by-two. However, the lists of the twelve give us the greatest example of how Christ developed teams. As you study the various lists of the twelve in the Gospels, the first, fifth and ninth listed are always the same. Although the others may be arranged in various orders among those listed 2 through 4, 6 through 8, and 10 through 12, they are also the same three in each of those groups. Notice the following team leaders, and those who were in their groups, in the following passages – Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:12-16:

Team leader: Peter; the team: Andrew, James, and John,

Team leader: Philip; the team: Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew,

Team leader: James the son of Alphaeus; the team: Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas

Iscariot.

Fifth, Christ gave the disciples very specific instructions when He sent them out to minister the first time – Matthew 10:1-15. The first time they went out, they were only to go to strangers of their own culture, so they did not need to cross too many barriers as they were learning to minister. They were to minister to both spiritual and physical needs. They were to depend on the Lord to provide for their needs. They were to find out, in each town, who was worthy (who had weight or influence) and begin their ministry at that home. One of the keys to remember when developing leadership is that most people need very specific instructions when they first begin to minister. As they gain experience, they will need less instruction because they have learned what to do both by observation and by experience.

Sixth, Christ took time to have the disciples tell what happened when they returned from their first ministry trip. Mark 6:30-31 says, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.” In these verses, we see that Christ had the disciples do three things:

- ◆ They told what they had done.
- ◆ They told what they had taught.
- ◆ They took some time to rest and get renewed.

As we think about the way Christ trained His disciples, we see that He spent a period of time working with them very closely, before He gave them the responsibility to lead a group. During that time, Christ focused on prayer, recruitment, investment of time, team building, and specific instructions for ministry, followed by a time to report on the progress of their ministry. Christ did all of these things with the twelve, before He even placed them in charge of a group. These are some of the same things we need to do before asking a person to take charge of a part of the flock (a small group since the basic unit for a group, in Exodus 18:19-21, is ten):

- \* a leader of ten (leaders of tens)
- \* a leader of ten leaders of ten (leaders of hundreds)
- \* a leader of ten leaders who are leading leaders of ten groups (leaders of thousands).

As we do these things, we will see Christ prepare individuals to lead others in the same way we have worked with them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help various individuals learn to lead a part of the flock. The flock will grow in direct proportion to the number of godly leaders who are developed to care for a part of the flock.