

6. Learning to be a Leader Who Serves

In the world, the most common style of leadership is what is known as top down leadership. Christ defined that style of leadership in Mark 10:42, where we read: “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.’” In this verse, we see that the leadership of the world loves to control others.

However, Christ said that is not to be the style of spiritual leadership. Mark 10:43-45 goes on to say, “...Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” What Christ defines here is what we might call bottom-up leadership. This style of leadership is opposite to worldly leadership, but it is essential if we are going to develop godly reproducing leaders.

Bottom-up leadership is understood better when we look at Ephesians 2:19-20, where we read: “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*.” In these verses, we see that Christ is the chief cornerstone. Christ is that great massive Rock on which the church is built. On that great massive Rock, the apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church. The apostles gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:21-22). The prophets gave us the written Word of God (2 Peter 1:19-21). From this, we see that Christ, the apostles, and the prophets all had the opportunity to serve all of the people of the world.

In our last topic, we saw that the Lord also led in the appointment of elders in every church (Acts 14:23). Then, in the three topics before that, we saw that Christ gave:

Evangelists - to equip the saints to share the Gospel.

Pastors - to equip the saints to minister to one another.

Teachers - to equip the saints to teach the Word of God and apply it to their lives.

We have also seen that God has given each Christian a unique “SHAPE”:

S - spiritual gifts

H - heart or passion for ministry

A - abilities

P - personality

E - experiences in life

Just as Christ, the apostles, and the prophets served all people through their ministries, we are to serve those with whom the Lord brings us in contact in our ministries. Here, it is essential to remember that Christ did not give us an equipping gift to be served. Instead, Christ gave us an equipping gift to serve others. If we have the gift of evangelist, we are to take other Christians with us and show them how to make contacts and share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. If we have the gift of pastor, we are to take other Christians with us and show them how to minister to other Christians. If we have the gift of teacher, we are to take other Christians

with us and show them how to teach the Word of God and help people learn how to apply the Word to their lives.

The Lord wants each Christian to learn to minister effectively with the spiritual “SHAPE” that the Lord has given to that person. That means that Christ wants each Christian to learn to share the Gospel in the way that will be most effective for that person. By going along with a person who has the gift of evangelist, the learner will learn the basic content of the Gospel message. The basic content of the Gospel does not change. However, their spiritual “SHAPE” will determine the way that people make contacts and build relationships to share the Gospel.

A Christian with the gift of serving will become equipped to share the Gospel by going along and observing the basic content of the message that is taught and how it is taught. However, that Christian will then use his gift of serving to make contacts and build relationships for the purpose of sharing the Gospel. A person with the gift of teaching (doctrine) who has gone with the same person will make contacts and build relationships and share the Gospel in a very different way. A key factor though will be the fact that both Christians will have grown in godly character as they have observed the character of the more mature Christian who was showing them how to share the Gospel.

The leader who serves will make it a point to try to understand the spiritual “SHAPE” of each of those going along with him so he can give each one specific ideas about possible ways the Lord may use their “SHAPE” to share the Gospel effectively. For example, the person who has the gift of showing mercy, and has also experienced the death of a close relative in the past couple of years, can be given ideas about how to share the Gospel with those who are suffering or grieving. In contrast, a person who has musical abilities can be given ideas about how to share the Gospel with the musical group of which he is a part. The leader is serving because he has taken the time to understand each person and their “SHAPE” and given possible ideas about how to share the Gospel.

In a similar way, the person who has the gift of pastor will show others how to minister to other Christians as he takes them along with him as he ministers to other Christians. If a person has a speaking gift, he can be given ideas about how to serve other Christians by the way that he speaks. If the person has a serving gift, he can be given ideas about how to serve other Christians by the things that he does (1 Peter 4:11). A person who has a shy personality can often be given ideas about how to serve individual Christians while a person with an outgoing personality may prefer ideas about ways to serve with groups of Christians.

The person who has the gift of teacher will show others how to teach the Word of God and help people learn to apply it to their lives as he takes other Christians with him. If the one with the gift of teacher knows the heart of passion of those he takes with him, he will be able to give ideas about the kinds of teaching that will get them really excited. I often ask the question, “If you could do anything you wanted to serve the Lord for the rest of your life, what would get you most excited?” That question will usually reveal the heart of the person and show what gets that person excited. Then, you can share with that person ideas how he can teach the Word of God while carrying out

the ministry that really gets him excited.

A key thing to remember, as we give ideas, is to share with each person that these are only ideas and that the Lord may give them totally different ideas about how to minister effectively. If a person shares an idea that he or she has been thinking about as a way to minister, encourage that person to try out their idea and see how the Lord uses that idea. Often, people will be given ideas, by the Lord, that far surpass the ideas we might suggest, because the Lord has given that person ideas that fit his or her spiritual “SHAPE”.

Our ministry as a spiritual leader is to serve each Christian and help each Christian develop the full potential that the Lord has given that person. If we:

- ◆ Drive a person, that person will only be driven until he can get out of the way
- ◆ Lead a person, we can lead that person as far as we have gone
- ◆ Serve a person, we can help that person reach his or her full potential which may go far beyond our personal potential

One of the great joys of the Christian life is to see Christians who we have served go far beyond what we could ever do. What actually happens is that each person we serve actually multiplies the ministry the Lord has given to us. That was what happened in the early church. In Acts 6:1 and 6:7, we read that the number of disciples multiplied. Then, in Acts 9:31, we see that the number of churches multiplied. The process moved from addition to multiplication because the early leaders of the church chose to serve those who became Christians and equip them for the work of the ministry. This is seen so clearly in Acts 8:1-4 where the apostles stayed in Jerusalem and the Christians who were scattered by persecution, “Went everywhere preaching the Word.”

The Lord has given you a very special privilege as a Christian leader. God has called you to “equip the saints for the work of the ministry.” May the Lord richly bless you as you multiply your ministry by equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.