

1. Jesus Knew His Followers Would Become Like Himself

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics. This series of topics will be titled, Developing Leaders Who Are Becoming Like Their Teacher. The word that is translated “teacher” is used fifty-eight times in the New Testament. In Luke 6:40, we read, “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.” Christ was training the twelve so they would become like Him. By the time He came to the night before His crucifixion, Christ was able to say, in His prayer to the Father, in John 17:4, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.”

This is a key principle to remember as we help Christians grow and mature. When they are fully trained, they will become like us whether that is good or bad. That is why we must continue to grow, so we are becoming more and more like Christ who is our Teacher. That is why Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” If we are going to develop leaders who are becoming like Christ, we must choose to make it our goal to imitate Christ, so that, as they imitate us, they will become like Christ.

In Ephesians 4:11-13, we see that teachers are among the group of leaders that are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Those verses say, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

In other topics, we have said that the apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church with Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone – Ephesians 2:20. The evangelists equip the saints to share the Gospel. The pastors equip the saints to minister to one another. The teachers equip the saints to teach and apply the Word of God. Since every Christian is called a saint, we will see that every Christian is to be equipped to teach and apply the Word of God. We will also see how Christ taught His followers to teach and apply the Word of God to their lives and ministry.

As Christ ministered to His disciples, the night before His crucifixion, He explained how He was equipping them to teach others. John 13:13-14 says, “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.” Christ did not give the disciples a lecture on how to serve one another. Instead, He gave an example for the disciples to follow. In verse 17, He said, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” In these verses, Christ said the disciples would be blessed if they followed His example. Christ wanted them to do the same thing and teach others by their example.

A few minutes later, Christ gave the disciples a new commandment. John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Again, Christ had shown the disciples how to love one another by the way He had shown His love to them over the previous three-and-a-half years. He did not just tell them what to do. Instead, He invited

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them to imitate His example.

Right from the time He invited them to follow Him, and become fishers of men, Christ began to teach His disciples the importance of prayer. Soon after Jesus called them, Mark 1:35-37 says, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, Everyone is looking for You.” One of the very first lessons Christ taught His disciples, by example, was the importance of prayer.

Christ continued to provide this example of the importance of prayer throughout His ministry. We see that this example caused the apostles to set certain priorities for their own ministries. They explained these priorities in Acts 6:4, where we read: “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” The disciples had watched the example of Christ for His entire public ministry. As a result, prayer was one of their two key priorities in their ministry.

The second priority of the apostles also came from the example of Christ. In Matthew 5:1-2, we read, “And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying...” The multitudes had the opportunity to listen on this occasion, but the priority of Christ was teaching His disciples. The impact of the teaching of Christ that day is seen in Matthew 7:28-29, where we read: “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” A study of that sermon will show why Christ taught with authority. Christ explained and applied the Word of God to the situations that the people faced in their daily lives.

In Matthew 5:23-26, Christ explained to the disciples how to resolve a conflict between themselves and someone else. However, just telling the disciples once did not mean that the disciples knew how to resolve conflict. As a result, Christ told them again, in Matthew 18:15, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.” However, just telling the disciples a second time did not mean that Christ had taught the disciples the principle. Christ had to demonstrate the principle both by word and action for the disciples to really understand.

In Matthew 20:20-28, James and John had their mother speak for them and request that her sons have the privilege of sitting on the right and the left hand of Christ when Christ came into His kingdom. Matthew 20:24 says, “And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.” To help the disciples learn to work as a team, Christ explained the Biblical principle of servant leadership. Matthew 20:25-27 says, “But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave...’” In these verses, we see that Christ explained the principle of servant leadership to help the disciples learn how to resolve conflict.

However, Christ did one more thing. Matthew 20:28 says, “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” In this verse, we see that Christ used His own example to illustrate the principle of servant leadership. The disciples learned, from the example of Christ, what they did not learn from just hearing Christ teach. In Acts 2:44-47, we read, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” The disciples had learned the principle of servant leadership from the example of Christ and were now showing the new Christians, by their own example, how to apply that principle.

In Matthew 6:25-34, Christ taught the disciples seven principles about why they did not need to worry. The fact that Christ had taught the principles did not mean the disciples had learned the principles. Instead, they had to be shown, by the example of Christ, that they did not need to worry. Peter learned that lesson so well that he later wrote about it. 1 Peter 2:23 says, “Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.” Christ had shown, by His example, that He could trust the Father to complete His work.

Peter had seen the example of Christ, and that had an impact on Peter’s life for the rest of His life. Acts 12:4-6 says, “So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover. Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.” Peter had learned that he could trust the Lord, even when he knew that he faced death the next day. He was sleeping so soundly, the angel had to hit Peter in the side to even wake him.

These are just a few illustrations of the way that Christ taught lessons in at least two ways. First, he taught the disciples through His teaching. Second, He taught the disciples through His own example. Jesus knew that His followers would follow His example. In the same way, an effective teacher will do as Paul did, in 1 Corinthians 11:1, and invite people to imitate him, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to teach others, both by their teaching, and by their example.