

9. A Servant Who Leads Focuses on Doing the Right Things

In life, it is easy to be busy doing many things. However, if we are going to lead people by serving them, we need to make certain that we are doing the right things, so that we provide an example for them of the things that The Word of God says are the most important things. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In Matthew 28:18-20, Christ gave us the Great Commission. That certainly tells us what Christ views as important. Those verses tell us, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.’ Amen.”

In these verses, we see that Christ is the One who has all authority. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. If we are going to be a servant who leads by doing the right things, we must begin by recognizing that Christ is the One who has the authority, and we are the ones who are to be His servants. When He gives us a command, we are not to just take it as a suggestion. As a result, in verses 19-20, we see that Christ gives us one command, “Make Disciples”. He then gives us three participles that tell us how to carry out that command:

- ◆ Going (we are to go to people, not expect them to come to us)
- ◆ Baptizing (we are to help them identify with Christ and His body, the church)
- ◆ Teaching (we are to show them how to obey all that Christ commanded)

Exodus 18:19-21 gives us five things that we do to help people become disciples, “‘Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. 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.’” In these verses, we see that we Make Disciples by:

- praying for them (Ephesians 3:14-21 gives us an example of prayer for disciples)
- teaching them the Word of God (we need to teach all the Scripture – Acts 20:27; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- showing them the way to walk (inviting them to imitate us – 1 Corinthians 11:1)
- showing them how to do the work (modeling Biblical ministry – Matthew 4:19)
- sharing the work with them (sharing part of the ministry – John 21:15-17)

As we look at these things, we see that discipleship is not a course we teach. Instead, we “Make Disciples” by the life we model and the priorities by which we live. When we spend time with people, and share our lives with them, those people will become what we are, whether that is good or bad. In order to make disciples, we choose to make it our purpose to spend time with people and share our lives with them. Over time, they will begin to learn to walk in the Spirit, as they see that we are depending on the Holy Spirit to guide us. Then, they will begin to talk about the things

we talk about and do the things we do.

In addition to giving us a Great Commission, Christ also gave us 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.” It is impossible to obey this commandment in our own strength. We do not naturally love others as much as Christ loves us. In fact, if we depend on ourselves, John 15:5 tells us, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” As you see, the last phrase tells us that without Christ we can do nothing.

That is why, in John 14, Christ went on to talk about the fact that He would give us the Holy Spirit to give us the power to obey this commandment. Then, Christ went on to tell us, in John 15:1-12, that we will only be able to obey this commandment as we abide in Him. The first eleven verses of that chapter remind us that we must abide in Christ to be fruitful. Then, John 15:12 reminds us again, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” New and struggling Christians will only begin to understand how much Christ loves them as they spend time with us and see the love that we have for them.

Then, Ephesians 4:12-16 tells us how we make disciples who love. Christ gave spiritual leaders, “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; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

In Ephesians 4:12, we see that spiritual leaders are to equip the saints for the work of ministry, so that, each Christian will come to spiritual maturity. The word “equip” means *to restore something to its original condition*. The original condition of mankind was without sin. However, when Adam sinned, it changed his condition. It also changed his relationships with others. In his relationship with God, Adam experienced separation. In his relationship with himself, he experienced fear, guilt, and shame. In his relationship with others, he began to blame. Equipping people and helping them grow to spiritual maturity means that we help them move:

- ◆ from separation to relationship with God (Romans 8:14-17) and daily fellowship with God (1 John 1:3-7)
- ◆ from fear to love (1 John 4:18)
- ◆ from guilt to forgiveness (Acts 26:18), cleansing (1 John 1:9,) and forgiving others (Ephesians 4:32)
- ◆ from shame to new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- ◆ from blame to taking responsibility for their own choices and their consequences (Galatians 5:13). As you see from this verse, this also equips us to serve one another in love.

In Ephesians 4:13, we see that spiritual leaders are to bring the saints to spiritual maturity. This includes helping each Christian:

- come to the unity of the faith
- grow in the knowledge of the Son of God
- become a mature Christian
- grow in Christlikeness

In Ephesians 4:14, we see that spiritual leaders are not to leave Christians as spiritual toddlers. If we, as leaders, fail to serve Christians by helping them grow and mature, they will remain spiritual toddlers. According to Scripture, spiritual toddlers:

- ◆ are like people who are not Christians – 1 Corinthians 3:1
- ◆ are not able to understand difficult teachings from the Word of God – 1 Corinthians 3:2
- ◆ experience envy, strife, and divisions – 1 Corinthians 3:3
- ◆ are limited in their talk, understanding, and thinking of spiritual things – 1 Corinthians 13:11
- ◆ are tossed to and fro by every false teaching – Ephesians 4:14
- ◆ are easily deceived by false teachers – Ephesians 4:14
- ◆ are dull of hearing to spiritual truth – Hebrews 5:11
- ◆ need to be re-taught the basics of Christianity – Hebrews 5:12
- ◆ are unskillful in the word of righteousness – Hebrews 5:13
- ◆ have not developed their senses to recognize good and evil – Hebrews 5:14

Perhaps, because we, as leaders, have tried to depend on telling others what to do, instead of spending time with them and showing them how to grow to maturity, we see many in our own churches who are still spiritual toddlers.

In Ephesians 4:15, we see that spiritual leaders are to speak the truth. The truth is not always popular, but it is the thing that will transform lives. That is why, as Christian leaders, we need to make certain that:

- we are speaking the truth
- we are speaking the truth in love
- we are helping people grow up into Christ
- we are helping people recognize Christ as their head (this is taught best by example as they see that Christ is our head.)

In Ephesians 4:16, we see that spiritual leaders are to have a goal to help every Christian learn to function effectively. This means that we set the example by becoming a spiritual parent to a few Christians and then help them become spiritual parents to those who are becoming Christians. As each Christian learns to function effectively, we see that Christ:

- is the One who joins the whole body together
- wants the body to grow together and become one
- wants the body to develop a unity of ministry
- wants every Christian to do his or her part
- wants every Christian to learn to function effectively
- says this will cause an increase in the body

- says this will cause the body to build itself up in love

If we are servants who lead by focusing on doing the right things, we will see people grow in Christlikeness. In these verses, we see that growing in Christlikeness causes people to:

- grow in unity
- grow in maturity
- grow in ministry
- grow in love

What a privilege we have, as spiritual leaders, to serve other Christians in their growth in these four areas, because we have made the choice to focus on doing the things Christ commands us to do. May the Lord richly bless you, as you are a servant who leads by making disciples who are being shown, by your example, how to obey the new commandment to love one another as Christ loved us.