

4. Esau's Pattern of Driving or Christ's Pattern of Leading

In Hebrews 12:15-17, we see that Esau is used as an example. However, he is used as a negative example to show us the results of bitterness and worldly values. Those verses say, "Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears." We see that Esau sold his spiritual leadership for a bowl of stew.

Because Esau did not follow the Lord, or seek godly values to lead his life, we see that it affected everything in his life, including his leadership. That is illustrated for us in Genesis 33:12-14, where we read: "Then Esau said, 'Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you.' But Jacob said to him, 'My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir.'" In these verses, we learn six things about the leadership style of Esau.

First, we see that Esau was used to telling others what to do. We see that Esau just expected others to do what he said and follow him where he led. In actual fact, at this point in time, Esau was coming as a military commander, and he was expecting everyone else to follow the chain of command. Genesis 32:6 says, "Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, 'We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.'" Esau expected everyone to follow his chain of command.

Second, we see that the plan of Esau was to reach the goal as quickly as possible. His attitude and focus was on getting to Seir as quickly as possible. In the world, it is common for people to focus on their goals instead of focusing on either God's goals or the people involved. Many Christians also follow the example of the world, and are so focused on their own goals that they hurt the development of people.

Third, we see that the attitude of Esau was to get going now. The world is like Esau. It wants immediate action. The world does not take time to pray and ask God what to do. Their only concern is to start doing something. Many times, Christians do the same thing. They depend on their plans and never pray and ask the Lord to show His will. When that happens, there may be a lot of activity, but nothing is being accomplished.

Fourth, we see that Esau thought that leadership meant driving others. We see what Jacob told Esau, in Genesis 33:13. That verse says, "But Jacob said to him, 'My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die.'" Jacob knew that the men of Esau would drive the flock hard to reach their goal. Godly leadership recognizes that the first part of the word leadership is lead not drive. If Christians are led by the love of Christ, they will lead others. If Christians are

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driven by the fear of people, they will drive others.

Fifth, we see that Esau gave no thought to the fact that he might destroy both the children and the sheep by driving them hard. Jacob also knew that the result of driving the sheep hard would be that it would kill the sheep, especially the lambs that were still nursing. As a result, Jacob said in Genesis 33:14, “Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir.” Jacob focused on the needs of the flock, and so, he was able to lead them effectively.

Sixth, we see that Esau had no understanding of the needs of the children. The world often forgets the needs of the children. It is also very easy for Christians to forget the needs of either physical or spiritual children. Sometimes, Christians become so busy, they neglect the needs of their physical children. Later in life, they wonder why their children have no interest in the things of the Lord. The same often happens with new Christians and spiritual children. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 show us that two of the key priorities of spiritual leaders are to provide new Christians with: the love and care of a nursing mother, and the example of a godly father to help them in their spiritual growth.

We see that Christ demonstrated a very different pattern of leadership. John 13:4-5 shows us that Christ chose to lead his disciples by showing them what to do. Those verses say that Jesus “...rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.” Christ did not preach a sermon on humility. Instead, Christ showed an example of humility by beginning to wash the feet of the disciples.

Second, John 13:6-10 shows that Christ took time to deal with the questions of the disciples. Peter was embarrassed and did not want Jesus to wash his feet, because he realized that he should have offered to wash the feet of Christ. Christ explained, to Peter, that it was necessary for Christ to wash Peter's feet if he wanted to be a part with Christ. Then, Peter asked Christ to wash his hands and head as well. Christ explained that Peter only needed his feet washed. The disciples had already had their bath so all they needed was the dust washed from their feet. When we put our trust in Christ, our sin has been forgiven. We just need the daily cleansing from the sins that we commit each day.

Third, we see, in John 13:12, that Christ took time to explain what He was doing. That verse says, “So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?” Christ was never in a hurry. He realized that the disciples needed to understand why He did what He did. In order to be an effective leader, we need to take time to explain why we do what we do. That way, those who are following us will understand why we are doing the things we do. Christ explained this in John 15:15. “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” Christ said that He was treating the disciples as friends, instead of servants, by explaining to them what He was doing.

Fourth, in John 13:13-14, we see that Christ chose to serve others rather than command them. Those verses say, “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 showed the disciples how to lead by serving one another. People will realize that godly leadership is best learned through example if we take the time to serve them and meet their needs. Their lives will be transformed as we serve them by helping them grow spiritually.

Fifth, we see that Christ chose to lead by example. John 13:15-16 says, “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.” Christ provided an example by what He did. Many people want to serve Christ, but they do not know what to do. If we will take them with us, and show them how to serve the Lord, they will become effective in serving the Lord.

Sixth, we see that Christ told the disciples how to be blessed. John 13:17 says, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” Christ was encouraging the disciples to follow His example, not just hear His words. In the same way, we are to show Christians how to serve Christ. Then, we are to give them the opportunity to do the things that we have shown them. Because they have been shown how to serve the Lord, by our example, they will be able to experience the blessing of the Lord as they see the Lord work through their lives as they follow our example.

The Bible helps us to see that the driving style of Esau will be destructive. Esau shows us that leadership is not exercised by driving people. In contrast, the style of Christ, by which He led His disciples, shows us the true meaning of leadership. Christ led them by showing them how to serve Him. He encouraged them to follow His example as He equipped them to serve the Lord. Christ took more than three years to show the disciples how to serve the Father. He provided them an example in many different areas of their lives. The result of this style of leadership was that their lives were transformed.

Christ also treated them as friends, not as servants, as He shared His plans with them. Then, in John 20:17, Christ called His disciples His brethren. By this title, He showed that He was treating them as equal partners as He led them. As a result, those disciples experienced such great blessing that they were willing to give their own lives for Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you lead developing leaders by providing an example and helping them become friends who share your plans and partners who serve together in ministry with you.