

5. Creativity and the Uniqueness of Every Person

Christ talked to many people about their need for spiritual life. However, in every recorded instance in the Gospels, Christ recognized the uniqueness of every individual by sharing the Gospel in a way that each person would understand it clearly. The approach of Christ was to start with the viewpoint of the person to whom He was talking and help that person understand how to have forgiveness of sins and eternal life from their viewpoint.

Today, many Christians do just the opposite. They have learned one way to share the Gospel, and they share it the same way with every person. Many times, when the Gospel is shared this way, the person who hears the Gospel presented that way has no idea what the person is trying to explain. Instead of sharing the Gospel from the viewpoint of the person hearing the Gospel, the Christian shares the Gospel the one way he or she knows, whether the other person can understand or not. This is usually due to a lack of two things. First, it is due to a lack of knowledge of the Scriptures. Second, it is due to a lack of creativity on the part of the Christian, because the Christian is only sharing from his or her viewpoint, not the viewpoint of the person hearing the Gospel.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Since all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and all Scripture is profitable, it should be our goal to help each Christian become familiar with the entire Word of God as they grow spiritually. When Paul spoke to the leaders at the church at Ephesus, he was able to say to them, in Acts 20:27, “For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” If Paul felt that it was important for every Christian leader to know the whole counsel of God, we should have the same concern to help every developing Christians become familiar with the whole counsel of God.

As Christians are becoming familiar with an increasing amount of Scripture, they need to learn how to see things from the viewpoint of each person who is not yet a Christian so they can share the appropriate Scriptures to help that person understand the Gospel. This requires that the Christian approach each person with a learner’s attitude so he or she can quickly begin to understand how that person thinks. The Christian also has to have a servant’s heart, so he or she can serve the person who is not yet a Christian by explaining the Gospel in a way that person can understand.

Christ also understood that each of those who followed Him were unique individuals. As a result, Christ also ministered to each of His followers in a way that each could best understand. We see this illustrated so well the night before Christ was crucified. A study of John 13 and 14 shows that Christ spoke specifically, during the Last Supper, to at least the following disciples: Peter, John, Judas Iscariot, Thomas, Philip, and the other Judas. In addition to speaking and teaching groups of people, we need to provide opportunities for people to ask their individual questions and give them opportunities for discussion.

Effective ministry to both Christians and non-Christians is most effective when the leaders have developed a learner's attitude. Since each individual is unique, it is important to help developing leaders begin to develop the attitude of a learner. The most effective way to help people develop the attitude of a learner is by example. 1 Corinthians 11:1 says, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." One of the best ways to model a learner's attitude is to ask questions of those we are helping to develop. Christ demonstrated this so many times in His ministry.

In Matthew 16:13, Christ asked the question, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" The disciples answered, in Matthew 16:14, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Then, Christ asked a second question, in Matthew 16:15, "But who do you say that I am?" Christ was not really concerned about the opinions of the crowds. However, He was very concerned about the answer of the twelve, because that determined whether or not they were ready to learn new things. The result of those questions is seen in Matthew 16:21, where we read: "From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day."

A learner's attitude helps us to learn what other people know and what they do not know. However, there is a second reason why a learner's attitude is even more important. Many of the most important things we learn in life are learned from the people with whom we work. They have had many experiences in their lives that we may not have had. These experiences have given them many things they can, and will, teach us if we will give them the opportunity. The man out of whom Christ cast a legion of demons illustrates this. Mark 5:20 says, "And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled." He was able to teach the people, of his entire area, many important things.

A second attitude that is essential if we recognize the uniqueness of each individual is a servant's heart. Rehoboam made a wrong choice in this area, and he divided a great kingdom. 1 Kings 12:6-8 says, "Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, 'How do you advise me to answer these people?' And they spoke to him, saying, 'If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.' But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him." The lack of a servant's attitude was shown by the way he answered the people. 1 Kings 12:13 says, "Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him." Then, 1 Kings 12:19 concludes, "So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day."

A leader who has a servant's heart will have the people follow him and recognize his leadership. In contrast, a leader who answers people roughly will stir up rebellion in the people he is supposed to be leading and will not be an effective leader. An effective leader, with a servant's heart, will recognize the uniqueness of each individual and equip that individual to serve the Lord according to the spiritual gifts, heart of passion, abilities, personality, and life experiences of that person. Taken together, these five things define the unique "SHAPE" of that person.

A servant's heart causes a leader to recognize the uniqueness of each individual. Instead of getting the people to carry out the agenda of the leader, a leader with a servant's heart will make it his or her goal to help every Christian develop their full potential for Christ. As we serve others by helping them develop their full potential for Christ, we are helping them learn to think and minister creatively. Christ helped a group of unknown fishermen, tax collectors, and other individuals develop their full potential.

The religious leaders suddenly realized that Christ had transformed those unknown individuals into a powerful team. They saw it first with two of the fishermen. Acts 4:13 says, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus." Then, they saw the same thing with the entire team Christ had developed. Acts 5:28-29 say, "'Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!' But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'"

However, Christ also taught those men to minister to others with that same servant's heart. As a result, many other people had their uniqueness recognized, their lives transformed, and were able to develop their full potential for Christ. Acts 9:31 says, "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied." In turn, these people did the same with others. As a result, Acts 16:5 says, "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily." Christ took a group of unknown men, served them by recognizing their uniqueness, and released their full potential for ministry.

As the followers of Christ recognized the uniqueness of each believer, they developed those people and released their full potential for ministry. Acts 17:6 says, "But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, 'These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.'" Here, we see that the Christians were accused of turning the world upside down. The Lord will allow us to become a part of this continuing process as we recognize the uniqueness of every Christian and serve them with a learner's attitude and a servant's heart.

The Lord has given us a great privilege to serve Him. He has also given us the opportunity to serve others by developing their full spiritual potential. May the Lord richly bless you as you serve other Christians and help them develop their full potential for Christ.