

## 17. Building Relationships and the Gift of Leading

In our last five topics, we have looked at ways to use the spiritual gifts of prophecy, serving, teaching, exhorting and giving to build relationships for the purpose of evangelism. Today, we will be looking at the gift of leading and some effective ways to build relationships with non-Christians if we have this gift. Those of you who have this gift will see some ways that God can use your gift to share the Gospel effectively. Those of you who do not have this gift will have a better understanding of why people who have this gift build relationships in a different way than you do.

We might use the following definition for the gift of leading: “To lead under the leadership of the Lord so that the good works of all will be profitable and fruitful - 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Titus 3:8 and 14.” The word translated “lead” actually means *to stand before or to lead*. In order to lead effectively, God has given the person with this gift the ability to see what a church or other ministry needs to do to accomplish the work of God in the future. The Christian who has the gift of leading (ruling) tends to take a long-range view and to make long range plans so that the work of God can be completed smoothly and efficiently. The person with this gift will often be given insight by the Lord which helps that person to see what a group needs to do to move forward and make progress in their ministry.

The word that is translated “to lead” or “to rule” means “*to set or place before and speaks of one who goes before, one who is set over or one who is a protector*”. As we look at the various verses that use this word in the New Testament, we see that this word is used to describe leadership in the home and in the church. As a result, the person with this gift will often be effective at leading his family or the whole church in sharing the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. The following are some of the ways that a person with this gift will build bridges to share the Gospel with non-Christians:

1. In Romans 12:8, we see that the one with the gift of leading is to lead with diligence. The word that is translated “diligence” means “*to do something with haste or earnestness*”. It has the thought of one who is striving or reaching after something. As a result, the person with the gift of leadership will build relationships and show love to non-Christians by being quick to make contacts. A person who has the gift of leading will be effective at quickly making contacts as he yields to the Holy Spirit. In Acts 8:29-30, we see an illustration of this as Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to make contact with the man from Ethiopia. Because he was being led by the Holy Spirit, we read, “So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Here, we see that Philip did three things which helped him to make contacts:

- he ran to the man (he was quick to obey the Holy Spirit)
- he listened to what the man was reading (he immediately looked for a point of contact)
- he began the conversation by asking a question

2. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, we see that Christians are to respect and esteem highly those who are leading them. As a result, the person with the gift of leading is one who can be effective at

making contacts and can also mobilize other Christians to join him in making contacts with those who are not Christians. This means that the person with the gift of leading can multiply his effectiveness by taking other Christians with him as he makes contacts so that others also develop relationships with those who are not yet Christians. Most people learn how to make contacts best by seeing how others make contacts.

3. In Titus 3:8, we see that the person with the gift of leading is to lead by good works. Here, we see that example is one of the most important things in the life of any person but especially in the life of one who has the gift of leading. Leading by good works attracts people to Christ because the non-Christian sees how the life of the Christian is changed by Christ because of his good works. Matthew 5:16 says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” As the world around us sees our good works, it will draw them to Christ and cause them to glorify God.

4. In Titus 3:14, we have a second verse that emphasizes the importance of leading by good works. That verse says, “And let our *people* also learn to maintain good works, to *meet* urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.” Here, we see that the whole church needs to learn to lead by good works. This means that those who have the gift of leading are to help the entire church become organized to reach out to those who do not yet know Christ. As a growing number of people in the church learn to lead by good works, there will be two results according to this verse:

- they will meet urgent needs in the world around them
- they will become fruitful

5. In 1 Timothy 3:3-5, 12, we see another key way that we can build relationships to share the Gospel. Verse 3 points out that a leader is to be given to hospitality. Then, in verses 4-5 and 12, we see that one of the qualifications for leaders is that they know how to lead their own family effectively. When we invite non-Christians into our home for a meal or for some other reason, the non-Christians have an opportunity to observe our family. As they observe our family, they will often ask for ideas to help them in raising their own children, especially if they have teenagers. This provides an opportunity to share that following Christ is what makes our family different. This will often open opportunities to share the Gospel.

6. In Acts 10:23-24 and Acts 11:12, we see another key way to use the gift of leading to build relationships and share the Gospel with those who are not Christians. In those verses we see that Peter took six other Christians with him when he went to share the Gospel in the house of Cornelius. Those six Christians had the opportunity to see how Peter built relationships and how he shared the Gospel with those at the house of Cornelius. We can use the gift of leading to help others learn how to share the Gospel by encouraging them to begin praying daily for specific people who do not know Christ:

- ◆ relatives - John 1:40-42
- ◆ friends - John 1:43-46
- ◆ co-workers - Matthew 9:9-10
- ◆ neighbors and other acquaintances - Mark 1:30-33

Then, we can offer to go with them to visit those relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and

other acquaintances to share the Gospel with those for whom they are praying. The fact that we come with a relative or a friend will help us to quickly build a relationship with that person. At the same time, we will also have an opportunity to show the one with us how to build relationships and share the Gospel with those who are not Christians.

The very fact that a person has the gift of leading will also give many other opportunities to lead others in the community in a variety of different situations. These also all provide opportunities to build relationships with others. Then as we pray that the Lord will open a door for our message - Colossians 4:3 and give us boldness to speak - Ephesians 6:19-20 we will see the Lord work in our lives and through our lives to share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you share the Gospel with others.