

11. Developing Leaders Who Hear the Voice of the Shepherd

In John 10:2-5, we read, “But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” As you know, John 10 is the passage that talks about the fact that Christ is the Good Shepherd. In these verses, we see three things about the sheep. We see that:

- the sheep hear His voice
- the sheep follow Him
- the sheep know His voice

In the next three topics, we will be talking about developing leaders who have these three characteristics. Today, we will focus on the fact that we want to develop leaders who hear the voice of the Good Shepherd.

An effective leader is one who hears the voice of the Shepherd. In the time of Christ, all of the shepherds kept their flocks in the same sheepfold at night. In the morning, the shepherds would all gather and the doorkeeper would open the door of the sheepfold. Each shepherd would call his own sheep. In fact, these verses tell us that the shepherd would call each sheep by name and the sheep would come to him. Since Christ is the Good Shepherd, all spiritual leaders are also sheep who need to hear the voice of the True Shepherd.

This is extremely important today, because there are many voices that are calling to spiritual leaders. One of the loud voices, that is calling to spiritual leaders today, is the voice of success. A trip to most Christian bookstores will reveal that many of the books being written today, for Christian leaders, are written to tell spiritual leaders how to be successful rather than obedient. Then, these books go on to measure success by the number of people and the size of the offerings. Usually, these books will then give the particular program of the writer to be successful by worldly standards. Many religious radio and television stations do the same.

In contrast, we see here that an effective spiritual leader will hear the voice of the Shepherd rather than the voice of success or other things. That brings us to the question, “How do we help a developing spiritual leader learn to hear the voice of the Shepherd?” Learning to hear the voice of the Shepherd involves learning to answer the following words from the Word of God: who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Saul asked the first two questions when he met Christ on the road to Damascus. In Acts 9:4-5, we read, “Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’” In these verses, we see that the very first thing Saul asked was, “Who are You, Lord?” This is the question that we need to ask the Lord daily if we truly want to hear His voice. In fact, each day, as we open our Bibles, we need to be asking this question. Then, as we study and meditate on the Word, we will be able to learn

more about who Christ really is. We want to help every developing spiritual leader learn to ask this question daily.

Second, we want developing spiritual leaders to learn to ask the second question Saul asked. Acts 9:6 says, “So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord *said* to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’” Each day, as developing spiritual leaders study the Word and meditate on it, we want to help them learn to ask this second question, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” In many passages, Christ gives us a command to obey, an attitude to develop, a sin to avoid, or some other thing the Lord wants us to do or avoid.

Third, true Bible study will cause us to ask a third question. We want to help developing spiritual leaders learn to ask this question each day as they study and meditate on the Word of God. The third question is, “Lord, where do You want me to obey this command?” For example, Mark 16:15 says, “And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.’” Notice that this command says nothing about inviting people to church. Instead, it commands us to go to people, wherever they are, and present the Gospel to them. The command is to go to them, not expect them to come to us. That also means that we need to teach each Christian how to share the Gospel.

Fourth, true Bible study will cause us to ask a fourth question, “Lord, when do You want me to obey this command, develop this attitude, or carry out these instructions?” Many of the things the Lord commands us to do also tell us when we are supposed to start doing them. In a large number of these things, we are to start doing them immediately and continue doing them until the Lord comes. For example, Ephesians 6:18-20 says, “...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” In these verses, we see that we are to pray at all times. We certainly want to help developing spiritual leaders learn to be praying at all times.

Fifth, true Bible study will also cause us to ask a fifth question, “Lord, why do You want me to do this?” In the verses given in the previous paragraph, we see why we are to pray at all times. We are to pray at all times for one another and for ourselves. We are to pray that we will be able to share the Gospel with boldness, not fear. We are to pray, because we have been appointed as ambassadors for Christ – 2 Corinthians 5:20. One of the things we want developing spiritual leaders to understand clearly is why they do what they do. Most people just react to the circumstances around them. As Christians, especially as Christian leaders, we need to have a plan of action for our lives that has come from the Word of God, so, we know why we are doing what we are doing.

Sixth, true Bible study will also cause us to ask a sixth question, “Lord, how do You want me to do the things that I do?” Proverbs 16:25 says, “There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death.” This verse, in Proverbs, shows why it is so important to ask the Lord

how He wants us to do what we do. There is a natural way to do things, and there is a supernatural way to do things. The two ways are usually opposite. Many Christian books focus on the natural way to do things instead of the Biblical way to do things. This is why it is so important to help the developing spiritual leader to begin to learn to think Biblically, rather than naturally. Christ teaches us both what to do and also how to do it.

As we think about hearing the voice of the Shepherd, we see that He speaks to us through His Word. Let's take just one small group of verses and apply these six questions to see how we hear the voice of the Shepherd. In Matthew 28:18-20, we read, "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." Let's see if we are hearing what the Shepherd is saying to us in these verses as we apply the six questions.

Question 1 – Lord, who are You?

Christ is the One who has all authority in heaven and on earth. If we hear His voice, we will then submit to His authority and do what He tells us to do.

Question 2 – Lord, what do You want me to do?

Christ gives us one command in these verses, Make Disciples!

Question 3 - Lord, where do You want me to Make Disciples?

Christ tells us that He wants us to Make Disciples among all the nations (among every ethnic group).

Question 4 – Lord, when do You want me to Make Disciples?

Christ tells us He wants us to Make Disciples from now until the end of the age.

Question 5 – Lord, why do You want me to Make Disciples?

Christ tells us He wants us to Make Disciples until the end of the age. That means that we must develop reproducing Christians, as stated in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (Paul, Timothy, faithful men, others also). We want to help every developing spiritual leader develop an understanding of how to develop the third and fourth generation (indirect leadership). Only by developing reproducing Christians will this continue to happen until the end of the age.

Question 6 – Lord, how do You want me to Make Disciples?

Christ tells us how He wants us to Make Disciples. He gives us three participles which tell us how to carry out the command to Make Disciples. Those participles are: going, baptizing, teaching. As we are going, we are to be sharing the Gospel and leading to Christ those the Father is drawing. When people repent and place their faith in Christ, we are to help them identify themselves as Christians by baptizing them. (There are eight kinds of baptism in the New Testament and they

all have one thing in common – identification.) Then, we are to teach and show them how to obey all Christ has commanded. Here, we see that we want to help developing spiritual leaders realize that our command to Make Disciples is to take people from the point of initial contact, as non-Christians, to the point where they have become healthy reproducing Christians who are taking others through the same process.

Some Christians never read their Bibles. Many Christians read their Bibles, but never hear the voice of the Shepherd. We want to help Christians learn to study, memorize and meditate on the Word of God so that they learn to really hear the voice of the Shepherd. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing spiritual leaders learn to hear the voice of the Shepherd.