

## 1. The Leader Who Serves

In Mark 10:42-45, we see that Christ taught that spiritual leadership is just the opposite of worldly leadership. Those verses tell us, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’”

In these verses, we see that a spiritual leader is very different from a worldly leader. A worldly leader likes to be the master over others. A worldly leader likes to exercise his authority and power. Today, many Christian leaders have chosen to lead in a worldly way because they like to exercise authority and power over others. However, Christ says that spiritual leadership is to be just the opposite. Instead, spiritual leadership is to be exercised by service.

Spiritual leadership is serving others and helping them grow to spiritual maturity so that they become reproductive Christians. Peter shared this same thought in 1 Peter 5:1-3, when he wrote, “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”

We learn several things from these verses written by Peter. From these verses, we see the following important lessons:

- Peter provides an example of a leader who serves by choosing to exhort or encourage rather than command
- Peter views himself as a fellow elder, not the chief elder
- Peter reminds us that the leader is a shepherd of the flock of God which points out that the flock belongs to God rather than any man
- Peter reminds us that shepherds are to serve as overseers of the flock – to look after and care for the flock just as a shepherd cares for his sheep
- Peter reminds us that leaders are to serve willingly, not because they are forced to lead
- Peter reminds us that leaders are to lead eagerly, not for self-gain
- Peter reminds us that leaders are not to try and exercise power over others
- Peter reminds us that leaders are to lead by example

Paul explains how we lead by serving in Ephesians 4:11-13, where we read: “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 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.” In these verses, we see a variety of leaders mentioned.

Ephesians 2:19-20 explains about the first two types of leaders mentioned. Those verses tell us, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*.” In these verses, we see the apostles and prophets provided the foundation for the church with Christ as the chief cornerstone. The reason why these two are the foundation is due to the fact that:

- The apostles gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ – Acts 1:21-22
- The prophets gave us the written Word of God – 2 Peter 1:19-21

Today, we no longer have any eyewitnesses of the resurrection and we have no one giving us new revelation that has the authority of the Word of God. That is why those two ministries are our foundation that was laid in the first century.

However, Ephesians 4:11 points out that we do have evangelists, pastors and teachers. It is important to see why we have these leaders in order to understand how a spiritual leader leads by serving. Ephesians 4:12 says that Christ has given us people with these gifts, “...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...” There is no gift of evangelism. Instead, God has given us evangelists to equip every saint and show us how to share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. God has given us pastors to equip all the saints and show us how to minister to one another. God has given us teachers to equip all the saints to teach the Word of God and show us how to obey the Word in our daily lives.

Interestingly enough, Christ did not give any Christian all of these gifts. Instead, Christ gave leaders only one of these gifts. Paul is never called a pastor-teacher and Philip is never called an evangelist-pastor. When Paul and Barnabas organized the churches in Galatia, they did not appoint a senior pastor for each church. Instead, Acts 14:23 tells us, “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” In this verse, we notice several things:

- ◆ The leaders were a part of each local group and did not come from another place
- ◆ The leaders were not even given a particular title such as evangelist, pastor or teacher
- ◆ The leaders were selected with prayer and fasting
- ◆ The leaders were entrusted to the Lord for guidance
- ◆ The leaders were able to carry on the leadership of each church because they had believed in the Lord

One of the things we notice about these leaders is that they felt that their leadership involved equipping every saint for the work of the ministry. By the time Paul returned to this area a few years later, Acts 16:5 tells us, “So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.” In Acts 2:47, the number of people being added to the church was increasing daily. However, by Acts 16:5, we see that the number of churches was increasing daily. This was happening in Galatia, even though Paul and Barnabas had not been in the area during the intervening time.

From this we see that the leaders of every local church took seriously their responsibility to equip every saint for the work of the ministry. Within the leadership team of each local church:

1. The evangelists were equipping the saints for the work of evangelism by showing them how to share the Gospel.
2. The pastors were equipping the saints by showing them how to minister effectively to one another.
3. The teachers were equipping the saints to teach the Word of God and showing them how to obey it in their daily lives.

We will see in the following topics how these three groups of leaders equipped the saints in the early churches for these various ministries. At this point, we just want to summarize what happens when the leaders take their responsibility to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Ephesians 4:12-13 tell us God gave us our 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.” When spiritual leaders are faithful in equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, the results are:

The body of Christ is being built up

The body of Christ develops unity of the faith

The body of Christ develops unity in their knowledge of Christ

The body of Christ is brought to spiritual maturity

The body of Christ is becoming more like Christ

Most of you who are reading these topics are already spiritual leaders in your churches. You might want to ask yourself, the following questions, “In what way has the Lord gifted me to serve other Christians by equipping them for the work of the ministry?” “Am I being obedient by equipping Christians to do the work of the ministry?” May the Lord richly bless you as you equip the saints for the work of the ministry.