

1. Developing the Attitudes of a Godly Shepherd

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics. This series of topics will be titled, Developing Leaders Who Are Becoming Like Their Shepherd. Matthew 13:52 gives us a definition of a disciple. In that verse, we see that everyone who has become a disciple has become the head of a spiritual household. That means that every disciple has a spiritual family of one or more people he or she is leading. We want to help every developing leader learn to follow the example of Christ as he or she leads that spiritual household.

In John 10:11, Christ said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” In the coming topics, we will see that developing leaders, who are becoming godly leaders, will also be willing to give their lives for the sake of those they are leading. As soon as a person becomes a new Christian, that person needs someone to lead him and help him in his spiritual growth. A developing leader will only be effective in helping that new Christian grow if he or she has the attitude of a godly shepherd.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy gave us an example of some of the attitudes that are needed to help a new Christian begin to grow. These attitudes are demonstrated so well in 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12. In those verses, we see the attitudes that these men demonstrated as they cared for new Christians, and helped them in their spiritual growth.

1 Thessalonians 2:7 says, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.” The first attitude that helps developing leaders become more like their shepherd is an attitude of gentleness. New Christians are just like newborn babies. If they are going to grow into healthy Christians, they need someone who has an attitude of gentleness to lead them. If they do not have one or more Christians who become spiritual parents to them, they will have a difficult time growing, and we will not see Christ formed in their lives.

Paul demonstrated a gentle attitude when he said, in Galatians 4:19, “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.” Here, we see that an attitude of gentleness is required in order for the new Christian to grow and have Christ formed in their lives. A developing leader helps a new Christian learn to develop Christ in his life by ministering to that person with a spirit of gentleness.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 says, “So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.” The second attitude that helps developing leaders become more like their shepherd is an attitude of great love. Paul, Silas, and Timothy said that they shared their own lives with these new Christians. They said that these new Christians had become very dear to them. Of the sixty-two times this word is used, it is translated “beloved”, “dearly beloved”, or “well-beloved” fifty-nine times. If developing leaders are going to become godly leaders, they have to learn to love people, especially those who are new Christians. This requires accepting them as they are, even though there may be a lot of things that will need to change as Christ is developed in them.

1 Thessalonians 2:9 says, “For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.” The third attitude that helps developing leaders become more like their shepherd is an attitude of sacrifice. Paul, Silas, and Timothy said that they worked night and day to help these new Christians in their growth. They also said that they did not want to be a burden to the new Christians. Instead, they chose to make their lives available to the new Christians. New Christians do not always choose ideal times to need help. Sometimes, when they are going through difficult times, they need help and encouragement in the middle of the night, and we may have to sacrifice a few hours of sleep in order to minister to them.

1 Thessalonians 2:10 says, “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe.” The fourth attitude that helps developing leaders become more like their shepherd is an attitude of willingness to lead new Christians by example, not just words. New Christians do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. They will only learn to become devout or holy as Christ is being formed in them, if they have an example of what it means to live a holy or devout life. Their lives will become just or righteous only as they have an example of a just life. Their lives will only become blameless as they have an example of someone who provides an example of a godly life.

In order to be an example to a new Christian, the developing leader has to choose to spend time with the new Christian in a variety of different situations. Aquila and Priscilla give us an example of how to help a person grow spiritually by their example with Apollos. Acts 18:26 says, “So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” We see that they ministered in two different ways to help Apollos in his spiritual growth. They spent time with him so he could see their example. They also explained the way of God to him more accurately so that he became able to explain the Word of God clearly to others.

1 Thessalonians 2:11 says, “As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children.” The fifth attitude that helps developing leaders become more like their shepherd is an attitude of a spiritual parent. 1 Corinthians 4:15-16 says, “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.” An instructor was a slave who raised a child by severe discipline and strict rules. A spiritual parent chooses to lead by love, and he or she provides an example to imitate.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy said that a spiritual father “exhorts” his children. This word is used one hundred and nine times in the New Testament and is translated by a variety of words. It means *to encourage or strengthen or to come to the side of another person to help them*. A spiritual father also comforts his children. This involves speaking words that may admonish or else console a person. A spiritual father also charges his spiritual children. This word is usually translated by the words “to testify” or to “bear witness.” It speaks of one who gives a good report about another. As we look at these various thoughts, we see that one who has the attitudes of a spiritual parent takes the time to talk with a person and walk beside them as that person goes through the trials

they face in life.

1 Thessalonians 2:12 says, “That you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” The sixth attitude that helps developing leaders become more like their shepherd is an attitude of helping a person grow to maturity. A spiritual parent has a goal of what he wants to help each person become. Here, we see that the goal is to help the person develop a walk that is worthy of God. This is the attitude that means that we want to see the life of Christ fully formed in the life of each growing Christian, so that the person comes to spiritual maturity.

This passage gives us six key attitudes that we are working to help a developing spiritual leader develop in his or her life. If a developing leader develops these six attitudes, that person will become a shepherd that helps others mature. He or she will also lead them and help the life of Christ to be formed in them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders develop the attitudes of a godly shepherd in their lives.