

4. Jesus Brought Again Those Who Were Driven Away

In Ezekiel 34:16, we read about one of the ministries Christ would have to the nation of Israel. That verse says, “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.” In this verse, we see that Christ said He would bring back those who were driven away. As servants of Christ, we need to follow the example of Christ, whether we are leading a Bible study, a Sunday school class, or an entire church. This is also a key ministry we need to help every developing leader learn to do if he or she is going to become an effective group leader.

As we look at the Gospels, we see that there were several groups the Jewish religious leaders had driven away from established religion by their attitudes. Of course, we know that these religious leaders were not worshiping God, but had made their own works the basis of their religion. Christ continually reached out to the tax collectors and sinners, because they felt totally rejected by the Jewish religious leaders. In the same way, we need to continually reach out to those who have been rejected by any organized religion.

However, our focus in this topic will be on the way that Christ reached out to those who had been driven away by His own disciples. Today, we have many Christians who have been greatly hurt by other Christians. Many of these Christians are very faithful in their personal prayer and Bible study. They just find it difficult to get together with other Christians, because of the hurt they have experienced. They need to have the body minister to them, and they need the opportunity to minister to others in the body. Since they may be too hurt to take the initiative to become active in the body again, leaders, and other Christians, need to reach out to them and help them become active in a local church again. We will look at different groups the disciples ignored or drove away and see how Christ reached out to them.

In Mark 10:13-16, we read, “Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.” Here, we see that the disciples rejected two groups. The disciples rejected the parents of young children. They also rejected the young children. Unless Christ had taken action, both groups would have felt rejected by Christ.

Today, many parents with young children also feel that Christ rejects them, because they have been exposed to churches where they felt their children were rejected. Sometimes, churches are more concerned about protecting their property than they are about ministering to people. The word that is translated “rebuke” can mean *to put such value on a relationship that it causes a person to speak to another in love about sin in that person’s life that needs to be corrected*. However, it usually means *to not put any value on something or someone so that it causes a person to judge or speak sharply*. In this verse, the disciples were telling the parents that Jesus had more important things to do than to pray for their children.

Growing Christian Leaders Series – Developing Leaders Who Are Becoming Like Their Shepherd 4. “Jesus Brought Again Those Who Were Driven Away”

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We see that Christ did three things in these verses. First, Christ corrected His disciples. We see that Christ was very displeased by the actions of His disciples. As a result, Christ took the opportunity to teach His disciples about the importance of children. Jesus first let the disciples know that they were not to hinder the parents or the children by their actions. They were to do nothing that would prevent them from coming to Christ. Then, Christ showed the disciples, by His words and actions, what they were to do instead.

The second thing Christ did was to take the children up in His arms and hold them. Here, He was showing the disciples, by His example, the importance of publicly holding the children so that all who were around could see that children were important to Him. While holding them in His arms, Christ also blessed the children. Third, both the disciples and parents heard the words of Christ as He blessed the children. Those families knew that Christ accepted them and their children. In this case, Christ brought back those who were being driven away before they even left.

Another group of people were those who had been driven away because of their physical disabilities. Mark 10:46-52 says, “Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then, they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.’ And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ The blind man said to Him, ‘Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.”

In these verses, we see that the multitude, which included the disciples, did not see either the physical or spiritual needs of Bartimaeus. In fact, we read that many people warned him to be quiet. He had a need, and the only one who really listened to him was Christ. Notice how Christ reached out to this man the people were trying to drive away from Him. We see that Christ did several things to bring back one who was being driven away:

- ◆ Christ heard him and listened.
- ◆ Christ called him and talked to him personally.
- ◆ Christ asked him to explain his need.
- ◆ Christ listened carefully as the man talked about his need.
- ◆ Christ focused on his spiritual life, as well as his physical need.
- ◆ Christ met both the physical and spiritual need.
- ◆ Christ helped him get past the rejection of the people. The result was that he followed Christ.

The disciples showed a third attitude that can cause people to be driven away in John 4. In John 4:27, we read, “And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, ‘What do You seek?’ or, ‘Why are You talking with her?’” Christ had reached out to a woman of another culture who had a bad past. The disciples were amazed that

Christ would even talk to the woman. This showed their attitude toward anyone of another culture or ethnic group. Many people are driven away from a church, because people ignore them or will not talk to them. They feel rejected and leave the church.

Christ showed a totally different attitude. We want to help developing leaders learn to develop the attitude of Christ, instead of the attitude of the disciples. Christ chose to start the conversation with the woman. Christ chose to accept her initial rejection and continued to talk with her. Christ reached out to meet her spiritual needs. Christ helped her to understand the meaning of true worship. Christ encouraged her so that her life was changed. Christ continued to minister to her, and through her, reached out to the entire town.

The disciples had not learned the lesson that they needed to reach out to people of other cultures, so, Christ had to repeat the lesson sometime later. Again, we see an attitude in the disciples that will drive people away. Matthew 15:23 says, “But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she cries out after us.’” Today, many people are driven away because people want them to leave, and drive them away. This was the attitude of the disciples toward this woman.

Mark 7:26 tells us a little more about this woman, “The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.” The woman was from a different culture and she had a demon-possessed daughter. The disciples just wanted her to leave and stop bothering them. In contrast, Christ saw her as a woman of great faith, and He ministered to her and her daughter. While the disciples had felt it was all right to just send her away, and were not concerned about her spiritual needs, Christ brought this woman into an eternal relationship with Him by His attitude.

As we help developing leaders learn to become more like their Shepherd, one of the things we want to do is teach them, by our words, and show them, by our example, the importance of bringing back those who have been driven away. That is a key part of the ministry of any shepherd. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders become more like our Shepherd.