

9. Jesus Gently Led Those Who Were with Young

In Isaiah 40:11, we read, “He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.” The last phrase of this verse tells us that one of the ministries Christ would have to the nation of Israel was gently leading those who were with young. In the same way, developing spiritual leaders need to learn how to gently lead those who are with young. That will be our focus in this topic.

Jacob explained the meaning of this phrase as it related to the care of physical sheep in Genesis 33:13. “But Jacob said to him, ‘My lord knows that the children are weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing are with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die.’” In this verse, Jacob made it clear that men could drive sheep and make them hurry, even though some of the sheep were nursing young lambs. However, the consequence would be that the flock would die. In contrast, we see that Christ would lead gently rather than drive His flock.

Isaiah explained the meaning of this phrase as it related to the lack of someone to care for the nation of Israel. Isaiah 51:18 says, “There is no one to guide her among all the sons she has brought forth; Nor is there any who takes her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up.” In this verse, we see that there was no one to take the nation of Israel by the hand and gently lead and guide the nation. Christ not only promised to gently lead the nation of Israel, Christ also showed us, by His example, how to gently lead those who are helping new Christians begin their spiritual growth. Since this is a key ministry for all spiritual leaders, whether they lead a Bible study, a Sunday school class, or a church, we need to help all developing leaders learn to gently lead those who are with young.

The word translated “gently lead” means *to lead with care, to give rest, to guide to a watering place, to refresh with water or food or to lead by stages where the shepherd only leads them a short distance each day*. David also used this word twice in the book of Psalms. Psalm 23:2 says, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.” In this verse, we see that Christ leads to the still waters. In Psalm 31:3, David wrote, “For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me.” In this verse, we see that Christ leads and guides.

In Mark 6, Christ sent out the twelve apostles, for their first ministry trip on their own, to share the Gospel. In Mark 6:30-31, we read how Christ ministered to them when they returned. Those verses say, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.” The twelve had just had their first ministry experience where they were sent out for a period of time in teams of two. Notice how Christ ministered to these who were just beginning to learn to minister.

First, Christ gave them the opportunity to tell what they had done and what they had taught. Then, Christ gave an example of how to gently lead those who are with young. Christ invited them to

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go aside with Him into a deserted place and rest for a while. In these verses, we see that Christ listened while the disciples talked. They were so excited about what they had done and taught that they had to tell Christ all that they had done and the things that they had taught. We talked about this part of the ministry in another topic.

Here, we want to see what Christ did after they had finished telling Christ what they had said and done. Christ said it was time to take a break and go to a deserted place so they could spend time just relaxing and enjoying fellowship together. A developing leader is very excited about the opportunities he has to serve the Lord, but the pressures of ministry can also cause developing leaders to get tired and discouraged easily. 2 Corinthians 4:16 says, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.” As a wise shepherd, Christ knew the importance of helping the disciples learn to relax and take time to renew the inner man.

Mark 6:31 said that there were so many coming and going that Jesus and the disciples did not even have time to eat. Busyness and effectiveness are not the same thing. In fact, they are often opposites. If developing leaders do not learn the importance of renewing their inner man as they grow and mature, they may become very busy leaders who do everything in their own strength. Christ took time, after the very first ministry trip of the disciples, to help them learn to renew their inner man.

In addition to providing a time to rest and renew their inner man, this time alone, with no crowds around, also gave them time to discuss some of the things that had happened as they ministered in more detail. Developing leaders learn how to best apply the Scripture to what has happened in their ministries as they take time to discuss what happened and learn to apply Biblical principles to the various situations they faced. This discussion helps them learn to strengthen the things they are doing right and correct the things they are doing wrong.

This is illustrated so well by what happened when Christ sent out the seventy to minister and they gave their report after they returned. Luke 10:17-20 says, “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’”

The seventy gave their report. They were excited to see that Christ had even given them authority to minister to those who were demon possessed. Christ began His answer by telling them that Satan was falling as a defeated enemy. Christ went on to encourage them and let them know that He would continue to work through their lives as they served Christ. Then, Christ gently corrected the seventy. He helped them to realize that the most important thing was not their position in heaven, not their power on earth. He said that the thing that should really cause them to rejoice was the fact that their names were written in heaven.

Christ continued to gently lead His disciples right up to the time He returned to heaven. Forty days after the resurrection, the disciples asked Christ a question that was very important to them. Acts 1:6 says, “Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, ‘Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’” The disciples were very concerned about the coming of the kingdom. In this case, Christ gently led them to refocus their priorities. It was not the plan of Christ for the disciples to sit and wait for the kingdom to come. As a result, Christ had to gently lead them to the key priority that was going to guide the rest of their lives.

In Acts 1:7 we read, “And He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.’” He gently led them, first by helping them realize that their first priority was not to sit and wait for the kingdom. He said that the times and the seasons were under the authority of the Father. They could do nothing about the times and seasons. Instead, they were to place their focus on what they were to do until the Father chose to restore the kingdom.

Christ had just told them, in Acts 1:4, “... not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me.’” He had told them that their immediate priority was to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promised Holy Spirit. Their lives would be powerless if they tried to do things in their own strength. Here, we see that Christ was gently leading them one more time to understand that they needed to learn to yield to the Holy Spirit and allow His power to work and through their lives.

Based on the fact that they were to wait for the Holy Spirit to give them power to minister, Christ then gave them their priority for the rest of their ministry once they received the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:8 says, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Their first priority, for the rest of their lives, was to be witnesses to Christ. That witness was to be carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit. Having just spoken His last words to the disciples, Acts 1:9 says, “...while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” Christ gently led His disciples right up to the moment He returned to heaven.

Christ has given us a great privilege to help developing leaders learn to follow the example of Christ and learn to gently lead those who are with young. May the Lord richly bless you as you help equip developing leaders by gently leading them and showing them what to do by your example.