

Developing Leaders Who Are Becoming Like Their Shepherd

Growing Christian Leaders Series
Manual 12

by
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The “Growing Christian Leaders Series” is the result of weekly topics which were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

Mark 10:43-45 says, “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, Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God-given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world, people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Success produces rewards until we die, but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, “So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.’” 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Growing Christian Leaders Series is designed to make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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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 that 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 that 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 give 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. They need someone who has an attitude of gentleness to lead them if they are going to grow into healthy Christians. 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, they have to learn to love people and especially love 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 and 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 that 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 109 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 the person as that person goes through the trials that 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.

Jesus Fed His Sheep Like a Shepherd

In Ezekiel 34:4, we have a passage that spoke of the failure of the shepherds of Israel. That verse says, “The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.” Then Ezekiel shared several things that Christ would do when He came. Ezekiel 34:15-16 says, “I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God. 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.”

Then in Luke 4:18-19, Christ quoted Isaiah 61:1-2a to tell some of the other things that He would do as a part of His ministry as a Shepherd. Luke 4:18-19 says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

We saw how Christ did some of these things as our Savior. Over the next several topics, we will share some of these things that Christ did as our Shepherd. These are things that we want to help all developing spiritual leaders learn to do as they lead and shepherd those who are new and growing Christians. We will study how Christ did these things and learn what principles He taught and how to apply them first to our own lives and then help developing leaders learn to apply them in their ministries.

Today, we will see how Christ fed His flock like a Shepherd. In Mark 3:14, we read, “Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” This group of twelve men became the flock that Christ would lead for the rest of His earthly ministry. Then after His return to heaven, they became shepherds to others who in turn became shepherds to still others. Today, as we help developing leaders learn to become shepherds of a part of Christ’s flock we are continuing the process. The part of the flock that they feed may be a home Bible study, a Sunday school class, a one-to-one Bible study or some other group that they lead.

Luke 8:9-11 gives us an example of how Christ fed the twelve. Those verses say, “Then His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘What does this parable mean?’ And He said, ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that ‘Seeing they may not see, And hearing they may not understand.’ ‘Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.’” Here, we see that Christ took the time to explain the parables to the twelve so that they were being fed spiritually. He taught the crowds but He explained His teachings to the twelve so that they would gain understanding and know how to apply the Word of God to their lives.

Christ focused on spiritually feeding His disciples, even when there was a much larger crowd of people present. Luke 6:13, 17, and 20 illustrate this, “And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles...And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases... Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: “‘Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God.’” We see in this case, there was a large crowd but Jesus made the disciples His focus and taught them while the others listened.

Jesus also fed the twelve by teaching them who He was and the purpose why He came. Luke 9:18-22 says, “And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked

them, saying, ‘Who do the crowds say that I am?’ So they answered and said, ‘John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered and said, ‘The Christ of God.’ And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, ‘The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.’” Christ fed His flock of disciples by helping them grow to understand who He was. Then He fed His flock of disciples by telling them what He came to do.

Jesus fed His disciples and taught them the true meaning of greatness. Luke 9:46-48 says, “Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.’” Here, we see that Christ was feeding them to help them develop proper attitudes for spiritual servant leadership.

Jesus also fed His disciples by teaching them how to pray. Luke 11:1-4 says, “Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.’ So He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.’” Christ fed the disciples and taught them to pray, so that they would know how to pray when He returned to heaven.

As Christ got closer to the end of His earthly ministry, He spent even more time feeding the twelve. Sometimes He even fed them in smaller groups. In Mark 13, we see that Christ fed a smaller group and helped them to understand a summary of future events. Mark 13:3-4 say, “Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?’” Here, we see that Jesus was feeding just four of the twelve who wanted to get their questions about the future answered.

Of course, we have an extended passage where Christ fed His disciples the night before He was crucified. That spiritual meal is given to us in John chapters thirteen through sixteen. That night Christ talked with them and answered their questions as they ate the Last Supper and then walked to the Garden of Gethsemane. The things that He fed them that night to develop their spiritual understanding would continue to help them in the months and years to come.

However, Christ did not stop feeding His disciples when He died. We also read that He fed His disciples and gave them spiritual food to help them grow and understand after His resurrection. Luke 24:25-27 gives us a summary of how He fed two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus. “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Later that same night, Christ fed the eleven as they were gathered in the upper room. Luke 24:44-45 says, “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Here, we see that His feeding of the disciples was not just to give them knowledge. Instead the focus on His feeding of the disciples was to also give them understanding.

However, the goal of Christ in teaching His flock was not just to give them knowledge and understanding. Luke 24:46-48 shows that Christ fed His flock so that they could apply what they had learned and feed others as they had been fed. Those verses say, “Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.’”

Christ did one more thing in addition to feeding His flock, helping them to understand, and helping them to apply what they had understood to their lives and their ministry. Christ also told them that He would give them the power to feed others. Luke 24:49 says, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” Here, we see a very key lesson that all developing spiritual leaders need to learn. They do not need to depend on themselves to feed the flock. Instead, they have been given the power of the Holy Spirit to teach them and guide them as they feed others.

Later, before Christ returned to heaven, He emphasized one more time the importance of the disciples feeding His flock. In John 21:15-17, Christ talked with Peter as the others listened, “So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs.’ He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.’ He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep.’ He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’” Christ wanted the disciples to know that a primary ministry of every spiritual leader is to feed His sheep.

The Lord has given us a great privilege to help developing leaders learn to become more effective in their ministry. One of the key things that we want to help them learn to do, is to follow the example and command of Christ to feed His sheep. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to feed the Lord’s sheep.

Jesus Caused His Sheep to Lie Down in a Good Fold

In Ezekiel 34:14-15, we read, “I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God.” In these verses, we see that one of the ministries that was predicted of Christ was that He would cause His sheep to lie down in a good fold. This is one of the areas where we want to help developing leaders learn to follow the example of Christ as we help them develop.

In the context of Ezekiel 34, we see that Christ has been talking about the unfaithful shepherds of Israel. In the same way, a developing spiritual leader who does not learn to do the things that Christ did may be unfaithful in leading others because of ignorance of what Christ promises to do as He leads His sheep. The things that Christ will do as He leads the people of Israel are also the things He wants Christian leaders to do as they lead other Christians.

Here, we see that Jesus wants those who follow Him to lie down in a good fold. To lie down, speaks of “stretching out and getting comfortable.” A good fold is one that is good and beneficial to the flock. From this, we see that Jesus wants those who follow Him to be comfortable in a fold (church, Bible study or any other group of Christians) that is good and beneficial for all of the Christians that are a part of that flock. It is the responsibility of the leaders and developing leaders to create the kind of a fold where the Christians will experience peace and joy. Probably the greatest hindrance to the flock feeling comfortable is internal conflict.

First, there is conflict between those who are developing as leaders. Jesus had to deal with this form of conflict several times with His disciples. In Mark 9:33-34, we read, “Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, ‘What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?’ But, they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.” Here, we see that these future leaders were experiencing internal conflict.

In response to this internal conflict in Luke 9:47-48 we read, “And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.’” The word that is translated “receive” means “*to accept or to receive into one’s family*.” Here, Christ shows that a developing leader must learn to take his eyes off himself and his desires and instead reach out to accept and make the physical and spiritual young at home in the family of Christ.

Jesus had to deal with this same attitude again in Mark 10:35-45. In Mark 10:35-37 we read, “Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.’ And He said to them, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ They said to Him, ‘Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.’” We see the response of the other disciples in Mark 10:41, “And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John.” In these verses, the disciples were focused again on their own desire for power and position and it was again causing internal conflict.

Christ responded to this request in Mark 10:42-45. In those verses we read, “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.” Here, Christ told these developing leaders that if they wanted to become great, they had to learn how to serve others. In fact, Christ said that spiritual leadership meant that a person chose to become the bondservant of all. This is exactly the opposite of worldly leadership. Only as they became the bondservants to all in the body that they were leading would they help those people to feel comfortable in that part of the body of Christ.

The disciples had not yet learned to apply what it meant to be servants to one another in the family of Christ even as the time of His death approached. This was demonstrated very clearly the night before Christ was crucified. Luke 22:24 says, “Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.” Here, we see that the disciples were more concerned about their own personal positions than they were about applying the principles that Jesus had taught about making others in the family of Christ comfortable.

One of the things that a person did in that culture to make a person feel comfortable and at home was to wash his feet. However, the disciples had not yet learned to make one another comfortable in the family of Christ. John 13:2 says, “And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him.” In this verse, we see that supper was already over and no one had volunteered to wash the feet of the other disciples. No one applied the principle that Christ had been teaching about making others comfortable by serving one another.

As we know, Christ then washed the feet of the disciples. Then in John 13:16-17 Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” Christ told the disciples that it does no good to know Biblical principles unless we apply those principles by focusing on the needs of others instead of our own needs.

Second, we also need to be concerned to help one another lie in a good fold in the family of Christ by resolving conflicts between various members in the body of Christ before those conflicts bring envying, strife and divisions. Jesus taught these developing leaders that principle in Luke 17:3-6. In Luke 17:3-4 Christ said, “Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.” A developing Christian leader needs to learn how to handle conflict between himself and another Christian.

Christ gave four steps to resolve a problem between two Christians when the other person has sinned against you:

- Go to that person – Matthew 18:15-16 adds: go to that person alone and if the person refuses to hear you then go to that person with one or two others.
- Rebuke that person in love.
- Give that person an opportunity to repent.
- Forgive that person.

When conflicts are resolved between two Christians, then both Christians can feel comfortable when they are together in the family of Christ. However, if conflicts are not resolved both will feel uncomfortable. A godly leader takes the first step to resolve the problem, rather than waiting for someone else to take the first step.

Third, we help other Christians lie down in a good fold and feel comfortable in the family of Christ as we help them learn to love and accept one another. Christ said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Here, we see that after giving the disciples the example of serving one another, Jesus went on to give them this new commandment that summarizes the way that Christians will make one another comfortable in the family of Christ. These developing leaders were told to love one another in the

same way that they had seen Christ love them for the previous three years.

However, Christ knew that the disciples had to hear this new commandment more than once that night. Later that evening they were walking toward the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus said in John 15:12-14, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." Christ reminded these developing leaders that it was not just a suggestion for them to love one another. Instead, it was a commandment for them to love one another as He had loved them if they were going to be effective spiritual leaders. That would help them show all others who would follow how to help the sheep of Christ lie in a good fold.

It is a tremendous privilege to help developing leaders learn how to follow the example of Christ and help His sheep to lie in a good fold. This will only happen as a developing leader learns that he must have a learner's attitude and a servant's heart that causes him to love other Christians as Christ loves them. May the Lord richly bless you as you as you help developing leaders learn to serve Christ by helping His sheep to lie in a good fold.

Jesus Brought Again Those who were Driven Away

In Ezekiel 34:16, we read about one of the ministries that 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, this is one of the key areas where 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, that 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 that 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 be continually reaching out to those who have been rejected by any organized religion.

However, our focus in this topic will focus 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 that 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 that 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 would have 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 that they felt rejected their children. 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.

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 his actions what they were to do instead.

The second thing, that 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 that 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 that were being driven away before they even left.

Another group of people is those who have 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 that 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 Christ. 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 he 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 with the result 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 and 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 continue to talk with her. Christ reached out to her 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 and 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, so 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. By His attitude, Christ brought this woman into an eternal relationship with Him while the disciples had felt it was all right to just send her away and not be concerned about her spiritual needs.

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 to become more like our Shepherd.

5.

Jesus Bound Up the Broken

In Ezekiel 34:16 we read, “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 one of the ministries of Christ to the nation of Israel would be to bind up the broken. The word that is translated “*broken*” means “to break, to crush or to shatter.” This is an important ministry for every spiritual leader whether that person is leading a Bible study, a Sunday School class or an entire church.

Today, we have many Christians whose lives have been broken and crushed. Proverbs 15:13, Proverbs 17:22 and Proverbs 18:14 talk about those whose spirits have been broken or smitten. When people have their spirits broken, it causes them to lose hope. Scripture gives a variety of reasons why the human spirit may be smitten or broken. Some of the many things that can break the spirit include:

- ◆ Our own sin - Genesis 3:7-13
- ◆ Sins of others - Genesis 3:16-19
- ◆ Death - 1 Corinthians 15:55-56; John 11:21
- ◆ Disabilities – John 5:1-7, 9:2-3
- ◆ Sorrow of heart - Proverbs 15:13
- ◆ Doing things in our own strength - Romans 7:14-25
- ◆ Conflicts with others - 1 Corinthians 3:1-3
- ◆ Deception by false teachers - Ephesians 4:14
- ◆ Our own dullness of hearing - Hebrews 5:11-14
- ◆ Lack of growth to spiritual maturity - 1 Corinthians 13:11

As we study the ministry of Christ, we see that He took time to bind up the broken many times. Many times, we see that Christ extended forgiveness to those who were broken by their own sin. In Mark 2:1-12, four men brought their paralyzed friend to Christ. Mark 2:5 says, “When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you.’” Christians are often smitten by their own sin. James 5:16 tells us how we can bring spiritual healing to such Christians. That verse says, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Here, we see that we are to pray with them and help them come to the point where they are healed of their guilt.

The sins of others often break the spirits of people and cause them to lose hope. In John 9, Christ healed a man that was born blind. However, just a short time later he was kicked out of the synagogue for speaking about Christ. John 9:34-35 tells us, “They answered and said to him, ‘You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?’ And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, ‘Do you believe in the Son of God?’” First, this man was accused of sin and second he was expelled from the synagogue. Christ ministered to him by coming to him when the religious leaders had rejected him. We also minister to others by going to those people when others have rejected them.

Christ also ministered to others when their spirits were broken by the death of relatives. In John 11, we read about the death of Lazarus. Christ ministered to his sisters in several ways before He raised Lazarus from the dead:

- He ministered to them by going to visit them – John 11:17
- He ministered to them by listening to them – John 11:21-24, 11:28-32
- He ministered to them by weeping with them – John 11:33-35
- He ministered to them by going to the grave with them – John 11:38

We can also minister to those whose spirits are smitten by the death of those that they love very much. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” Here, we see that we can comfort others with the comfort that God gave us in our times of trouble.

Doing things in their own strength can also cause Christians to break their own spirits and lose hope. Romans 7:19, 24 tell us, “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice...O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” The disciples also did things in their own strength and failed. Probably the best example was the night Christ was arrested and tried. Notice what happened in the life of Peter:

- Peter was warned that Satan wanted to sift him – Luke 22:31-32
- Peter said that he was ready to go to prison or even die with Christ – Luke 22:33
- Peter was told he would deny Christ – Luke 22:34
- Peter and the others slept when they were told to pray – Luke 22:40-46
- Peter tried to defend Christ in his own strength and all he succeeded in doing was removing the ear of the servant of the high priest – John 18:10 (Jesus did take time to heal the ear so that Peter would not be charged with attempted murder – Luke 22:51)
- Peter and the others all forsook him and fled – Mark 14:50
- Peter later followed afar off – Luke 22:54
- Peter later sat down among those who had Christ on trial – Luke 22:55
- Peter denied Christ three times – Luke 22:56-62
- Peter felt like a failure and later went back to fishing (he also took six other disciples with him who were probably having the same feelings) – John 21:2-3
- Peter was a man with a broken spirit who had lost any hope that the Lord could use him.

Christ did several things to bind up Peter and the other disciples who were broken by their own failure. In John 21, we see that Christ did the following things to bind up the broken spirit of Peter and help him to realize that Christ still could use him in ministry.

- Christ went to Peter and the other disciples – John 21:4
- Christ spoke to them with words of kindness – John 21:5
- Christ gave them a great catch of fish – John 21:6-11
- Christ invited them to eat a meal with him – John 21:12-14
- Christ asked Peter if Peter loved Him more than the fish – John 21:15
- Christ questioned him three times – John 21:15-17
- Christ told him he still had a ministry three times – John 21:15-17
- Christ told him how he would glorify God in the future – John 21:18-19
- Christ renewed His invitation to Peter to follow Him – John 21:19

In these verses, we see that Christ took time to go to the disciples and bring healing to them in their brokenness. He ministered to them with love and compassion. He did not condemn them for depending on their own strength. Instead, His focus was on restoration. He helped them to see that their lives would again be useful.

Christ also tells us in Galatians 6:1, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” In this verse, we see that Christians can be broken by their own sin or by depending on their own strength. Our first concern should be to help them restore their relationship with Christ. We are to do this with a spirit of gentleness. Otherwise we will be tempted to sin ourselves. Galatians 6:2 adds, “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Here, we see that we are to

follow the example of Christ and exercise the law of love by loving our brothers and sisters in Christ as Christ has loved us.

Christians can also have their spirit broken by people like Diotrephes. 3 John 9-10 says, "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church."

Christ ministered to people who had been broken by people like Diotrephes. The common people had often been hurt by the pride of the Pharisees and Sadducees. One day, Christ was teaching in the temple. The Herodians, the Sadducees and the Pharisees had all tried to trap Christ in His words but Christ continued to teach. Right in the middle of his teaching we see a very important statement. Mark 12:37b says, "And the common people heard Him gladly." The religious leaders did much to cause the common people to be smitten and broken by their proud attitudes. In contrast, the common people loved Christ and were eager to hear Him because they knew that Christ accepted them. In the same way, we want to help all people know that we love and accept them.

One of the key ministries of any group leader is to bind up those who are broken in spirit. It does not matter whether they were broken by their own sin, the sins of others, or by the circumstances of life. We need to show all developing leaders by our example how to bind up those who are broken. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to follow the example of our Great Shepherd and bandage the wounds of the broken.

Jesus Strengthened Those who were Sick (Weak)

In Ezekiel 34:16, Christ said that one of His ministries to the nation of Israel would be to strengthen those who were sick. 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.” Christ demonstrated this ministry many times while He was here on this earth. He certainly strengthened many that were physically sick. However, He also strengthened many that were spiritually weak or sick. His ministry to those who are spiritually sick will be the focus of this topic today.

The word that is translated “sick” means *“to be weak or to be sick.”* In many of the passages where the word is used it could be translated either way. An illustration is Genesis 48:1 where we read, “Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, ‘Indeed your father is sick’; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.” Since this is the chapter where Jacob blesses the two sons of Joseph, we see that Jacob may have been weak because of his age or he may have been sick. Either word would be appropriate.

In some contexts, the word must be translated weak such as Judges 16:7, 17 where the passage talks about Samson. Judges 16:16-17 says, “And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death, that he told her all his heart, and said to her, ‘No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.’” In this passage, we see that Samson would become both physically and spiritually weak and of course that is exactly what happened in his life.

Christ spoke to the disciples about spiritual weakness the night before He was crucified. Matthew 26:40-41 says, “Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, ‘What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ These verses point out the condition of many Christians at various times in their lives. They want to do what is right, but spiritually they are weak. In these verses, we also see one of the reasons for this spiritual weakness. Peter and the others failed to pray and so they were depending on their own strength instead of the strength that the Lord provides as we ask Him for His strength.

Herod put John the Baptist in prison and there John became discouraged. John sent two of his disciples with a question for Christ. Matthew 11:2-3 gives John's question, “And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’” At this point in his life, John needed to be strengthened because things were not going as he had expected and he was now in prison.

Christ told the two disciples in Matthew 11:4-6, “Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” In this case, Christ strengthened John by sending him a message of encouragement. He told the two disciples to tell John what they had heard – the teachings of Christ. He also told them to tell John what they had seen – the works of Christ. Christ knew that as John was reminded of both His words and His works that John would know that Christ was there to encourage him even when John was going through a difficult time in his life.

Peter also had times in his life when he was weak and needed to be strengthened. One such time

happened when Christ came walking to the disciples on the water after the feeding of the five thousand. When the disciples saw Christ coming, they were afraid. Peter said if it was really the Lord that Christ should ask him to come to meet Christ. Christ then invited Peter to come and join Him. Peter got out of the boat and started walking toward Christ. Everything was going fine until he took his eyes off Christ and started looking at the waves around him.

Matthew 14:30-33 says, “But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, ‘Lord, save me!’ And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’ And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’ Many times, when we take our eyes off Christ and look at the problems around us we also become spiritually weak. In this case, Christ strengthened Peter by catching him and holding his hand until they got into the boat. He just needed to know that Christ cared and held his hand as he walked through the waves.

One day Christ took three of His disciples with Him to the mountain where He was transfigured. When they came back to the other disciples, a man came to Christ and asked Christ to heal his son because the disciples were not able to heal the son. Christ then healed the boy. Later, the disciples came with a question. Matthew 17:19-21 says, “Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.’” Here, again the disciples were depending on their own strength.

In this case, Christ shared with the disciples how to be strengthened in their spiritual weakness. First, Christ defined for them that the problem was their unbelief. They did not expect Christ to work through their lives. Christ did not tell them that they needed greater faith. Instead, all the faith that was needed was the faith of a mustard seed which is the smallest of all seeds. Instead of needing a great faith, they needed just the tiniest faith in a great God. If they had faith in Christ, He had the power to perform the miracle that was needed. In this case, He pointed out that they needed to fast so that they could spend an extended time praying to Him.

This same event shows us how Christ strengthened the father. We read the words of the father in Mark 9:22, “And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Mark 9:23-24 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.’ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’” Here, we see that Christ immediately responded to the spiritual weakness demonstrated by the words of the father. Christ strengthened the father by telling the father that Christ could do all things. The only thing that the father had to do was believe that Christ could work in the life of his son. He asked Christ to help him believe and Christ met the need of both the father and the son.

One of the instructions that we are given as Christians is to hold up those who are weak. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 says, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” Those who are fainthearted need to be comforted. Those who are spiritually weak and without strength need someone to hold them up until they grow stronger. That is a ministry in which every Christian can get involved and especially those who are developing leaders. As we have seen, Christ held up those who were weak in many different ways.

After His resurrection, Christ showed another kind of strengthening ministry to two of His disciples. Christ joined them and began walking with them as they walked along the road to

Emmaus. Luke 24:17 says, “And He said to them, ‘What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?’” Christ then asked them to tell why they were sad. After hearing why they were weak, Christ said in Luke 24:25-27, “Then He said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” He strengthened them by helping them to understand the Old Testament.

The lives of these two disciples were changed. Luke 24:32-33 says, “And they said to one another, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’” So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together.” Christ strengthened these two, so that it changed both their attitudes and their actions. They were so excited, that they even had to tell others what had happened. That shows us the power of a strengthening ministry.

Developing leaders need to be shown how to have a strengthening ministry to other Christians. Such a ministry will change the thoughts, the attitudes and the actions of Christians that are weak. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to strengthen other Christians.

Jesus Proclaimed Liberty to the Captives

In Luke 4:18-19 we read, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” In these verses, we see that Christ quoted Isaiah 61:1-2a and then in Luke 4:21 we read, “And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” In these two passages, we see that one of the ministries of Christ as our Shepherd was to proclaim liberty to the captives. That will be the focus of our topic today.

The word that is translated “liberty” or “deliverance” is also translated “*forgiveness or remission in several passages of Scripture*.” Christ used this word in Matthew 26:28 when he said, “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” It means to pardon sin or let go of sin so that it is as if the sin had never been committed. The word that is translated captives comes from the word that means a spear and speaks of one who has been held in captivity.

Jesus was speaking to some of the Jews in John 8. John 8:31-33 says, “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’ They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, “You will be made free”?’” These Jews believed on Christ. However, they were still in bondage. Here Christ tells them that if they are true disciples they will continue in His Word. He promises that because the Word is the truth that the truth will set them free.

These Jews did not even understand they were captives and were in bondage, although they believed Christ. Christ told them that only by abiding in the Word would they become true disciples and be set free from the guilt and shame of their past. Christ made it very clear that He sets people free from their captivity. Christ went on to say in John 8:36, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” A study of the entire chapter will show that these people believed the words that Christ spoke but they did not put their trust in Him. Instead, they were in spiritual bondage to Satan. Jesus was proclaiming liberty to the captives and they were making the choice to remain in spiritual bondage.

Some people become Christians and remain in a different kind of captivity or bondage. One of the greatest hindrances, to the spiritual growth of Christians, is continuing guilt and shame about sins they have committed in the past. Sometimes, these are sins that were committed long before they placed their trust in Christ. Others are sins that people have committed since they became Christians. However, this continuing guilt is something that continues to hinder and prevent spiritual growth. One of the ministries of Christ, was to help those who followed Him understand that He came to set them free from their past.

Paul understood how Christ had set him free from his past. He summarized it so well in 1 Timothy 1:12-14. There, we read, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” Paul knew his past and yet he understood the mercy and grace that Christ had shown to him.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell us about Christ choosing the twelve. In Mark and Luke, the name of Matthew is given and nothing is mentioned about his past. However, Matthew 10:3 says, “Philip

and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;” Although Matthew was writing many years after this event happened, He knew that he had been set free from his past and was not ashamed to admit that past.

In fact, both Mark and Luke, when telling about the original call of Matthew, talk about Levi the tax collector. However, in Matthew 9:9-10 Matthew uses his own name because he is not afraid to admit his past. Those verses say, “As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.” When Christ sets people free from their past, He takes away the guilt and the shame of that past. Matthew understood that he had been set free from the bondage of his past.

Christ also set people free who were in bondage to demons. Luke 8:2 says, “...and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities--Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,” Mary Magdalene was set free from these demons and she experienced the liberty of those who are set free. In fact, she was the first to see Christ after His resurrection. Mark 16:9 says, “Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.”

We see an example of the liberty that people experienced when Christ set them free from demon possession in Mark 5. Mark 5:2-5 says, “And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.”

In Mark 5:15, we see the change that Christ made in the life of this man when Christ set him free from the bondage in which he had lived for many years. That verse says, “Then they came to Jesus, and saw the one who had been demon-possessed and had the legion, sitting and clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.” This man had been given liberty and freed from his captivity to Satan. As a result, instead of being untamable, he was now sitting and talking with Jesus. Instead of being naked, he was now clothed. Instead of being insane, he was now in his right mind. Instead of being in spiritual bondage, he now had the eternal life that Christ gives.

This liberty that he now had in his life had so changed him that he went and told everyone that he met. Mark 5:19-20 says, “However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, ‘Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.’” And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled.” Christ told him to go home and tell his friends (he was alone in the caves and had not had friends for a long time). His life was so changed that he went throughout the region telling what Christ had done for him.

Galatians speaks of another kind of bondage. False teachers were trying to bring the Gentile Christians under the bondage of the law. Paul described what these teachers were doing in Galatians 1:6-7, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” Paul made it very clear, these teachers were perverting the Gospel of the grace of God.

The purpose of the law is explained in Galatians 3:24-25. Those verses say, “Therefore the law

was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” The law shows people their need of Christ but once they become Christians they are no longer under the law. The false teachers were trying to bring the Christians back under the bondage of the law

As a result, Paul said in Galatians 5:1, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Then Galatians 5:13 adds, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Christ came to set us free so that we are free to serve one another in love. This is the freedom that can give every Christian a real purpose in life.

Christians can be held in captivity by Satan. They can be held in captivity by their own sin. They can be held in captivity by the guilt and shame in their lives because of past sin. They can be held in bondage by trying to keep the law. Christ said that He came to proclaim liberty to all. As spiritual leaders, we are to follow the example of Christ and help people learn to live in the liberty that Christ has given. That is why it is very important to show developing leaders how to help other Christians learn to experience the freedom Christ has given. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to share the liberty that we have in Christ.

Jesus Carried His Lambs in His Bosom

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.” In this verse, Isaiah spoke of two of the ministries that Christ would have to those who followed Him. Our focus today will be on the fact that Christ would gather the lambs in His arm and carry them in His bosom. By His example, Christ showed the importance of this ministry for all spiritual leaders.

In John 10:11, Christ said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” In that chapter, Christ talked about the way that He leads His sheep and the way that He protects His sheep. He makes it very clear that His sheep are those who have placed their trust in Him. A lamb is a very young sheep.

Many times as a shepherd led his flock to the grassy places, a lamb would become tired and could not keep up with the rest of the flock. Unless the shepherd carried that lamb, it would end up alone and then be killed by either the wild animals or the weather. To protect the lamb, the shepherd would pick up that lamb and carry it. That lamb would be held close to the heart of the shepherd as the shepherd carried that lamb home. We see that Christ has a very great concern for those who have just begun to follow Him and are like newborn lambs. In the same way Christ wants all leaders and developing leaders to have this same concern for His lambs.

In Matthew 18, Christ was teaching about who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. To illustrate His message Christ called a young child to Him and set the child in the middle. In verse 6 Christ said, “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” In this passage, Christ used a child to illustrate a little one that had believed in Him. Christ said that if a person caused a little one to sin that person should be judged. Spiritual leaders are examples to both little children and also new Christians. Christ made it clear, it is sin to cause a little one (a young child or a new Christian) to sin.

While still talking about little children, a few verses later Christ said in Matthew 18:12-14, ‘What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.’”

In these verses, we see that it is possible for people to go astray. The word that is translated “perish” in verse fourteen can mean that “*the spiritual life of a person is destroyed*” rather than referring to eternal destruction. John 10:27- 28 says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” Since Christians will not face eternal destruction, a sheep or lamb that goes astray speaks of a Christian who has his or her spiritual life destroyed.

A new Christian can have his or her spiritual life destroyed very easily. Christ as the Good Shepherd and we as His undershepherds are to go after the sheep or the lamb that has gone astray until we find it and then bring it back to the flock. However, it is much better to prevent new Christians from going astray and hurting or destroying their spiritual lives by being there to help and carry them during their difficult times. It is much better to prevent problems before they happen, than to try to correct them after they happen. To do this, we need to work with developing leaders to show them how to help new Christians begin healthy spiritual growth.

In 1 Corinthians 4:15-16 we read, “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.” Here, we see that Christ wants every new Christian to have a spiritual parent that he or she can follow and imitate. A wise church develops a plan of action to make certain that every new Christian has one or more spiritual parents to begin follow-up immediately after that person becomes a Christian.

A careful study of John chapters 1 and 2, shows that Christ immediately gave His new disciples His example to follow. John 1:35-42 tells about Christ meeting some of His disciples for the first time. John 1:43 begins, “The following day...” John 2:1 says the third day... John 2:12 says He then spent several days with His disciples in Capernaum. Then, we see in the second half of John 2 that these new disciples traveled with Jesus to Jerusalem for the feast (2:17). Christ realized the importance of helping these disciples get a healthy start in their new life in Christ. He made certain that they had an example to follow in their very first days of this new life. He spent a lot of time with them during these first few weeks. We want to help developing leaders see that this is a very important part of their ministry to new Christians.

In 1 Peter 2:2 we read, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” Here, we see that Christ is concerned that those who are new Christians get the proper food that they need in order to grow in their spiritual lives. We read about the beginning of Christ’s public ministry in Luke 4:14-15. Those verses say, “Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.”

In Matthew 5-7, we have what is called the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:1-2 says, “And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them...” Here, we see that His primary focus was to teach His new disciples even though there may have been crowds gathered around Him as well. A study of the Sermon on the Mount shows that Christ spent most of the sermon teaching His disciples how to apply the Scripture to situations they faced in their daily lives. Christ taught His new followers:

- How to experience blessing in their lives
- How to be a light to the people around them
- How to understand and carry out the law in love
- How to treat those who treat you as enemies
- How to give and pray
- How to have treasure in heaven
- How to have victory over worry
- How to avoid judging others
- How God would respond to their prayers
- How to make wise choices
- How to recognize false teachers
- The importance of doing and not just hearing
- The importance of teaching and explaining the Word of God instead of giving the opinions of others

Christ demonstrated how to carry His lambs (new Christians) in His bosom. He knew what they needed to begin healthy spiritual growth. First, they needed an example to follow. Second, they needed someone who would teach them the Word of God, help them to understand the Word and then help them apply the Word to their daily lives. Even though there were often crowds of people around, Christ focused on being an example and helping His new disciples learn to know,

understand and apply the Word of God to their personal lives. His first concern was their spiritual growth and development rather than the crowds that came and went. Christ knew that if His disciples experienced healthy spiritual growth that they would then reproduce in the lives of others what had happened in their own lives.

In the same way, developing spiritual leaders need to develop priorities for their lives as they lead others. Their first priority needs to be that of learning to be a godly example to others. Their second priority needs to be to help those that they have led to Christ learn to know, understand and apply the Word of God to their daily lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to follow the example of Christ by carrying new Christians close to their heart and helping them to experience healthy spiritual growth.

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 that Christ would have to the nation of Israel was to gently lead those who are 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 gently lead 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 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 done and what they had said. Christ said it was time to take a break and go to a deserted place so that 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 inward man.

Mark 6:31 said that there were so many coming and going that He 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 the inner man as they are growing and maturing, 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 the inner man.

In addition to providing a time to rest and renew the inner man, this time alone with no crowds around also gave them time to discuss in more detail some of the things that had happened as they ministered. Developing leaders learn best to 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 that they faced. This discussion helps them learn to strengthen the things that they are doing right and correct the things that 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 power on earth but their position in heaven. He said that the thing that should really cause them to rejoice was the fact that their names are 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 to 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, “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them 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 to understand one more time that they needed to learn to yield to the Holy Spirit and allow His power to work in their lives and then 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, “Now when He had spoken these things, 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 that 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 to equip developing leaders by gently leading them and showing them what to do by your example.

Jesus Went Before His Sheep

In John 10, we read about some of the ministries of Christ as the Good Shepherd. John 10:4 says, “And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” In this verse, we see that one of the ministries of Christ is to go before His sheep. That will be the focus of our topic today.

One of the things we see about the ministry of Christ, is that He always leads His sheep and never drives them. One of the most important things, for a developing Christian leader to learn, is to learn to lead others instead of driving them. In the world, we have many worldly leaders who try to drive others instead of leading them. Today, an increasing number of Christian leaders are following the pattern of the world instead of following the example of Christ. We see that Christ gives us an example of how to lead and serve His sheep. An effective leader will always remember that:

- ◆ If we drive people, we will only drive them until they can get out of the way
- ◆ If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone
- ◆ If we lead and serve people, we will help them develop the full potential that Christ has given them and they may be able to go far beyond what we are able to do

Psalm 23 gives us a wonderful picture of some of the things that Christ did as He went before His sheep (the disciples). Psalm 23:1 says, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” The word that is translated “want” means “*to lack or have a need.*” In Luke 22:35, Christ said to the disciples, “And He said to them, ‘When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?’ So they said, ‘Nothing.’” Here, we see that Christ had provided what the disciples needed when he sent them out in teams to minister. One of the things that we show others by our example is that we have learned that the Lord will provide our needs as we follow Him. Every developing leader needs to learn to depend on the Lord to supply what is needed for the work that Christ has called that person to do.

Psalm 23:2 says, “He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.” The green pastures are the fields where there is a lot of food for the sheep. Christ certainly provided a lot of spiritual food for His disciples. In Matthew 5:1-2, we read, “And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:” Although there was a large crowd, we see that the focus of Christ was to feed His disciples with spiritual food. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew show us the teaching that Christ gave His disciples in just one day. Christ made sure that His disciples received a lot of spiritual food as He explained the meaning of many things that they already knew from the Old Testament.

The second phrase of Psalm 23:2 says, “He leads me beside the still waters.” The waters of a fast mountain stream would be dangerous to the sheep when they went to drink. As a result, we see that an effective shepherd leads his sheep to the places where the water is like a quiet pool where they can easily drink the water. In John 4:14, Christ told a woman who would soon become a follower of Christ, “But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” Christ wanted all those that followed Him to know that the spiritual water that He gave them was living water that produced everlasting life.

Christ also taught His disciples one other thing about living water. In John 7:37-39, we read, “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow

rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” One of the ways Christ led His disciples, after He returned to heaven, was through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:18 points out a key lesson about what happens as Christ leads us through the Holy Spirit, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” As a developing leader learns to be led by the Spirit, He learns that the liberty that Christ has given him makes it possible for him to serve other Christians in love instead of fear

Psalm 23:3 says, “He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.” This gives us two more ministries of Christ to His disciples. Christ restored their souls. Our soul is our mind, emotions and will. Often when Christians fail and sin, they feel like failures. Christ told Peter in advance that He would be restored after he denied Christ. Luke 22:31-32 says, “And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.’” Peter was told in advance that his faith would not fail and that he was to strengthen the brethren after he returned to Christ.

The second phrase of Psalm 23:3 says, “He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.” Christ led the disciples in the paths of righteousness and He wants all developing leaders to know how to lead people in the paths of righteousness. One of the ways that Christ led the disciples, was to explain to them how to respond to those who were against them. Luke 6:27-28 says, “‘But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.’” However, Christ did not just teach the disciples to love their enemies. Christ showed them by His example how to love their enemies. This is illustrated so well when Christ said in Luke 23:34a, “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’”

Psalm 23:4 tells us another way that Christ went before His disciples. That verse says, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” Christ took away the fear of death for His disciples and replaced that fear with victory. 1 Corinthians 15:55-58 says, “‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” The disciples were shown how to face death from the example of Christ. We want to help developing leaders learn to be able to talk with Christians who are facing death and remind them of the victory that they have because of Christ.

Psalm 23:5 says, “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.” Here, we see that Christ provides what is needed even in times of opposition. The disciples were filled with fear after the crucifixion of Christ. They had no idea what the future held for them. John 20:19-20 shows how Christ assured the disciples of His presence with them and the assurance that they did not need to fear. Those verses say, “Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.” Christ showed the disciples that His death and resurrection meant that they no longer had to fear those who treated them as enemies.

Psalm 23:6 says, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Christ took time to assure His disciples of His presence with them for the rest of their lives. In John 14:16-17, Christ told the disciples, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of

truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” Christ assured the disciples of His presence with them in the Person of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, developing leaders need to have a very clear understanding of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit for the rest of their lives.

The last phrase of Psalm 23:6 says, “...and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Christ also took time to remind the disciples of their future hope of eternal fellowship with Him. The night before He was crucified, Christ told the disciples in John 14:1-3, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” Developing leaders need to be shown how to remind all Christians of the confident assurance that we have in the return of Christ to take us to be with Him for eternity.

Jesus went before His sheep. We want to help developing leaders know how to go before those that they are leading and carry out each of the ministries mentioned in Psalm 23. In that way, they will help those that they are leading to have peace as they follow them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to follow the example of Christ and go before those that they are leading.

Jesus Gave His Life for His Sheep

In John 10:11, Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” As we help developing spiritual leaders in their spiritual development, we want to help them learn to follow the example of Christ. This is very important or otherwise they will be like hirelings rather than faithful servants of the chief Shepherd. We will look first at the warning that Christ gives about a hireling shepherd.

In John 10:12-13, we read, “But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.” In these verses, we see several characteristics of a hireling. First, we see that a hireling is not a shepherd. A hireling is a hired person who is only working for his own benefit. It is possible for a developing leader to only be concerned about what will benefit him and he will not make an effective spiritual leader because he is not concerned about those that he is supposed to be leading. In fact, a hired person will drive the sheep instead of leading them.

Second, a hireling is more concerned about his own safety and security than he is about the sheep. When the hireling sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep. Matthew 7:15 gives the following warning about false prophets and false teachers, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” At the very time that the sheep need protection from false teachers, the hireling leaves the sheep (especially the newer Christians) because he is more concerned about his own safety and security. If a developing spiritual leader develops such an attitude, he will focus on his own success instead of the needs of the less mature Christians. He will focus on counting decisions, instead of obeying our great commission to make disciples.

Third, we see that the hireling allows the wolf to catch and scatter the sheep. When a developing leader is focused on his own success, this phrase tells us there will be two negative results. First, the false teachers will catch the sheep. Many new or immature Christians have been deceived by false teachers and cults because no shepherd was helping them in their spiritual care and growth. Next, we see that many new or immature Christians will be scattered and never develop into healthy reproducing Christians.

Fourth, we see the real problem of the hireling is his own attitude. We see that the hireling does not care for the sheep. One of the greatest dangers that a developing spiritual leader faces, is a failure to love the sheep that Christ has entrusted to his or her care. That is true whether the person is a Bible study leader, a women's ministries leader, a pastor, or some other spiritual leader in a church. Christ is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. A godly leader will develop the same attitudes that caused Christ to give His life for the sheep.

As we go on in John 10, Christ describes what it means to give His life for the sheep. John 10:14 says, “I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.” The word that is translated “know” means “*to become acquainted with, to come to know and to understand each person.*” A developing leader must be shown how to really get to know and understand those that he will be leading. A developing leader needs to be shown how to ask questions and listen so that he or she gets to know the needs and concerns of each of those that he or she is leading. Developing leaders will develop into effective leaders, if they take the time to get to know and understand the people that they are leading.

John 10:15 says, “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for

the sheep.” In this verse, we see two keys that are important as a developing leader learns to follow the example of Christ. First, the developing leader must make it an important part of his or her life to get to know the Father better each day. Second, a developing leader must learn to make sacrifices in his own life in order to minister effectively to those that he or she is leading. Paul describes this attitude so well in 1 Thessalonians 2:9 where we read, “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.” Here, we see that two of the attitudes that Paul demonstrated were a willingness to work hard and a willingness to be available night and day.

John 10:16 says, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.” This verse teaches us several things that are important for a developing leader as he learns to follow the example of Christ. First, we see that Christ had a concern for those sheep that were not a part of this fold. Since Christ was talking to the Jews, this was talking about His concern for the Gentiles. Christ had a tremendous concern for both the Jews and the Gentiles. In the same way, we want to help developing leaders learn to develop a great concern for people of other cultures and ethnic groups by our own example.

Second, we see that in addition to having a great concern for people of other cultures and ethnic groups, Christ was also concerned to bring these people to the Father. This speaks of His concern to help these people of other cultures and ethnic groups come to a true understanding of what is meant by repentance and forgiveness of sins. In order to bring people of other cultures and ethnic groups to repentance, Christ chose to go to the people and not just wait for people of other cultures to come to Him. John 4:3-4 says, “He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria.” John 4:5-42 shows that the reason that Christ needed to go through Samaria was to help the people of Samaria learn how to have forgiveness of sins.

Third, we see that Jesus said that the Gentiles would hear His voice. Peter was traveling with Christ and saw the concern of Christ for people of other cultures. Because he had seen the example of Christ, Peter also began to reach out to people of other cultures. Acts 10:34-35 says, “Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.’” As a developing leader, Peter had come to realize that Christ wanted to reach people from every tribe and nation. As a result, Peter followed the example of Christ and took the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Fourth, we see that Christ had a great concern to help both Jews and Gentiles become a part of the same fold. The last part of verse 16 says, “...and there will be one flock and one shepherd.” Ephesians 2:13-18 says, “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

In these verses, we see that Christ broke down the wall that separated the Jews from the Gentiles. In Christ we have all become one. One of the things that we want to do is help developing leaders learn to help new Christians learn to break down the barriers that previously existed between themselves and others. For many new Christians there are barriers that exist between themselves and other members of their own families. We want to show such individuals the importance of forgiving one another. To do this we help them to understand why they forgive. Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” God forgave us because of what Christ did for us on the cross. In the same way, we

help others learn to forgive because of the fact that God forgave them for Christ's sake.

We also help developing leaders learn to help people of various cultures become one in Christ. This means that we help them to learn to take down the barriers between themselves and others and replace those barriers with bridges. We help developing leaders learn that Christ has given Christians of different cultures and ethnic groups the same Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives all Christians the same access to the Father. If ten Christians from ten different ethnic groups are together, it is possible for them to have unity because all ten have the same Holy Spirit. If each of the ten is yielding to the Holy Spirit, there will be unity. We help developing leaders learn to develop unity between Christians of different cultures, languages and ethnic groups as we help those developing leaders learn to show people how to yield their human spirits to the Holy Spirit.

Just as Christ gave His life for His sheep, we want to help developing leaders learn to give their lives to serve those that Christ has given them to lead as His undershepherds. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to follow the example of Christ as they lead His sheep.

Jesus Taught His Sheep Many Things

In Mark 6:34 we read, “And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.” In this verse, we see that Christ saw that the crowds were like sheep without a shepherd. The people had many religious leaders, but we see that they were without shepherds. In this verse, we see that as a shepherd Christ taught the people many things. Since this event happened in the context of feeding the five thousand, we will look at the things that Christ taught His disciples about how to be effective undershepherds when He fed the five thousand.

After Christ had taught the people for most of the day, the disciples came to Jesus with a suggestion. Mark 6:35-36 says, “When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, ‘This is a deserted place, and already the hour is late. Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.’” The disciples saw the need, but they did not even think of seeing what could be done to meet that need except to send the people away. Christ used the opportunity to teach the disciples to minister to people in need.

In Matthew 14:16, we read, “But Jesus said to them, ‘They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.’” Instead of seeing an opportunity to minister to people in need, the disciples immediately began to focus on the problems. The first problem they saw was the financial problem. In John 6:5, we see that Christ asked Philip a question, “Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’” But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.” Instead of answering the question, Philip immediately focused on a problem. John 6:7 says, “Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.’” Instead of answering the question of Christ, Philip gave a financial report and said they could not afford to feed the people.

Christ next gave the disciples an assignment. Mark 6:38 says, “But He said to them, ‘How many loaves do you have? Go and see.’ And when they found out they said, ‘Five, and two fish.’” Here, we see that Christ asked the disciples to find out what was already available. Throughout the Bible, God asked people what they had and then used what they had to carry out His work. An example is found in Exodus 4:2 where we read, “So the Lord said to him, ‘What is that in your hand?’ He said, ‘A rod.’” Then, Exodus 4:17 says, “And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.” The Lord used that rod many times as Moses led Israel through the wilderness. Christ wanted the disciples to learn to use what He had provided.

As a result of the assignment that Jesus gave the disciples, we see that Jesus taught Andrew and the other disciples another important lesson. John 6:8-9 says, “One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, ‘There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?’” Andrew learned by following the instructions of Christ. He found a boy with a lunch and he brought the boy to Jesus. Andrew was learning the importance of introducing people to Christ. He did not know what Christ would do, but he was learning by following instructions.

Next, Jesus gave the disciples another assignment. Here, we see that Jesus is showing the disciples how to delegate responsibilities. Mark 6:39-40 says, “Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties.” We also see that Christ is showing them that the way to work with larger groups is to divide them into a number of smaller groups, so that they will be able to minister to all of the people. The disciples

learned this lesson and applied it after the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Even though the disciples had to teach 3,000 new Christians, they were able to do it because they divided them into groups that were small enough to combine Bible study and fellowship. This helped each of the new believers to get their questions answered.

The next lesson that Christ taught the disciples was that He would do the things that the disciples could not do and at the same time give the disciples the opportunity to do what they could do. John 6:11 says, “And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted.” Christ performed the miracle and multiplied the food. Then Christ gave the disciples the responsibility to pass out the food. In this way the disciples were learning that they must depend on Christ to do the things that seem impossible to people.

At the same time the disciples were learning that Christ is the One who must do the impossible, they were also learning that Christ wanted to use them to minister to the people. Christ could have spoken the word and everyone would have had food in his or her hands. Instead, Christ chose to distribute the food to the disciples and let them have the privilege of becoming partners in the work of the Lord. This is the same thing we want to teach developing leaders. We want them to realize that only Christ can do the impossible, but at the same time Christ wants to give them the privilege of becoming partners with Him in doing the work of the Father.

When the people had finished eating, Christ had another assignment for the disciples that would help them to learn. John 6:12-13 says, “So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, ‘Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.’ Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten.” Christ waited until everyone had eaten all that each person wanted. Then, the disciples were instructed to gather all of the extra food that was left after the people had eaten. The first lesson that the disciples learned was that Christ was able to supply more than enough for the crowd of 5,000. It did not matter that the lunch was just five loaves and two small fish. Christ had multiplied what they had so that there was more than enough for all of the people that were there that day.

The second lesson, the disciples learned was that nothing was to be lost. In this case, they learned as they gathered the food that remained. Later the disciples learned to apply this same lesson as they led the early church. We have already mentioned that they divided the new believers in the book of Acts into small groups where they could both grow through Bible study and also grow in their relationships with one another as they learned to fellowship with each other.

The disciples also learned how to apply this same principle when the early church faced the first problem that was mentioned in the book of Acts. That problem is mentioned in Acts 6:1. In that verse we read, “Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.” The first recorded problem, in the early church, was the neglect of the widows that were not from Jerusalem and Judea. We see that the disciples had learned from the example of Christ to take action when there was a problem.

Acts 6:2-3 says, “Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.’ The disciples had learned the importance of resolving conflicts. They took immediate action, but they did not burden themselves down with extra responsibilities. Instead, they encouraged the believers to recognize the qualified men and then assigned the new

responsibilities to these qualified men. This gave these men the opportunity to grow and develop in their ministry instead of giving the apostles too much to do.

The disciples had also learned from the example of Christ, the importance of choosing men who met spiritual qualifications even though their initial responsibilities were to distribute the food to the widows. They had learned from the example of Christ, the importance of making spiritual qualifications the top priority as they shared the responsibility with others. In this way, the seven chosen would view their responsibility as a ministry and not just as a job to be done. The disciples had learned this because that was what Christ had taught them as He delegated responsibility to them.

One other lesson that the disciples had learned is found in Acts 6:4. That verse says, “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” The disciples had learned from the example of Christ that they needed to focus on the priorities that Christ had given them. They made sure that needed ministries were carried out by others. However, they also realized that they must not neglect the priority that the Lord had given them. They knew that they were to spend their time in prayer and the ministry of the Word of God. In the same way, these are also key lessons that we want to help developing learners learn from our example.

Jesus taught His sheep many things. He did not just teach Bible knowledge. He also taught His disciples how to carry out an effective ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to carry out effective ministry.