

10. A Servant Who Leads Focuses on Informal Communication

Christ is our perfect example of a servant who leads. One of the key things, that made Christ an effective servant who leads, was His ability to really listen to His followers. A key factor in informal communication is the fact that a servant who leads takes time to listen to what those around him are saying and doing.

In Mark 6:7-13, Christ sent the disciples out two-by-two to minister to others. As we read those verses, we see that Christ gave the disciples specific instructions. Then, He sent them out to minister. When the disciples returned, Mark 6:30-31 tell us, “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.” In these verses, we see that:

- Christ gave the disciples the opportunity to share what they had done
- Christ gave the disciples the opportunity to share what they had taught
- Christ gave the disciples the opportunity to share without interruptions
- Christ gave the disciples the opportunity for rest and leisurely discussion

The four things Christ did are four key things we will do if we are going to be a servant who leads. A servant who leads is a good listener. If we want to have a real impact on people, we make the choice to really:

- listen to what people have done
- listen to what people have taught
- listen without interruptions or distractions
- listen and discuss without being in a rush

First, we listen to what people have done. Romans 12:15 tells us, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” When we get excited about what others are doing, and rejoice with them for the way the Lord is working through their lives, we give them a desire to do even more. Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” In these verses, we see that we do two things to stir up love and good works in their lives. First, we get together and spend time with them. Second, we encourage them by getting excited about what the Lord is doing through their lives.

Second, we listen to what people have taught. This helps us to know what they clearly understand and shows those areas where they will eventually need further teaching. This principle is illustrated by Aquila and Priscilla, in Acts 18:24-26, where we read: “Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man *and* mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 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.”

Instead of disagreeing in the synagogue, Aquila and Priscilla just listened carefully to Apollos. By listening carefully, they knew what he understood and what he needed to have explained more clearly. Then, they invited him to visit with them alone (probably for dinner). While they were talking, they explained to him about the death and resurrection of Christ so that he understood the way of God more accurately. We see the results in Acts 18:27-28, where we read: “And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.”

Third, we listen without interruptions or distractions. Christ could see that the constant coming and going of the multitudes made it hard for the disciples to tell Him what they had done and taught. As a result, Christ took the disciples into a desert place, where they could be alone. Christ made it clear that He wanted to give full attention to the disciples and what they were telling Him. When we listen, without interruptions or distractions, people know that we care what they are saying.

Fourth, we listen and discuss without being in a rush. Christ chose to spend a block of time with just the disciples. In the same way, we need to choose to spend extended periods of time with those we lead by creating blocks of time to be with them, so there will be time for extended periods of listening and discussion. Christ illustrated this principle in Matthew 16:13, where we read: “When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ Christ took time to listen to the disciples. Then, He used that discussion time to introduce “the church” to them.

Christ calls us to listen more than talk. In James 1:19-20, we read, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” In these verses, we see that:

- ◆ an effective leader will be quick to listen
- ◆ an effective leader will be slow to speak
- ◆ an effective leader will avoid wrath

In addition to carefully listening to the disciples, Christ used informal communication when He sent informal messages to the disciples. By comparing Mark 16:1-7 and John 20:11-18 we see that Christ sent an informal message to Peter, and the other disciples, by Mary Magdalene. Christ knew how Peter felt after denying Him three times, so Christ sent him a personal message through Mary.

Later, when Peter decided to go back to fishing, and took six of the other disciples with him, Christ went to where Peter was so He could give him a personal message. Peter must have still felt the Lord could no longer use him, so felt all he could do was go back to fishing. Instead of rebuking Peter, Christ gently asked Peter if Peter loved Him more than he loved the fish. Then, Christ gave Peter three personal messages in John 21:15-17:

- feed My lambs

- shepherd My sheep
- feed My sheep

In addition to Christ sending personal messages to His disciples, Paul also sent many personal messages to both individuals and groups. Think about these personal messages Paul sent to others:

- Paul sent personal messages to Christians in Rome – Romans 16:1-16
- Paul sent personal messages to Christians in Corinth – 1 Corinthians 16:15-20
- Paul sent personal messages to Christians in Colosse – Colossians 4:7-17
- Paul sent personal messages to Timothy – the books of 1 and 2 Timothy
- Paul sent a personal message to Titus – the book of Titus
- Paul sent a personal message to Philemon – the book of Philemon
- Paul also sent a personal messenger at times when he could not go
- Paul sent Timothy to Corinth – 1 Corinthians 4:14-17
- Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica – 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8

The book of Proverbs also gives us many principles of effective communication if we want to be servants who lead. We will list just a few here and then encourage you to study the book of Proverbs from the viewpoint of looking for effective communication principles:

- ◆ an effective leader knows when to keep quiet – Proverbs 10:19
- ◆ an effective leader will speak with soft words – Proverbs 15:1-2
- ◆ an effective leader is respected for listening – Proverbs 17:28
- ◆ an effective leader will listen before answering – Proverbs 18:13
- ◆ an effective leader listens to both sides – Proverbs 18:17
- ◆ an effective leader avoids trouble by careful talking – Proverbs 21:23

One of the things we see is that to be an effective servant who leads, we must continually seek wisdom from the Lord. Scripture gives us two key sources for true wisdom:

- this wisdom is gained through prayer – James 1:5
- this wisdom comes from above – James 3:17; Isaiah 55:8-9

The Lord will greatly use us as we seek His wisdom. That way, after listening, we will be able to share the wisdom of God, instead of the wisdom of man.

The Lord will guide us as we seek Him and ask Him to help us become better listeners. By becoming a good listener, we will greatly multiply our ministry. May the Lord richly bless you, as you are a servant who leads by being a good listener.