

# FOLLOW ME



**A CHRISTIAN WORKER'S FIELD  
MANUAL TO EFFECTIVE CHURCH  
MINISTRY**

**BY PASTOR KEN MERRIHEW**

***Follow Me*, by Ken Merrihew**

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## Dedications

This manual is dedicated first and foremost to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who for some inexplicable reason allows us to serve Him. May our living sacrifice to Him always be a reasonable service.

Secondly, to my wife, Sherry, who has taught me more about the subject of servanthood and submission than I am capable of containing.

And last, but certainly not least, to the greatest group of Christians I have ever met or had the privilege of serving—the fellowship of Calvary Chapel of OKC—who have taught me so much of sacrifice, integrity and being “full on.”

## Special Dedication

While I have only observed him from afar, I would like to offer a special thanks to Pastor Chuck Smith who has epitomized the precepts and principles brought forth in this book more than any person I have ever known.

## Special Thanks

To Tim, Sherry, Brett, Shannon, Mike and Eva for their invaluable input, suggestions and examples.

**“True servanthood is caught, not taught”**

**Chuck Smith**

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## **Introduction**

For too long, the concept of church leadership has been relegated to the professionals—the clergy, the elders, the deacons, the church administrators, etc. The Bible, however, paints a very different picture. Church work is not consigned to any particular group of people but rather to the Body of Christ as a whole. For as the Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:13-16, the entire goal of ministry is that we should...

*all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

There is nothing new about this book. There is nothing contained within its pages that has not been brought out much more cogently by others. Yet, I believe it is needed.

While the contents of this book are for the most part common knowledge, they seem to be the least employed by those who perform the “work of the ministry.” While much emphasis today seems to be placed upon the mechanics and “how-to’s” of ministry, little seems to be said about laying a good solid foundation for effective inner-church ministry. As journalist Cal Thomas wrote in a recent editorial, “too much is being said about leadership and not enough is being said about followership.”

There lies the focus of this book. By no means is this work exhaustive—quite the contrary. I only attempt to lay a foundation. If the foundation is secure, then the “how-to’s” will likely endure. But if the ministry is built without a good foundation, the storms will surely destroy it.

During a recent storm season, a beachfront community in western Florida survived a killer hurricane. While most of their neighbors received great devastation, they emerged almost unscathed. As reporters inquired about their secret of success, townspeople explained that they had stricter building codes. It was imperative all structures be built upon a firm foundation—one that had been dug deep and well established.

It is my prayer all readers will commit themselves to be like the wise man of Jesus’ parable who built his house upon the rock. When the ministerial storms buffet, the solid foundation will prevail.

# Part One

**GO IN THIS THY MIGHT**

# Chapter One

## ***What Is Leadership?***

Consider, if you will, the following statements from some of this century's evangelical leaders:

“What we do not need is another teaching on leadership. The last thing the Church needs is another leadership conference or seminar. In fact, it is possible that the entire subject of leadership is one that is totally foreign to the teachings of Scripture.”

“Leadership is the art of moving people from point A to point B.”

“The quality of one's leadership is determined by asking the question, ‘Is anyone following?’”

While allowing that each of the quotations has been lifted out of context, I feel, with all due respect to their authors, I would have to disagree with each premise. The subject of leadership is not foreign to Scripture (although what *is* presented today as leadership may often be an aberration). In fact it is taught explicitly in both the Old and the New Testaments and implicitly in the lives of the biblical characters. We need more of good, solid biblical leadership teaching in our churches, not less.

Leadership is not the art of moving people from one point to another. It is not an issue of *moving* anybody anywhere.

The quality of one's leadership should not be measured by the lack or presence of followers. I have witnessed very poor leaders with extremely large crowds flocking to them. Some leadership techniques, such as coercion or manipulation, can produce huge followings. John chapter 6 tells us of the greatest leader of all time. He revealed to His followers that His miracles were to lead them to spiritual perfection—not to prosperity. So stumbled at this idea were the people that...

*from that [time] many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.*  
(v. 66)

For the sake of clarity, let me say that when I speak of the term *leadership*, I am referring to what may best be spoken of as *biblical* leadership. I'm sure there are many tried and true concepts and models in the corporate world that accomplish the desired end. It's not my purpose



to challenge these nor promote them. My focus will be to present the only model that should concern us as Christians—the biblical one.

What can be accomplished by a further review of the subject of leadership? To answer that, we must first determine what constitutes a leader. The common misconception is that church leaders are those with titles before their names (Reverend, Doctor, Deacon, Pastor, etc.) and letters after their names (Ph.D., M.Div., M.B.A., etc.). We believe true leaders are those who have attained certain academic levels or been elected to certain positions. Therefore the average “lay person” need not be concerned with the subject of leadership.

True biblical leadership is not seen in a military general in some war room barking orders and swinging a swagger stick. Where it is seen is in a good shepherd—one who leads his flock beside the still waters and into green pastures. In other words, a biblical leader is a servant.

Even a cursory reading of the New Testament reveals the mark of a Christian—servanthood. Jesus, after washing His disciples’ feet and explaining to them His lesson in servanthood, told them,

*“If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”* (John 13:17)

The Apostle John tells us in his first letter...

*if someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? (4:20).*

There is no greater way to show our love for a brother than to serve him. If then, Christianity is epitomized as servanthood, leadership is nothing more than intensified Christianity. Therefore, it’s easy to see that *all* Christians are called to leadership.

Leadership can be easily summed up in three aspects: being a servant, being an example and being accountable. These constitute the three components which form the foundation of good church leadership.

As James 3:1 tells us...

*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

Now we all know who James is referring to in this passage—the preachers, the pastors, the Ladies’ Home Bible Study Guild teachers—those who handle the Word of God. But the fact remains that as Christians, we all teach the Bible at some time and at some level. Therefore, James’ exhortation to those of us who would be prophets<sup>1</sup> and bring forth the Mind of God would be equally applicable, in some degree at least, to all Christians. This is true whether they are parents, nursery workers or cleaning ministry personnel—and is regardless of what that teaching might entail.

It would be difficult to address the topic of biblical leadership without using the word “shepherd,” although this term has fallen into disrepute in recent years. There is a doctrine that was fairly popular in certain circles of the Church during the eighties often known as “Shepherding.” Basically this doctrine holds that God has raised up certain people as elders or shepherds. These would have authority over the flock extending beyond spiritual matters to all areas of life.

The idea is the sheep are dumb and can determine nothing for themselves. So these shepherds have been gifted by God to direct the sheep what to do. The sheep ask the shepherds about everything—who to date, what kind of car to buy, where to work and live. Only the shepherd is qualified to make those decisions. If you don't seek this counsel before making a decision, then you are rebellious and out of the will of God.

Thankfully, this doctrine has waned. However, some vestiges remain even though the founders of the movement have renounced it.

However, the word “shepherd” is a biblical term and there is a biblical concept of “shepherding.” 1 Pet. 5:2 tells the elders to...

*shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.*

It is in this context I use the word “shepherd” or “shepherding.”<sup>2</sup> Many who have come out of this dictatorial style have a strong aversion to any type of authority. But it is important for us to remember that the Bible ordains authority—both civil and sacred—and teaches all men to be subject to both. This is not annulled because of the abuses of a few others. So what is a true biblical leader? The answer lies in the definition of leadership: simply someone who leads. Not someone who *moves* people from A to B but someone who *leads* people from A to B. This is what true shepherding is all about.

Let's return to the scene of the Last Supper found in John 13. In this time, the common practice was for the lowest servant to greet the dinner guests as they arrived for the purpose of washing each guest's feet. Although a matter of social etiquette, it served a functional use as well. The roads in those days were not paved and sandaled feet became very dirty and sweaty when traveling even the shortest distances.

The problem in Jesus' case was that *His* servants (the 12 disciples) were busy vying for position as the greatest in His Kingdom (Mark 9:35) None would be subservient to the others. You can almost hear James standing in the corner talking to his brother, John, as the others arrived. “Just look at Peter over there. He's crazy if he thinks I'm gonna wash his feet. I'll bet they smell like *Catfish Charley*. Besides, he oughta be standing in line to wash *our* feet. After all, we'll be sitting on Jesus' right and left hand soon. Mom's seen to that. All we have to do is get baptized.”<sup>3</sup> So one by one, all 12 disciples arrived, each one thinking that duty was better suited for someone else. Consequently, the room was soon filled with the aroma of 26 dirty, smelly feet.

With all due respect to Mr. Da Vinci, the upper room scene did not take place with Samsonite chairs all placed on one side of a table made of plywood and sawhorses covered with a tablecloth tied in knots at the corners. The more traditional setting would have been a low U-shaped table with all the guests placed around the outside of the U. They would be sitting (or more properly, lying) on a “reclining couch,” leaning on their left elbows leaving their right hands free to eat. So all 13 people at the Last Supper found themselves lying with their heads just inches away from their neighbor's feet as they tried to enjoy the most festive meal on the Jewish calendar.

At a certain point during the meal, Jesus got up, wrapped a towel around His waist and methodically began to wash each disciples' feet one by one. As He proceeded around the room, the disciples no doubt began to feel extremely uncomfortable. Eventually, He came to Peter. Pete, who was never at a loss for words, exclaimed, “You shall never wash my feet!” At which

time Jesus explained that if Peter did not allow this, he could have no part with Him.

There was a specific reason for Jesus' actions. Whether He had reasons of social propriety or the desire to clear out the locker room aroma, we can't be sure—but His ultimate purpose was given to us in His own words.

*“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for [so] I am. If I then, [your] Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”*  
(vv. 13-15).

Here is a prime example of leadership. Jesus said, “I am your Lord (*kurios*) and Teacher (*didaskolos*).” In other words, “I am your Leader and this is where I am leading you—that you follow My example and serve one another.” Then in verse 17, He says,

*“If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”*

Anyone who has been a Christian for any length of time knows God's economy is the exact opposite of the world's. The world's way is called the *kosmos*—that which is set in opposition to God (John 15:18-19). The *kosmos* says, “Climb up the ladder.” God's way says, “Climb down. To be the first, you must be last. If you want to rule, you must serve.” There is only one King, and we are not Him.

We are servants and are to lead others into servanthood by example. We aren't kings teaching others how to be kings, or Jesus would have come as the Jews expected Him to come—on a white charger and brandishing a sword.

God didn't look at Moses and proclaim, “Moses, My leader.” He instead said, “Moses, My servant.” (Num. 12:7-8). Did Paul begin most of his letters by introducing himself as “Paul, a leader of the Church of Jesus Christ”? No, he told us that he was a “servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The greatest leaders of both the Old and the New Testaments identified themselves first and foremost as servants. It was their servanthood that qualified them as leaders. They reached the top, as it were, by climbing down.

## Endnotes for Chapter 1

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- 1      The Greek word *prophetes*, transliterated *prophet* carries with the idea of not only foretelling the Mind of God but primarily that of forthtelling the Mind of God. Therefore, a prophet is someone who brings forth the Mind of God—hence, a preacher.
- 2      According to Thayer’s Greek Lexington, *poimano*, shepherd, means to furnish pasture for food, to nourish; metaphorically, to serve the body.
- 3      See Matthew 20:20-23.

### Study Questions for Chapter 1

1.      What are the three aspects of leadership?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2.      How does this book relate to me? In what ways do I teach the Word?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3.      List some Scriptures pertaining to teaching. What is God's Word on the teacher?

## Chapter Two

### ***The Volunteer Mentality***

One of today's contemporary leaders has said that one of the greatest problems in the Church is the majority of functions are being performed by volunteer help. This is very true. One of the things about volunteers is that they know they are volunteers. They know they are not getting paid. Compare how readily someone will go to work for pay when it's inconvenient with their willingness to perform a "volunteer" ministry when it's inconvenient. How often are we late to work as compared to being late for ministry?

"Well," one may say, "I've gotta keep my job. Besides, they won't fire me from my ministry because they can't get anyone else to do it. And even if they did, there are plenty of other churches around." Most of us would not admit to thinking this consciously, but if we were truly honest, it probably hits closer to home than we like to think. We can't follow through with our commitment to ministry when we are feeling ill, but if we have an 8:00 a.m. tee time—well, that's another story. After all, I need some "me time." The aches and pains and obstacles that seem to permeate life, for some reason, become unbearable when it becomes ministry time. This is what I call a "volunteer mentality."

Over the years I've observed three basic types of volunteers. Actually, because of the connotation the word "volunteer" conveys as free labor, I prefer the biblical term of "servant".<sup>1</sup> The Bible doesn't promote volunteerism, it promotes servanthood.

There is the I-don't-do-windows church worker. This is not the individual who says, "I'll come and help clean or mow or visit shut-ins, but please don't ask me to get in front of a group and say anything because I just know that I'll lose my breakfast over the matter."

Instead, this type of servant (who is really not a servant at all but is a volunteer) feels certain functions are either beneath him or not stimulating enough. "I'll do anything down there at the church that you want only don't ask me to work in the nursery, because I work in a day care all week long and when I come to church, I need an escape."

While understandable (and probably identifiable in most of us), this is not true biblical servanthood. We must constantly fight against the mindset that we are doing God, the pastor or anyone a favor by "doing our part." When we don't guard against this we develop the "volunteer mentality."

Secondly, there's the I'll-do-anything-you-ask church worker. This is the person who is always available for anything that needs to be done. All you have to do is ask. The person normally scheduled to be in the nursery doesn't show up so you ask Sister Sue if she wouldn't mind. And Sue is immediately up out of her seat and headed for the nursery. She doesn't mind. It doesn't matter to Sue that she was in the nursery just last Sunday and tonight's study topic is from her favorite chapter in the Bible. She's available. She's Janie-on-the-spot. Few are as dependable as Sue. Most church workers, I feel, fall into this category.

The third type of church worker checks the nursery calendar every Sunday morning to see if there is someone scheduled for the following Wednesday and if not—they immediately scrawl in their name. This type of worker enjoys serving God by serving His people so much that he or she is constantly looking for areas in which to serve.

When the church has scheduled a picnic potluck at the park, these are the individuals who come an hour early to pick up the beer cans or ensure the rest rooms are clean and stay a hour after everyone has gone to clean up afterwards as well. Not because someone has asked them to do it, but because it was something that needed to be done. This person will hardly ever walk past a piece of paper on the church grounds without noticing it.

It's not that this third type of church worker will blindly jump into any ministry without praying about it or answer every opportunity listed in the bulletin. This person is prudent enough to know that he isn't gifted or qualified to do everything. Nor is he omnipresent and omnipotent. So he will do whatever he can to assist those who are called or gifted and to make the performance of their ministries go as smoothly as possible.

People in this category look for ways to serve. They are constantly nurturing the mindset that, "I want to make this the most efficient ministry it can be by using whatever abilities are at my disposal." This is all done for God's glory, not for the sake of the well-oiled machine.

This last type of church worker exemplifies the true servant found in Scripture. It's certainly the type that Jesus exemplified in the upper room. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "I have given you this example." The lesson in this example is that we aren't volunteers. God's not looking for volunteers. He's looking for servants. He doesn't say, "try to fit Me into your schedule if you can." He says, "You are not your own; you were bought with a price." (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Remember during the dinner in the upper room, at one point Jesus couldn't stand the air pollution anymore, so He got up and girded Himself with a towel and picked up a basin of water.

Someone might say, "Now wait a minute. That's not really what happened. He was simply trying to show the disciples their selfishness and give them an example of servanthood." True. He was. But the fact remains, they did have dirty, smelly feet. He didn't do it solely as a visual sermon illustration. He was, I believe, at least in part motivated by the need. No one else was answering that need, and He could. He had the ability to wash His disciples' feet.

Years ago, when I was serving in another ministry, we were meeting in an old church building in an older neighborhood. This was a very quaint, turn-of-the-century building with a bell tower. One of the things that is very common to those old tree-lined neighborhoods is pigeons. And pigeons like to congregate. For some unexplained reason, it seems they like to congregate in old church building bell towers. And where pigeons meet, they excrete. So for many years, the pigeons laid solid claim by way of squatters' rights within the confines of this bell tower.

One day the pastor went up to inspect the tower and thought it would be nice to ring the bell on Sunday mornings just like in the old days. The problem was that no one could even get to the bell for all of the pigeon dung. A couple of brothers in the fellowship decided that they were perfectly suited for the task. They "received the call" to the pigeon dung removal ministry. They just girded their faces with a towel, took a deep breath and went into the tower and did it.

It was a job that needed to be done. They did it at a time when no one else was around and to this day only a handful a people know who they are. They weren't volunteers, they were *douloi*.<sup>2</sup> The result was the bell rang once again and more importantly, two brothers stored up rewards in heaven—one shovelful at a time.

## Endnotes for Chapter 2

- 1        The Greek term is *doulos*. Thayer's defines this as one who gives himself up to another's will; those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing His cause among men.
- 2        *Douloi* is the plural *doulos*.

## Study Questions for Chapter 2

1.        What type of servant am I?

"I don't do windows."

"I'll do whatever you ask."

"I'm always looking for ways to serve."

2.        In the past 24 hours, what have I done that was not "expected" of me?
3.        How do I know when to serve and what to do?
4.        List some Scriptures pertaining to servanthood. What picture to these paint?

## Chapter Three

### ***Hey! Look At Me, A Servant***

*This [is] a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop<sup>1</sup>, he desires a good work. (1Tim. 3:1)*

At first reading it appears as if this passage is promoting a self-exaltation of the person desiring the position of elder. *Elder Ken*. Hey, I kind of like the sound of that. Has a good ring to it, doesn't it? Now I'll get the sort of respect I deserve.

The problem with understanding this, however, is we read it with a 1990s, Western mindset. It's fashionable to have a title in "Christian" America. However, this wasn't the case in the early days of the Church. During the days of the Jewish and Roman persecutions, if a person was acknowledged as being the elder or leader of a particular congregation, he was taking his life in his hands. When the "Storm Troopers" came, the bishops were the first ones to go. It wasn't a matter of wearing cool robes with long, pontifical hats. It wasn't a title that went before the elders' names so that they "got the respect they deserved." Being an elder in the first two and a half centuries of the Church was a life-threatening proposition. Not only did few men "desire" it, even fewer were willing to accept it.

There is really nothing wrong with desiring to serve God within the capacity and with the gifts He has given us—not even in today's Christian society. Paul tells us if someone, having searched his soul and taken inventory of his motives, believes he is equipped and God has enabled him to operate in the office of an elder (bishop) then that person desires a good thing.

The issue boils down to motivation. Are we motivated by people's admiration of our prestigious, pontifical hat or because we truly want to serve the Body of Christ? Do we like seeing our names on the inside cover page of the church directory and sitting on the platform with the other mucky-mucks? Or do we see the office of elder as an opportunity to be an example? Do we realize others will judge our walks, the local church, the Body of Christ and even Jesus Himself by the example that we set before them? If we do, then Paul says we desire a good thing. The hard part is being able to discern our own motives.

*"The heart [is] deceitful above all [things], and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jere. 17:9)*

This is the hardest thing for me. I can never be totally sure if that little part of me that clamors for recognition and exaltation hasn't dominated my reason for service. Satan knows this and capitalizes on it.

Some time ago, at a former ministry, we had just conducted a wedding. This particular church building had a second story entrance with about 20 million steps going to the door. (I always thought I heard the theme to *Rocky* playing every time I prepared to climb them.)



It was Saturday evening, the bride and groom and most of the guests had already left. We were completing the finishing touches on preparing the building for the next day's services. As is the custom at most weddings, when the newlyweds exited from the building, they were greeted by dozens of well-wishers who drenched them with little net bags of bird seed. My job was to sweep the steps and to remove all signs of that part of the ceremony.

About the third step down, the groom's parents came walking by carrying some of the wedding gifts to their car. As I saw them I thought, "Boy, I'll bet they're impressed—seeing the pastor out here doing the job of a lowly servant. They probably think I'm not only spiritual, but extremely humble as well." Of course, no sooner had these carnal thoughts entered my mind and found a home than the Lord, in His inimitable way, busted me.

"Wood, hay, and stubble," thought I at that point. "No rewards for you. Your motives are all wrong. You are scum. You are not worthy of even sweeping the steps of the church building. Go put the broom up and put on sackcloth and ashes."

"But then," I thought, "the steps won't get swept and the building won't be ready for the service tomorrow."

What was I to do? I decided to confess my sin to the Lord and go ahead and finish the job. I figured there would be no rewards for this one, but maybe I could learn some lessons from my mistakes. Maybe I could learn a little motive discernment from doing it the wrong way so next time I could be a little more fruitful.

How can you know your motives? How can you tell if the things you do are from a pure heart or not?

The first thing is to be honest and admit we all face these struggles. I've found God will work in any area of our lives as long as we are willing to be real with Him. This is always the first step.

Secondly, 3 John 9 tells us...

*I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.*

How can we determine our motives? A person who desires to have pre-eminence, who likes the titles, hats and the recognition—one who likes to have his or her "servanthood" noticed will not receive from a true servant of God. Diotrephes wouldn't even receive from the Apostle John!

How do you think he justified such a position? I'll bet he did it by casting aspersions on the beloved disciple. He probably accused John of doctrinal errors. After all, doctrinal errors must be rejected, right? But in doing so, he was exposing his own selfish motives. If I find myself immediately shifting into a defensive mode every time some person approaches me so as to discredit the messenger, and not heed the message, my motives more than likely need readjusting.

## Endnotes for Chapter 3

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- 1 Bishop, *episkopos*, usually translated elder or bishop.

### Questions for Chapter 3

1. What is the proper motive for service?
2. How can I know my motives?
3. Have I ever done a good deed without telling?
4. List some Scriptures pertaining to the heart of man. How should I view my own heart?

## Chapter Four

### ***Go In This Thy Might***

Judges chapter 6 takes place during a very dark period of Israel's history. Because of their evil ways, the Lord had delivered them over to bands of marauding Midianites who were constantly pillaging the Israelites' crops. These marauders would wait until the grain was harvested and threshed and then just ride in and take it. This had gone on for years, leaving the Children of Israel desperate and destitute. As always, when all else failed, they cried out to God for deliverance. As always, He saw their repentant hearts.

Young Gideon was busy threshing his father's wheat in the winepress in order to hide from the Midianites. Normally, a threshing floor would be chosen for its elevation so as the winnowing fork tossed the crushed grain into the air, the chaff would be separated from the wheat and blown away. Winepresses were hollowed out rocks. As the grapes were crushed, the wine would collect in the bottom.

Gideon had chosen a winepress because the lower elevation kept him protected from being spotted by the raiders. It also made for a most uncomfortable threshing experience. As he winnowed the wheat, the wind swirled and whipped around inside the press blowing the chaff every which way. I'm sure as much went into his eyes as was carried off by the wind. You can picture how unhappy, miserable and humiliated this young man must have been.

Sitting nearby underneath a terebinth tree, the Angel of the LORD<sup>1</sup> watched this sad, pitiful but surely comical scene transpire.

Finally, the Angel spoke and His words are most interesting:

*"The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!"*

What's wrong with this statement? Isn't this guy hiding in the bottom of a winepress from some unseen enemy threshing his father's wheat? Yeah, but this theophany, this Angel of the Lord says,

*"The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!"*

Gideon, feeling the need to correct this Visitor, reminds Him if God were truly with his people, then he wouldn't have been reduced to threshing grain down in the bottom of a hole. "You see," Gideon said,

*"the LORD has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."* (v. 13)

But notice the Angel's most interesting response:

*“Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent thee?”* (v. 14, KJV)

There are two things to learn from this verse.

The first is what God told Gideon to do. “Gideon, take your left foot and put it in front of your right one. Then put your right foot in front of your left. Go. Go in the might that you have.”

Why? Why would God tell Gideon to do this in his own strength. Doesn't the Bible direct us *not* to do things of our own resources? The answer is found in the second lesson: “*Have I not sent you?*” You see, Gideon wasn't going to be going in his own strength at all. It would be the Lord working through him.

God was saying, “If I'm the One Who has called you to this task; if I'm the One Who has told you to clean the pigeon dung out of the bell tower; if I'm the One Who has called you to work in the nursery and the cleaning ministry; if I'm the One Who has called you to preach the Sunday morning message, then I can call you a mighty man of valor if I want to. Go in this might of yours because *I have sent you.*”

Gideon's immediate response seems to have been a well-rehearsed, oft-repeated one. “Lord, You don't understand. I'm the runt of the litter of the most insignificant clan in one of the smallest of the tribes. You've got the wrong boy. I'm just a winepress-wheatthresher. Surely You can find someone more qualified than I.”

*And the Lord said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.”* (Judg. 6:16)

When Paul told Timothy that if a man desires the office of a bishop, or to work in the nursery, or teach Sunday School, or mow the grass, or visit the shut-ins, or vacuum the sanctuary, or preach the sermons or water the plants, then he desires a good thing.

It's interesting though that when we look in the Bible, we find Gideon is not alone. Most of the great leaders of Scripture were reluctant when the Lord first called them. They all tried to argue their way out too! “I can't do this, God. I'm not qualified to lead this great people. I realize that this is for You! It's not just some casual, part-time if-I-feel-like-it thing. It's for You! I'm not capable. Get someone else!” And God's response has always been the same: “*Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.*” It's not our ability that God is interested in. He *knows* our limitations. He made us. He's not impressed with our charismatic personalities and our academic degrees. He's only interested in us and our availability.

Remember the story? Gideon checked out the Lord's promise with the two fleeces. Then when he ran out of excuses, he began to muster his forces. Thirty-two thousand men rose to the occasion. I'm sure by now Gideon was feeling a little better about his chances. Thirty-two thousand of Israel's finest. Only 135,000 measly Syrians. That's only a ratio of 4:1. We're bad! Bring on the Midianites!

“Not so fast!” the Lord interjected. “If you go with this many men, you'll just think the victory was because you're so bad. I want you to know that *I have sent you and the battle and victory belong to Me.*”

So God whittled the army down to 300 good, strong men. But they weren't *that* good and they weren't *that* strong. That ratio was more like 450:1. Those are the kind of odds God likes. So when the battle was over and the dust had cleared, there was no doubt in anyone's mind Who

to praise. The battle belonged to the Lord.

It all began with a single step. It all began when Gideon quit making excuses and saying, “Not so, Lord.” and began putting his left foot in front of his right.

In Isaiah 6, Isaiah saw the Lord, high and lifted up. He was brought before the throne of God; into the presence of God Himself. His response was probably much like yours or mine.

*“Woe [is] me, for I am undone!  
Because I [am] a man of unclean lips,  
And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips;  
For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.”* (Is. 6:6)

Then one of the seraphim took a coal from the altar and cleansed Isaiah’s unclean lips. Whereupon the voice of the Lord asked,

*“Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?”*

Spoken almost three millennia ago, this question still reverberates throughout this fallen universe. Oh, that all of those who have had not only their lips, but their very souls cleansed by the Lord would reply to this question in the same fashion as Isaiah:

*“Here I am, send me.”* (v. 8)

Not “Here I am, and here I stay.” Or “Here I am, send someone else.” Or even “Here I am, serve me.” But “Here I am, **send** me.”

There once was a rich, Texas oil man. He had a beautiful, young daughter. Needless, to say, this lovely debutante had no shortage of suitors. This was of great concern to the father because he didn’t want any swift talking young Texan in a pair of rattlesnake boots to come along and lay claim to his little girl (not to mention his money)! He wanted to make sure that he would be getting the right caliber of man to be his future son-in-law.

So he came up with a plan. He devised a test in which he would be able to separate the men from the boys. He lined up all these would-be suitors at one end of his back yard, Texas-sized swimming pool and announced the conditions of his competition. “Boys,” he said. “The first one to swim the length of the pool and come out on the other end will have the honor of receiving the hand of my daughter in marriage. In addition, I will give the winner his choice of one of the following: any one of my downtown Dallas office buildings, 10,000 head of prime beef, or ten oil wells.”

Naturally, the excitement grew at the end of the pool where the nuptially-minded men were assembled as each considered his chances of achieving the prize. They all lined up to the edge of the pool awaiting the signal to start.

But then the oil man rolled back the pool cover revealing something very alarming. The pool waters were alive with the activity of hundreds of creepy, crawly things. Alligators, water moccasins and piranhas covered every inch of the pool. A gasp followed by absolute silence grabbed the group of marital hopefuls. Just as the father was beginning to think none of the men would be willing to accept his challenge he heard a splash coming from the end of the pool where the men were assembled. A tremendous flurry of activity followed as all speed records—water, land, and air—were broken as one of the suitors made his way through the life threatening

obstacle course. He exited on the other end.

“That was fantastic!” exclaimed the wealthy father. “Never have I seen such bravery and courage! I would be proud to have you as a member of my family and to take my lovely daughter in marriage. Now, tell me, which would you like—one of my prime Dallas office buildings?”

“No, sir.” replied the drenched bachelor. “I don’t want one of your office buildings.”

“Well, then, you must want my offer of 10,000 head of cattle.” said the millionaire.

“No, sir. I don’t want your cattle either.”

“Of course, not.” exclaimed the girl’s father. “You must want the 10 oil wells. Good choice, young man.”

“Sir,” replied the young man politely. “I really don’t want your oil wells either.”

“Son! Just what do you want then?” asked the exasperated Texan.

“Sir, the only thing I want,” said the young man with growing boldness, “is the name of the person who pushed me in at the other end!”

Is it possible that you have been withholding from service to God for some reason? Maybe you’ve been burned by the experience before or you’ve done it from the wrong motives. Maybe you’ve tried and failed or you feel totally inadequate to the task.

Is it possible—even in the remotest sense—the Holy Spirit could be the One pushing you into the churning waters of Christian ministry, promising to empower and to enable you for the task He has set before you? Is it possible the Lord is telling each and every one of us to, “Go. Go in this thy might!”?

## Endnotes for Chapter 4

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1 In the Old Testament, the phrase *The Angel of the LORD* is generally considered by most scholars as a *Theophany* or preincarnate manifestation of Christ.

### Study Questions for Chapter 4

1. What statement do I make when I doubt God's ability to use me?
2. What happens when I avoid stepping out in faith when the Spirit is leading?
3. What situations do I face today that require faith to go forward?
4. What verses tell of God's ability to give me the ability?

## Chapter Five

### *The “Call”*

Before we finish defining and describing leadership, I feel it would benefit us to first take a look at what it means to be “called to the ministry.” We learned from chapter 1 since we’re Christians, we’re called to the ministry. The ministry is nothing more than intensive Christianity—and *all* Christians are called to be intense.

You probably have heard it said, “If you’re not called to the ministry, you’d better get out.” In fact, maybe you have said something similar yourself. I have. If this is true, is it a contradiction from what was established earlier?

A few years ago, my family and I received “the call” to move to Oklahoma City and pioneer Calvary Chapel of OKC. We know what that means, don’t we? I was sitting in my study one afternoon in the midst of prayer and fasting when the phone rang. Not the almond-colored one but the *red* one. The hot line.

“Hello?”

“Ken?” The Voice on the other end said. “This is the Lord. I want you and your family to pack up, leave your home and go to the land I will show you. I am calling you to go.”

Of course this isn’t the way it happened. How did I know that I was being “called” to Oklahoma City? How did I know I was being “called” into the ministry in the first place?

Charles Spurgeon, who trained many men for the pastorate used to tell his men that if there was *anything* else they could do, then they should go do it. If they could possibly be a doctor or a carpenter or a baker or *anything* else then they should. He would try his best to talk them out of their pursuit and if he could then he figured they weren’t called to be a pastor.

The Scriptures also tell us that there is sometimes a specific call upon individual’s lives. Abraham was called to a different land. God called to Moses from the midst of the burning bush. Paul was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles. The list could go on and on.

I wonder how Paul did receive his calling? Acts 13:2 tells us the Lord said,

*“Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”*

How did the Lord say this? Was it audible as it was for Abraham and Moses? Was it a still small voice that spoke confirming words to all of those present? Was it an overwhelming burden in the hearts of Paul and Barnabas?

What about Timothy? The Bible is silent regarding his calling. It just tells us he had one (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). And remember the pigeon dung removal ministry?<sup>1</sup> Did those men hear a word from a burning bush or a burning bosom?

How do we determine whether or not God is leading us to become involved in a particular ministry? I think the primary answer was seen in chapter 4 in Isaiah’s vision of God’s throne (Is. 6). After having his lips cleansed by the coal from the altar, the Lord asked the



question...

*“...who will go for Us?”*

Without hesitation, Isaiah answered...

*“Here am I, send me.”* (v. 8)

It’s obvious there are times when the Lord specifically calls a person to perform a certain task—whether it is a single act or a life-long endeavor. The vast majority of the time, however, it is simply a matter of Him using and guiding open and willing vessels to accomplish His purposes.

A reporter once asked Billy Graham if he had ever heard the voice of God. Dr. Graham responded by saying that if you meant did he ever hear an audible, unmistakable, burning bush voice of God, then the answer would have to be “No.”

No one would question, however, the guiding of Billy Graham’s life and ministry. The Lord has obviously “spoken” to him and “told” him to do certain things. Who would doubt that God “called” Billy Graham to a ministry of evangelism?

Today, I have no doubt that I received the call to come to Oklahoma City. But when did I have no doubt? Was it when the idea first came into my head? Was it when my house in my home town sold? Was it when I found a group of people in the OKC area who were desirous of having a Calvary Chapel in this community?

I can’t answer that question with all certainty. All I know is when we make ourselves available to God to do His will, and we allow Him to guide our steps as we seek to be faithful in the opportunities He places before us—then we can look back in retrospect and say for certain we were responding to “the call.”

Remember the pigeon dung guys? Today, they are both engaged in full-time Christian service.

The Lord had asked regarding the need for pigeon dung removal, “Who will go for Us?” They responded by saying, “Here we are, send us.”

It’s like the parable of the talents Jesus tells us of in Matthew 25. A man was preparing to travel to a far off country. Before leaving, he called his servants and gave each a certain amount of money—according to the ability of each (v. 15).

Upon returning, he called his servants to give an account of what they had done with that which he had entrusted to them. The first two had each doubled their money but the third, being afraid of his master, hid his portion in the ground.

At this, the angry master took what he had given the third servant and gave it to the first. But to each of the two faithful servants, he said,

*“Well [done], good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.”* (vv. 21, 23)

and...

*“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.”* (v. 29)

As the Lord used the faithfulness of the men in the parable to use them in other capacities, so He used the men who cleaned the pigeon dung.

“The call,” then, is not necessarily so much a matter of hearing the voice of God telling us what to do as much as it is being available to respond to a particular need. In other words, we might say that the need constitutes the call.

This is not to say that we should do everything and be involved in everything, but it is to say that we should do what we can and be involved in what we can.

Can we pick up paper? Can we vacuum the Fellowship Hall? Can we work in the nursery; visit the shut-ins; do repairs and maintenance on the building? Can we teach the Bible; be an elder; sing in the choir?

I only know one way of answering those questions—“Here I am, Lord, send me.”

## Endnotes for Chapter 5

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1 See Chapter 2.

### Study Questions for Chapter 5

1. How can I know when God is leading me to become involved in a particular ministry?
2. In what areas of my life am I holding back, refusing to say "Here I am, send me"?
3. Look up the biblical accounts of the following people. Reflect on the response each person had to the call one his or her life. What were the results of their responses? To whom do you relate most closely?

Esther

Balaam

Abraham

Mary

David

Jonah

Samuel

## Part Two

**WHAT YOU BE DO HERE?**

## Chapter Six

### ***The "Rights" of a Disciple***

Years ago, I attended a Christian concert. The artist, who was from South Carolina, explained the quaint way that Southerners have of expressing themselves. “Down South,” he said, “we say things like ‘What you be do here?’” Of course he meant, “What are you doing here?” I remember thinking, “That would be a good title for a Bible study.” *What You Be Do Here?*. After all, that’s a good question, isn’t it?

What be we do here? Why do we go to church? What is the necessity of Christian service? In Part 1, we found God uses even the most inept of us. This begs the question, however, “why?” In Part 2 of this field manual, we will attempt to answer these questions.

In Part 1, we learned leadership is made up of three characteristics: being a servant, being an example and being accountable. We learned that leadership is nothing more than intensive Christianity. Therefore, all Christians are called to ministry because, by its very nature, Christianity is intense. We essentially focused on the first two by defining leadership as the act of being a servant with Jesus as our prime example (John 13). In this section, our focus will be, primarily, on the third aspect—accountability—or maybe more properly stated—discipleship.

A very controversial question in certain circles within the Church today is, “What is it that makes a Christian a Christian?” Is it a person who has made Jesus his Savior? Or is it someone who has made Jesus his Lord? Can Jesus be an individual’s Savior and not his Lord? Can a person “get saved” and then later, as he grows as a Christian, make Jesus his Lord? Are the two concepts inseparable?

It is not the purpose of this work to thoroughly investigate this issue, however, as we look at the subject of discipleship, it will serve to at least address the subject briefly. In studying the Bible, I’ve found scriptural support for either side of the issue. However, the Bible in general doesn’t make a distinction between Jesus being Savior and Lord. This distinction was certainly absent from the Church we find in the book of Acts.

We could ask the same question, with only a slight restating, “Is it possible to be a Christian, and not be a disciple?” Is it possible to be a lackadaisical, apathetic, non-committed, lukewarm, fill-a-pew-on-Sundays kind of Christian and say, “I love the Lord, but I’m not a disciple?”

Again, if we look to the early Church for our example, we find that when the first believers became born again; when they became converted; when they received their new life in Jesus, they became disciples. For them, it wasn’t an issue of controversy. It wasn’t even a matter of consideration. For the first century Church, being a disciple was part and parcel of all that being a Christian entailed. They had this simplistic idea that being followers of Jesus meant that they were followers of Jesus. They were humbled by the fact the Lord deemed them worthy to follow in His footsteps.

The word *disciple* comes to us from the original language as *mathetes*. It is where we get

our modern English word *mathematics*. As we trace the etymology of the word backwards through the centuries and various languages, it eventually loses its arithmetical connotations and we find it in its original sense. A *Mathetes* is simply someone who learns. Hence, a disciple is a learner, a student.

One of the things that is most important for us to understand (and one of the things that is most easily forgotten) is it is a privilege to serve God. When we are down at the church building on Saturday afternoon vacuuming the sanctuary, are we constantly cognizant of the fact it's God's grace—and His grace alone—that makes it possible to be doing such a great work for Him?

It is an awesome thing to be able to serve such an awesome God. A volunteer will not look at it this way. A servant will. A volunteer will probably, if not always begin to look at his service as something that is deserving and worthy of recognition. A volunteer will begin to believe that he is owed something—if not from those whom he serves, then from God. He will often become bitter and resentful if he doesn't get it.<sup>1</sup>

A servant on the other hand realizes he is not his own, for he was bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). Therefore he is not deserving of anything and sees all good things that come to him as being contingent upon his Owner's mercy and grace. A servant is a *doulos*. His ear has been laid upon the door post and pierced with an awl (Deut. 15:16, 17).

Jesus said regarding servanthood, "*If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.*" (John 13:17). Many Christians don't know these things because they haven't learned them. This, my friends, is the duty of the disciple—to learn.

For most of us, most of the time, there is far too much volunteer mentality at work in our service to God. It is a constant battle to remind ourselves of the sanction that we have in serving Him. He has chosen *me* to do this task or perform that mission! I am not worthy of even the least of God's mercies and yet He has deemed I should be blessed with every spiritual blessing there is (Eph. 1:3). What could be any more totally mind-blowing than that?

Our normal tendency is to think of it as something that we are doing to help God out. We see a line in the bulletin requesting help in a particular ministry and we think, "Yeah, I'll help out." And then it's only a matter of time before we're wondering, "When am I going to get the recognition I deserve for this great sacrifice I'm making?" Or, "How come I'm the only one who is doing this. I've done my time. I've paid my dues."

On the subject of sacrifices, Dr. David Livingstone, the great missionary to Africa wrote over 100 years ago,

"People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward of healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and a bright hope of glorious destiny hereafter?

"Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege. Anxiety, sickness, suffering or danger now and then, with a foregoing of the common conveniences and charities of this life, may make us pause and cause the spirit to waver and sink; but let this only be for a moment. All these are nothing when compared with the glory which shall hereafter be revealed in and for us. I never made a sacrifice. Of

this we ought not to talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father's throne on high to give Himself for us."

The thing that God would have us to do as leaders, as church workers, as servants, as disciples is consistently realize it is a privilege to serve God. We *get* to be servants when we deserve to be grease spots in the parking lot. He *allows* us to be His Body. Pause and reflect upon the meaning of that statement for a minute. He looks at us and says, "You are the Body of Christ." Privilege of all privileges! Therefore, our service to God is not something we are to enter into unadvisedly or lightly.

The following story probably best illustrates how servanthood and leadership come together to build the Kingdom of God. I borrow it from a man whom I consider to be one of my mentors, Gayle Erwin, who in turn borrowed it from Robert Patton.

Little Chad was a shy, quiet young fella. One day, he came home and told his mother that he would like to make a valentine for everyone in his class. Her heart sank. She thought, "I wish he wouldn't do that!" because she had watched the children when they walked home from school. Her Chad was always behind them. They laughed and hung on to each other and talked to each other.

But Chad was never included. Nevertheless, she decided she would go along with her son. So she purchased the paper and glue and crayons. For three whole weeks, night after night, Chad painstakingly made thirty-five valentines.

Valentine's Day dawned, and Chad was beside himself with excitement! He carefully stacked them up, put them in a bag and bolted out the door. His mom decided to bake him his favorite cookies and serve them up warm and nice with a cool glass of milk when he came home from school. She just knew he would be disappointed. Maybe that would ease the pain a little. It hurt her to think that he wouldn't get many valentines...maybe none at all.

That afternoon, she had the cookies and milk on the table. When she heard the children outside, she looked out the window. Sure enough, here they came, laughing and having the best time.

And, as always, there was Chad in the rear. He walked a little faster than usual.

She fully expected him to burst into tears as soon as he got inside. His arms were empty, she noticed, and when the door opened, she choked back the tears.

"Mommy has some warm cookies and milk for you." But he hardly heard her words. He just marched right on by, his face aglow, and all he could say was:

"Not a one. Not a one." Her heart sank.

And then he added, "I didn't forget a one, not a single one."

## **Endnotes for Chapter 6**

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- 1 For a further comparison of volunteers and servants, see Chapter 2.

### **Study Questions for Chapter 6**

1. The primary duty of a disciple of Christ is to learn. How should this learning translate into my daily living?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why is it so important that I, as a leader, have a proper outlook on service?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. List several Scriptures that describe a proper attitude toward service. Memorize one that is especially meaningful.



## Chapter Seven

### ***The Yoke's On You***

There are some passages of the Bible that are just too familiar. There are some Scriptures that are so well known most of us can recite them from rote memory. But if pressed to consider exactly what the passage is teaching us, we find ourselves at a loss. Such is the case, more often than not, with Matthew 11:28-30.

*“Come unto Me, all [you] who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke [is] easy and My burden is light.”*

As far as familiarity goes, this passage would rank right up there with John 3:16. Few Christians are not aware of its teaching. But do we understand what it means—that Jesus’ yoke is easy and His burden is light?

As we go through life, we carry our burdens with us. If we are experiencing some kind of bummer and go to church, we take the bummer to church with us. Let’s face it. Life can be hard. There’s no getting around it. Even now, as you are reading this book, it is quite possible your present circumstances are extremely burdensome. So Jesus comes along and says, “Hey, My yoke’s easy. My burden’s light.” And we think, “Oh, what a great verse.” We may even memorize it, or stick a copy of it on our refrigerator. Then we pick our burden back up and go on with life.

As a disciple, as a *mathetes* of Jesus, we need to realize that what He wants to do in our lives is to teach us what it means to take up His yoke. It’s not simply some academic Bible study. It’s not some word study where we learn how to conjugate this verb or decline that noun and as a result proclaim, “Oh, this is what it means to have His yoke upon us.” It’s a life-long process.

We all know what a yoke is. In Bible times, when a farmer plowed his field, he would take two oxen and harness them together with a wooden beam called a yoke. This beam would be custom-made so that it fit each animal perfectly. Thus yoked together, the two animals would be able to do twice the work. It was important, however, the animals be in sync. In fact, Deut. 22:10 forbade the yoking of a donkey and an ox together. Their gaits were different. They would work against each other.

Jesus said we are to take His yoke upon ourselves and *learn*<sup>1</sup> from Him because His yoke is easy and His burden is light. The only way we can learn; the only way we can come to an understanding of what exactly it means to have Jesus’ easy yoke and light burden is to come to a place where we are committed to going the same direction as He. We must strive to acquire His gait and be resolved to stop working against His pull upon the yoke. We must *want* to be a disciple. We must desire to *learn from Him*, not to have Him learn how to please us. No yoke is

easy if one of the “yokees” pulls against the other. His yoke will not be easy for us if we are going the other way. If we’re trying to sit down as He is trying to pull, it doesn’t work. If He is trying to go down the paths of righteousness while we’re struggling to take the road of selfishness, it will be a bust. The only thing accomplished is chaffed necks. As disciples, as His *mathetai*<sup>2</sup>, this is the first order of business. Then we begin the life-long process of learning what taking His yoke means.

## Endnotes for Chapter 7

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- 1 From the verb *manthano*, which, according to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, is practically the equivalent to being the verb form of *mathetes*.
- 2 *Mathetai* is the plural of *mathetes*.

## Study Questions for Chapter 7

1. What attitude must I adopt to be productively yoked with the Savior?
2. Describe what happens in a negative situation when Jesus' yoke is accepted and His way is followed. Are these things happening in my life?
3. What other Scriptures describe Jesus' desire to share our burdens?

## Chapter Eight

### ***So, Ya Wanna Be A Disciple?***

There is a common fallacy these days as to what exactly discipleship is. We think discipleship is two or more individuals getting a workbook, meeting together at appointed times, memorizing certain Scriptures and filling in specified blanks in the workbook. Then at the end of eight to thirteen weeks, when we've completed the book, we may successfully say that we've been disciplined.

While these types of programs are good, while many Christians have been helped tremendously through them and while they might serve to help in the process of discipleship—they are not in and of themselves discipleship. Of course memorizing Scripture is good. Getting together in small intimate groups can be very fruitful. Learning how to look at a text of the Bible inductively and being tested over the material covered has much merit. But it's not discipleship. Discipleship is being conformed to the image of Christ.

I can memorize vast portions of the Bible. The devil has done that. I can study and gain all kinds of intellectual Bible knowledge. Even some atheists do that. I can get together with my peers and discuss what we've gone over and what does it accomplish? If I'm not walking more by faith and closer to Jesus after having done so, it profits me nothing.

When we talk of taking discipleship out of the objective realm of memorizing and question-answering into the subjective realm of how the Holy Spirit works in each individual life—where He molds us and shapes us and hammers us and chips away the parts of us that don't look like Jesus; in other words, conforms us into Christ's image—He does so in a very individual and a very personal fashion. Therefore, we can't say, "Here is the formula for discipleship, and it works the same way for everybody."

In Luke 9, we find Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. His time had finally come (v. 51). As He was working His way from Galilee to Jerusalem, He was ministering to those in need. He would heal, teach and comfort all those who came to Him. I can imagine that as they progressed in their journey, the entourage which accompanied Him grew. Picture the scene as dozens, maybe more, followed along and jockeyed for position next to Jesus.

*Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, [that] someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air [have] nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay [His] head." (vv. 57-58)*

Jesus informed him that when they arrived at the next town, they didn't have reservations at the Marriott. In fact, some of the towns wouldn't receive them at all (v. 53). "You say you'll follow Me wherever I go," Jesus said, "but you need to know there is no place I won't go. And there are no promises that it will be easy when I get there. Don't say you're going to follow Me

unless you are willing to follow *Me*.” The text doesn’t tell us what the man’s response was, but wouldn’t you like to think he said, “Hey, as long as You’re there, a rock is a good enough pillow for me”?

The journey continued and a short time later, Jesus looked over at another man and said,

*“Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.”* (vv. 59-60)

Initially, Jesus’ comment seems rather calloused and cold. But the fact was, the man’s father was not dead yet. In fact the truth be known, he wasn’t even sick. The man was simply using familial obligations as an excuse for not becoming a disciple. The Lord’s response to him was that a true disciple is one who has given up all claim to everything—even family.

Of course, we know the flip side to that coin is the family is our first ministry. A true disciple will serve God through the service to his family. But this guy was using his family as an excuse *not* to follow Jesus.

The dialogue between Jesus and the next man is equally interesting:

*And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go [and] bid them farewell who are at my house.” But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”* (vv. 61-62)

The man was saying in effect, “The things of home have a certain hold on me. I cannot completely disassociate myself from them.”

In order for us to fully understand what Jesus was trying to communicate to these three men, we must adopt an eternal mindset. As humans, living in a four-dimensional world of time and space, we tend to view things in a linear fashion. In other words, we look at things from a past, present, and future perspective. Yesterday, I went to the store; today I’m going to take it easy; and next week I will start my diet.

The natural tendency, is to look at the Kingdom of God in the same manner. I received the Lord when I was 10 years old; I am currently learning the books of the Bible; and when I get older, I intend to begin serving the Lord with my whole heart. Eternity is something we also think of as future—something that begins in the future and never has an ending.

We know, however, that God is a God of eternity—He doesn’t dwell in the past, present, or future. He has no beginning and no end. He lives in the ever-present Now. That’s why He says,

*“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”* (Matt. 22:32)

Notice He says, “*I am* the God...” not “*I was* the God.” His very Name, *YHWH*, translates as “The Self-existing One.”<sup>1</sup> Eternal life is not something God *has*, it is something He *is*.

A careful reading of the first few verses of John’s first letter tells us the arrival of Jesus into the world was a manifestation of that eternal life (1:2). Again, eternal life was not something that Jesus possessed, it was an attribute—something He is.

In chapter 5 of this same book, verse 11, we see this same eternal life is imparted to all of us who have become His children—all of His disciples.

Bear in mind, the Bible nowhere says *someday*, we will receive eternal life. It's something we have *now*—ever-present, eternally now! All of life's experiences are to be interpreted in light of that fact.

Serving God is not something we plan on doing someday, for as Paul told the Corinthians:

*Behold, now [ is ] the accepted time; behold, now [ is ] the day of salvation.*  
(2 Cor. 6:2)

In the 17th chapter of Luke's gospel (v 32), Jesus gave us a very provocative exhortation: "*Remember Lot's wife.*" Now *there's* a memory verse for you. We like the short, easy one's like "Jesus wept." Here's the one of the shortest verses in the Bible: "Remember Lot's wife."

But do we remember Lot's wife? In Genesis 19, God had determined to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. But first, He was going to remove Lot and his family. His angel had instructed them to head for the hills and to not look back. Reluctantly, they followed the angel's advice and left Sodom. As they ascended up the side of the hill a safe distance from city, the destruction began. The Lord began raining fire and brimstone down upon the inhabitants of the plain. Lot's wife stopped. She cried, "Oh! My home!" and she looked back. Whereupon she was immediately turned into a salt lick.

She longed for her roots. She longed for her comfortable, familiar surroundings. This faith-walk stuff was too tentative. She wanted something more permanent, something more stationary. She got it—a pillar of salt.

There are two common denominators in the three examples found in Luke 9. First of all, the cost of discipleship is uncompromising. It requires total commitment—total abandonment. Excuses are cheap, but discipleship is costly. It costs everything.

Secondly, Jesus met with all three men in a personal, individual way. Two of them came to Him. One He approached Himself. But in each case, Jesus knew exactly where each person was and just what it was each needed in their relationship to Him.

Why He has chosen to do His work through such frail, selfish creatures as us is beyond me, but He has. Therefore, it is essential we come to Him with complete and total surrender.

### Christ Has No Hands

*Christ has no hands but our hands to do His work today  
He has no feet but our feet to lead men in the way  
He has no tongue but our tongue to tell men how He died  
He has no help but our help to bring them to His side  
We are the only Bible the careless world will read  
We are the sinner's gospel; we are the scoffer's creed  
We are the Lord's last message, given in word and deed  
What if the type is crooked and the print they cannot read?  
What if our hands are busy with other work than His?  
What if our feet are walking where sin's allurements is?*

*What if our tongue is speaking of things His lips would spurn?  
How can we hope to help Him or welcome His return?*

--Annie Johnston Flint

## Endnotes for Chapter 8

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- 1 Brown, Driver, and Briggs Lexicon: Reference, *LORD*.

### Study Questions for Chapter 8

1. What is discipleship?
2. What is the most effective method the Holy Spirit uses to shape and mold me?
3. Use Scripture to describe the difficulties of full-on discipleship. What are the payoffs?



## Chapter Nine

### ***The “A” Word***

Accountability. The word strikes terror into the hearts of many. We’re sure that it somehow has to add up to being a four-letter word. It’s a nasty word. It’s a word we would just as soon be struck from the English language. It’s a word like *mandatory*. If it doesn’t fray the ending of every fiber of our humanity, it certainly goes against the grain of all that is American. “We are Abraham’s children,” we say, (Abraham *Lincoln* that is.) “and have never been in bondage to anyone.” Accountability is bondage.

Hence, within the Church, there is very little accountability. And what little there is is often grossly abused. The word gets used a lot, but there is actually very little real application of it. We leave the church building and go where we want to go. We do what we want to do and see whom (or what) we want to see. Then come back to the church building when we want to come back and participate in the programs and ministries that we want to be involved in—and we do so in the degree and effort we think appropriate. And everybody else had best just mind their own business.

If we are teaching Sunday School and are consistently five minutes late to report to class, and the Sunday School superintendent says anything to us, we say he’s slamming us. If we are living a carnal, public lifestyle and an elder approaches us in love to attempt to restore us, we declare he is judging us and is being holier than thou. If we say we’ll clean the building on Saturday afternoon, but don’t show up and something is said to us on Sunday morning, we are sure the church is full of cliques, and they can just find someone else to do the cleaning because we’re just going to pull away from all kinds of ministry right now while we “work through some things.”

Of course the question is begged, “just what is accountability?” These examples are actually better defined as selfishness or even rebellion. Good ol’ Webster helps us out by defining accountability as “an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility to or accountability for one’s actions.”<sup>1</sup>

In fact, in searching through various other dictionaries and comparing definitions, I find the one word they all have in common is the word *responsibility*. An accountable person is a responsible person. While on the one hand, we may take pride in the fact we are accountable to no one—non-accountable, we would never say we were responsible to no one—irresponsible. If a synonym for accountability is responsibility, then a synonym for non-accountability is logically irresponsibility.

Of course, a responsible individual is a dependable individual. Therefore, is it stretching the application too far to say that being accountable is the same as being dependable? At the very least, I think it would be safe to say dependability is contained within the concept of accountability.

Chuck Swindoll, in his book *Living Above The Level Of Mediocrity*, gives us four qualities that are observable in accountability:<sup>2</sup>

*Vulnerability*—capable of being wounded, shown to be wrong, even admitting it before being confronted.

*Teachability*—a willingness to learn, being quick to hear and respond to reproof, being open to counsel.

*Availability*—accessible, touchable, able to be interrupted.

*Honesty*—committed to the truth regardless of how much it hurts, a willingness to admit the truth no matter how difficult or humiliating the admission may be. Hating all that is phony or false.

If these qualities truly represent (and I believe they do) what accountability is, it's no wonder that there is so little of it in the Church. To paraphrase the King James Version of Prov. 31:10: *An accountable person, who can find?*

But if these qualities are difficult and rare within the average Christian, how much more should we all strive to acquire them?

Let's turn and read Eph. 5:21-33:

*...submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so [let] the wives [be] to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord [does] the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife [see] that she respects [her] husband.*

In this classic passage of His Word, God lays out the model for all authority. He begins by saying we are to be in submission to each other. No one Christian is above another. We are all to be in voluntary cooperation<sup>3</sup> with each other, in other words—to be accountable.

Quite clearly, Paul is instructing husbands and wives in their God-given roles within the marriage unit. He makes it very clear the wife's job is that of submission (See definition below.) and the husband's job is to love the wife. (See 1 Cor. 13 for a definition of biblical love.) While this model has been much abused and misunderstood by many, the teaching is clear. This is God's ideal for the home. It is important for us to understand the heart of this model in order for us to understand what God desires for us in the arena of accountability.

When Paul tells the wives to submit, we need to see he is addressing the *wives*, not the

husbands. No place in Scripture do we see the husbands are given free reign as a despot within the home demanding perfect and absolute obedience. Paul is simply telling the wives to be in a state of voluntary cooperation toward their husbands as to the Lord (or, as though he were Jesus Himself).

Marital submission then, originates with the wife and proceeds to the husband.

Husbands, are to love their wives unconditionally, sacrificially and without reservation. Verse 25 tells them they are to perform this in the same fashion as Christ loves the Church. Jesus doesn't crack a whip, stomp His foot and make demands upon His Bride. In fact, the only place we see Him reacting that way is when dealing with the hypocrites and the false shepherds of Israel. But with the Church, we see Him just exhibiting love. He loves us into submission. He pours His grace out upon us without measure. We are drawn to Him as a result. To the degree this model is worked out in the home, there is harmony.

"Yes," you might say. "I understand how it's suppose to work at home. I've read all those marriage books. But what does this have to do with accountability in the church? What's this got to do with others knowing about my business?"

It takes nothing more than a cursory perusal of the rest of the chapter to notice that more is at work there than simply Paul giving spouses their marching orders. Notice the alternate plot: Christ is the head of the Church (v. 23); the Church is subject to Christ (v. 24); Christ loved the Church (v. 25) in order to present it to Himself glorious, spotless, and without blemish (v. 27); for we are members of His Body (v. 30). In other words, He is really talking about Christ and the Church (v. 32).

As marriage provides a beautiful representation of the relationship between Jesus and the Church, it also gives us a perfect picture of how the authority structure is to be played out. Jesus Christ loves the Church with an unconditional, limitless love. We respond in kind. We *want* to do His will. His *love* constrains us (2 Cor. 5:14). We *desire* to be pleasing to Him.

No place in Scripture do we find submission being coerced. We never see Jesus forcing the Church to do anything. Love is always the motivation. Submission is always the response to that love.

The bookshelves at the local Christian bookstore abound with the latest tomes about the spiritual abuse and misuse of power in the Church today. In some churches, it seems the entire ministry is built upon the precept of running a tight ship and holding the members accountable.

This isn't found in the Bible. Jesus was completely accountable to God. He knew His very purpose for becoming flesh was to do the will of His Father (Ps. 40:8, Heb. 10:7). Nowhere do we see the Father making His Son do His will. He didn't have to. Jesus delighted in being accountable to His Dad. While I believe Scripture mandates accountability, I believe that it begins in the same place as its cousin—submission—at the bottom.

As the wife is subject to her husband, so is the ministry worker subject to the ministry head. As the Church is accountable to Jesus, so are we to be accountable to each other (Eph. 5:21). But in all cases, it's to be a voluntary, willing part of a servant's living sacrifice to the Lord (Rom. 12:1).

While it is foreign to Scripture to have it forced, accountability is something all disciples should desire. Everyone who has said, "I want to take Your yoke upon me, Jesus. I want to follow You wherever You go," should desire accountability as a normal part of his or her spiritual growth.

## Endnotes for Chapter 9

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- 1 Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th ed.
- 2 Chuck Swindoll, *Living Above the Level of Mediocrity* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), pg. 127.
- 3 Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines submission, *hupotasso*, as "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden."

## Study Questions for Chapter 9

1. How do accountability, responsibility, dependability and submission interrelate to describe a disciple?

2. Considering my own "accountability quotient" how do I rate on:

Vulnerability

Teachability

Availability

Honesty

3. As I make myself accountable to other it can become difficult. What Scriptures can I use to help me through?

## Chapter Ten

### ***An Integral Part of Ministry***

As important as accountability is to an effective ministry, even more significant to the working of the local church is integrity.

Interestingly, *integrity* is the noun form of the verb *integrate*. It comes to us through the Latin word which means “to make whole.” Webster explains integrity as “a firm adherence to a code or standard of values. The quality or condition of being undivided.”<sup>1</sup>

This definition is easily understood when we look at the verb form, *integrate*. Whenever we integrate something, we make it part of the whole. We integrate new families into the church, new employees into the workplace, and new students into classes by making them part of or assimilating them into that respective body.

However, when it comes to understanding the meaning of the word integrity, we think it simply means upright. But by virtue of the definition of the word, it means more. It also means to be undivided.

Jesus had integrity didn't He? If ever a man walked this Earth with integrity, it was He. Not only did He have a firm adherence to a standard of values, but He was undivided.

The mark of a disciple, the mark of a *mathetes*, is that of integrity. If we want to be like Jesus, we must be people of integrity in every sense of the word.

When Noah was building the Ark, he didn't just go out in the backyard on a long four-day weekend and whip it up out of some scrap lumber. He spent over 100 years in preparation.

One hundred years. Can you see Noah about 30 years into his mission just one day throwing down his hammer and yelling, “Enough! I'm through! I've done my time. It's someone else's turn. The whole world is laughing at me. I need some 'me-time,' Lord. Get someone else.”?

One hundred years of sacrifice. Sawing the gopher wood. Planing the surfaces. Pitching the joints. What kept him going? Surely he got discouraged at times. Why didn't he quit? Noah was a man of integrity. He had a firm adherence to a standard of values. He was undivided.

I wonder how God spoke to Noah. Have you ever thought about that? We know how Bill Cosby says the Lord spoke to him, but how do you think God *really* spoke to him? How loud and audible? How often? Do you think that at any time during that century plus Noah woke up one morning—muscles aching from the previous day's toils—and thought, “Did I really hear God? I wonder if it was actually that Little Caesar's pizza I had that night.”

Do you think that at any point during that time he asked himself, “What if it doesn't rain? What if I got it all wrong?”

Do you think he never wavered? He was a man wasn't he? I have no doubt there were times when Noah's faith faltered. But he was not just any man. He was a man of integrity. He was not a man who put his hand to the plow and then turned back. He had a task. He had a

mission. He was a *doulos*.

We all remember the story of Joseph from Sunday School. He was the guy with the coat of many colors. His jealous brothers sold him to a caravan bound for Egypt where he found himself in the household of Potifer, the *vizier*, or number two man in the entire kingdom.

In Genesis 39, we find Joseph made the head over all of Potifer's house—his chief-of-staff, if you will. Joseph wasn't simply purchased from some traveling caravan and immediately given a position of such esteem, trust and honor. He had to work his way up. He had to earn it. He stood out among all the other slaves, because he was a man of integrity.

It was Joseph's integrity that kept him from falling into a deep funk. He could have copped a major attitude and justified it because of the circumstances that put him there. His own family had betrayed him! Where was God when he needed him? Why should he trust anyone ever again? But the difference between our Joe and the average Joe is integrity.

"Finally!" Joseph must have thought. "My integrity has paid off. I have been recognized for being the capable, trustworthy person that I am and Potifer has promoted me to the highest position in his home. Everything's going to be all right now."

Of course, very alert Sunday School students will remember things were not all right. Potifer's wife had her eyes on Joseph. She had made several attempts at seducing him, but Joseph, being the individual of integrity he was, successfully resisted her advancements.

Then one day, the master was gone. Mrs. Potifer had decided that would be the day. Nothing was going to deter her from her goal—Joseph.

So it happened that as Joseph was entering the house she reached out and grabbed his garment. "Come lie with me," she said in a deep, sultry voice. But Joseph simply split the scene—leaving garment and seductress behind.

How was Joseph able to conduct himself with such integrity? The answer is found in verse 9 of Genesis 39:

*"[There] [is] no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you [are] his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"*

Notice the last part of this verse. Joseph didn't see this sin as a sin against Potifer, his wife, or even his own body. Joseph saw that to commit this great wickedness would be to sin against God.

The initial impetus for all integrity is to realize, as David explained in Psalm 51:4, that all sin is against God and God alone. To not walk in integrity is to sin against God.

Or how about Daniel? Now here was a man of integrity. When the Babylonians tried to feed him pork chops, he said he would rather eat Brussels sprouts than to defile his own body. Now *that's* integrity!

Whenever the subject of integrity comes up, the most oft-mentioned non-biblical character is Abraham Lincoln. Regardless of what someone might think of his politics or faith, nearly all agree on his integrity.

He once said,

"I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reigns of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me."

Wouldn't it be great to have leaders like that in our nation today? Wouldn't it be great to have leaders like that in our church? It seems as though the very subject of integrity is becoming foreign to all segments of our society today.

Again Lincoln said,

"I do the very best I know how; the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing it to the end. If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me will not amount to anything. If the end brings me out all wrong, then a legion of angels swearing I was right will make no difference."

That's what it's like to live your life having a firm adherence to a code or standard of values. That's what it's like to be undivided. As a sage once said,

"The measure of a man's real character is what he would do, if he knew he would never be found out."

The measure of a Christian's real character is what he would do if he knew God would be the only One Who ever saw. Recently, someone said, "Integrity is like air—the further up you go, the less there is." How true. How sad this can also be said of the Church.

We've learned what it means to be a servant and an example. We've seen what it means to be a disciple. Now we've discovered the importance of being accountable as men and women of integrity. We can see the value of entering into our ministries (i.e. our Christian walks) with a view toward being the Body of Christ—being the hands, the feet and the mouth of Christ.

We are now ready to work within the Body—building it up in love (Eph. 4:15-16). We want to serve His Church with total abandon, because we serve Him by serving His Body. And if we do it right, hey, what is said against us will not amount to anything. Critics begone! And if we do it wrong, it doesn't matter. Jesus can fix it. All He asks for is our responsibility—our response to His ability.

## Endnotes for Chapter 10

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- 1 Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary, 1984.

### Study Questions for Chapter 10

1. What is the two-part meaning of the word "integrity"?
2. Think of a man or woman who has great integrity. Describe how they demonstrate this virtue.
3. Look up the word integrity in a concordance. List the verses that encourage us to remain firm and undivided.



## Part Three

### **SHEPHERDS AND UNDERSHEPHERDS**

## Chapter Eleven

### ***Let's Get Organized***

If we were to look at a typical Christian church organizational chart, we would see, of course, at the top of the chart a balloon with the name “God” or “Jesus” inside it. “Jesus is the Chairman of our Board,” as some say.

Then, depending upon the type of government of the particular church, we would see a series of other balloons beneath the top with names like “pastor” or “elder” or “deacon.” Beneath those would be listed various ministry heads or superintendents—and so on until all the different ministries within the church were included. From a distance, it would look like something from an Amway pep rally.

If we remove all names and titles, most of us could place ourselves anywhere on the chart and see we’re sometimes in a position of authority and sometimes in a position of submission. We could clearly see from the chart everyone in a position of leadership had someone providing oversight for them and most people would have those over whom they were considered the leader. (Keep in mind that for the sake of illustration, I am speaking in very broad, general terms.)

In other words, sometimes we are shepherds, and sometimes we are undershepherds.

Hebrews 13:17 tells us to...

*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

This verse serves as a launching pad for Part 3 of this manual.

We are told that those who rule (spiritually) over us watch out for our souls. The word translated “watch out” is from a compound Greek word that means literally “to chase after or search for sleep”—or, simply stated, sleeplessness. *Vine's Expository Dictionary* tells us “the word expresses not mere wakefulness, but the watchfulness of those who are intent upon a thing.”<sup>1</sup>

The idea is those who “rule over you” actually go without sleep (or, make great sacrifice) in order to provide that leadership. They realize “they must give an account.” Therefore they take their role and position very seriously. Those who are truly called of God and desire to fulfill that calling understand that someday they “*shall receive a stricter judgment.*” (James 3:1).

We are told in the last half of the verse we should...

*Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*

The overwhelming majority of all Christian service is done from an undershepherd's point of view. We are almost always under somebody else. In other words, we are in the position of being in submission to another person and serving God from within that framework. All of us have someone "*who rule(s) over (us.)*"

My friend, is there anyone who does not want to be profitable? Of course not. We all want to profit, especially spiritually. Our text tells us that if we do not let our leaders rule over us "*with joy and not with grief,*" then it is unprofitable for us. Since we all want profit, the question must be asked, "What can I do to allow my leader to rule over me with joy and not grief?"

Before we proceed, however, it would be beneficial to review a subject already addressed in chapter 1—the Doctrine of Shepherding or the Shepherding Movement. This doctrine has been prevalent in many circles of Christianity in the latter part of this century. In the late eighties, however, its prime architects renounced the movement as unbiblical. Rightly so.

Simply put, this is the view that God raised up certain shepherds or elders of the flock to whom the sheep are to blindly submit. These leaders have dominance over every area of one's life—spiritual, and personal.

Such doctrines are aberrations and reprehensible. They produce bondage. They must be renounced. No one should ever place themselves underneath that kind of authority.

The problem is that these "teachers" can lift Scriptures from context and use them to beat us over the head. "You're not bringing me joy right now. You're bringing me grief. Therefore you're in rebellion and the Bible says that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft!"

I offer this review because I feel it is imperative for us to understand that just because a doctrine is abused, the doctrine in and of itself is not negated. Nor do the false teachers and propagators of aberrant theology have a corner on the English language.

The biblical doctrine of shepherds is still...well, biblical. The Bible instructs the elders of the Church to "*shepherd the flock of God*" (1 Pet. 5:2). The word *shepherd* is still in the Bible. And, if you will grant me just a little latitude, the doctrine of *shepherding* is a biblical concept—assuming, of course, that by shepherding we are referring to the idea that God does raise up elders for the express purpose of providing spiritual oversight and protection for His flock.

It is in this context and this context alone that we use the terms *shepherd* and *shepherding*.

You see, as we saw in chapter 8, nowhere in Scripture do we find submission mandated or forced. Anytime a person feels he must force another into submission, he is, in effect, publicly stating that he doesn't believe he has the authority he claims. If you feel you have to make somebody follow you, they're not following you. You're dragging them. It was General Eisenhower who once said, "It's easier to pull a string than to push it." In other words, it's better to lead the way over the hill than to shove somebody over it.

Let's remember the world's way (the kosmos) is diametrically opposed to Jesus' way. The kosmos says, "I'm the boss, and you ain't!" (The world always did have a problem with grammar!) But Jesus says, "All authority has been given to Me, let me wash your feet."

"So what you are saying," some might ask, "is that we are to just blindly follow, never offering input, never attempting to correct perceived wrongs, and simply cater to the very whims of our leaders in order that we might '*bring them joy and not grief*'?"

Not at all! I think that question is best answered by Romaine, the assistant pastor of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, CA. Romaine is a retired military drill instructor. (Although some would question just how retired he really is! He still subscribes to *Stars and Stripes* magazine.) He is, in my opinion, the quintessential assistant pastor. Several years ago, he was speaking at a conference and he said while perusing his latest issue of *Stars and Stripes*, he had run across the perfect description of scriptural authority and submission: advise strongly and submit fully.

Advise strongly and submit fully. Isn't that simple? Doesn't that make it easy? Keep in mind, though, submission is an attitude of the heart. It's not a matter of, "I disagree with you but the Bible says I gotta submit. So by golly, I'm gonna submit!" If that's the case, we end up being like the little boy who, being disciplined, was made to sit in the corner. "I may be sitting down on the outside," he said, "but on the inside I'm standing up!"

One of the ways that we can bring our leaders joy and not grief is for them to know that we will stand with them even when we think that they are wrong.

By that, I'm not talking about submitting to our leaders when they are *doing* something wrong. The Bible would never condone that. What I'm talking about is when we disagree about amoral choices. More about that later.

## Endnotes for Chapter 11

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1 Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, complete and unabridged, "Watch," B. Verbs, 4., *Agrupneo*.

### Study Questions for Chapter 11

1. Describe the attitude and goals of one who "advises strongly and submits fully."
2. What causes my spiritual leaders grief? How can I maintain proper attitudes that will make their service a joy?
3. What makes my leaders grief unprofitable for me?
4. Read Eph. 5:21; 1 Cor. 16:15-16; Jam. 3:17, 4:7-8; Rom. 13:1, 5. What is the source and purpose of submission? What does submission look like?

## Chapter Twelve

### ***Peter Means Rock Not Bonehead***

In this chapter, we will look at a couple of examples from the Bible that are given to us by the Apostle Peter. Peter is a good model for us in Scripture for two reasons:

First, Peter was a bonehead. Right? Practically every time Peter opened his mouth, it was for the express purpose of inserting his foot. His motto was “shoot off the mouth first and ask questions later.”

You might say, “Well, that was before he became a Christian and got the Holy Ghost. After that, he became the Apostle Peter. The Rock.”

Well, not exactly. Of the two examples that we’re going to look at, one is before the Crucifixion and one is after Pentecost.

Secondly, and even more significantly, Peter learned from his mistakes. Though he made a lot of them, not one of them was wasted on him.

Let’s turn to Matthew 16. The scene is Caesarea Philippi—up north in the area of Dan. Jesus had set His face to go to Jerusalem and He had begun His final ascent to the holy city. Jesus’ time had come.

Therefore, in verse 21, we are told:

*From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.*

Now, immediately before this, Matthew tells us that Jesus asked His disciples the question,

“*Who do men...say that I am?*” (v. 13)

They gave a variety of answers until Jesus posed,

“*But who do you say that I am?*” (v.15)

Then in a rare moment of spiritual astuteness, Peter rose to his full height, cleared his throat, motioned for silence and proclaimed,

“*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” (v. 16)

I can imagine that the profundity of his words shocked even Peter. Jesus immediately responded with the affirmation,

“*flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*”  
(v.17)

With that, can't you see Peter becoming even more erect. He probably shook out his robe a little, smoothed the wrinkles, and stuck his thumbs under his armpits. Rocking back and forth on his heels, he might have said, "Well, yes, we have been talking a lot lately. He's been showing me a few things."

It was immediately after this scene that we come to verse 21 and Jesus began instructing his followers what lay ahead. The Son of Man was going to suffer; He was going to be beaten; He was going to die. Even though Jesus went on to say that He would rise on the third day, Peter being so upset by what the Lord was saying, didn't even hear the last part, so that it says in verse 22:

*Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"*

Can you even begin to imagine this scene!? The Bible tells us that Peter began rebuking<sup>1</sup> the One he called his Lord! He called Jesus aside (after all, he didn't want to embarrass the Lord in front of His own disciples!) and said, "Jesus! You need to watch what you're saying! You've got it all wrong. Have You forgotten? God talks to me. Haven't You read the Old Testament? Haven't You read the parts that speak of the victorious Messiah? I think what You need is some good old fashioned discipling. A few sessions with me and I think we can get this whole thing straightened out."

Notice Jesus response to this affront:

*"Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.?"* (v. 23)

"You're the one who has it wrong, Peter. You're thinking in *kosmos* terms again. You're not thinking in God's terms." And then He went on to explain it all over again that the way of the Kingdom is not like that of the world. If you want to be in My club, fellas, you've got to learn to deny yourselves.

Interestingly enough, right after Peter's profound proclamation, Jesus made a startling announcement: He told Peter that He was going to give him the keys to the Kingdom! The keys to the Kingdom? Maybe Jesus does need to be straightened out! Anybody but Peter! What could have possibly been going through Christ's mind at this time?

I think I know. Again, I owe this illustration to Gayle Erwin, as he tells the story of the first time that his 16-year old son approached him and asked the question that strikes fear into the heart of all fathers. Just thinking that one day their children will come and make this request of them causes our paternal blood to run cold. "Dad, can I borrow the keys to the car?"

With chills running up and down his spine, Gayle relates how he slowly reached into his pocket and with trembling fingers withdrew the symbol of his most prized possession—the keys to his car. With much chagrin and regret, he relinquished them into the hands of his anxious and energetic teenager. With a hoop and a holler, the young man bounded away, having completed one of the most significant rites of passage in any person's development.

And as his son skipped away, Gayle said to himself, "There's a wreck in that boy's future."

One of the inalienable things of life is that we seem to learn the best way of doing things

right is by first doing them wrong. Those of us who understand this go on to be successes. Those of us who never quite grasp the truth of this end up believing that we are failures and therefore give up trying.

Gayle knew that the best way for his son to learn what driving is all about is to give him the responsibility, let him make his own mistakes, and let the chips fall where they might.

As Jesus was looking at Peter standing there with his thumbs stuck under his armpits, feeling so spiritual, looking so competent, having just handed him the keys to the Kingdom, I think I know what he was thinking: "There's a wreck in that boy's future."

But what Jesus saw in Peter was not an admiration for Peter's limitless capabilities, but a desire in Peter to grow. Jesus knew that sometimes it is better for the shepherd to let the undershepherd learn from experience.

That was Peter B. C., before Christ. Now let's look at an example from the book of Acts, after the Day of Pentecost, after Peter's baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Up until the time of chapter 10, the gospel had only been preached to the Jews. The idea that the good news would be for all mankind was completely foreign to Hebrew thinking.

Peter was staying in Joppa at the home of a man named Simon. One day about noon, Peter went up on the roof to pray while he waited for lunch.

*but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." And a voice [spoke] to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." (vv. 10-15)*

As Peter waited for lunch, he fell into a trance. A vision ensued in which a sheet descended containing all kinds of unclean animals: snakes, lizards, peccaries, pigeons.

The Lord said,

*"Rise, Peter; kill and eat."*

Then follows probably the greatest paradoxical statement ever uttered:

*"Not so, Lord."*

"Not so, Lord."? Talk about oxymorons. "Not so, *Kurios*."<sup>2</sup> "Not so, Boss." "Not so, God." "You might be the omnipotent Ruler of all things. You might be in charge of the whole universe, but, I'm telling You, 'No.'"

You see, Peter was a kosher Jew. He wasn't going to let anybody lead him astray. Not even his Maker.

We are told in verse 16 that this scene was repeated three times. Now it would follow, therefore, that Peter said, "Not so, Lord." three times.

I mean, Peter's no dummy. He only had to hit his head against the wall three times to learn this lesson. He only had to wreck three times. Sometimes, I wish that it were only that easy for us, don't you?

Verse 17 explains that Peter then wondered within himself what this vision meant. This is actually Biblese, I believe, for saying that Peter finally said, "Oh. Now I see what You mean."

Which is worse, Peter saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" or "Not so, Lord."?



Humanly speaking, if Peter had gotten his way at Caesarea Philippi, then Jesus would have never died for our sins and we would all be lost. If he had gotten his way in Joppa, all Gentiles would still be lost.

There are two very important lessons for all of us would-be *douloi* out there that we can glean from Peter's examples. First, he learned from his mistakes. The maxim *winners never quit and quitters never win* holds true even in the Christian arena. Peter's greatest asset lie in his tenacity—his desire to grow. Jesus didn't call him "Bonehead," He called him "Rock."<sup>3</sup>

Secondly and equally as important, in both examples, Peter was convinced that he was right. He was absolutely sure about it. This is too important of a point to miss. The majority of problems that arise within the inner workings of ministry are the result of undershepherds going against the wishes of their leaders because they disagreed. It wasn't an issue of "advise strongly and submit fully," it was outright refusal to comply.

This made him doubly wrong. First, he was wrong because he was in rebellion and non-submission. This made him wrong from the git-go. He would have been wrong even if he'd been right. But in addition, he was wrong because he was wrong. The Lord knew what He was doing in both cases. From Peter's perspective, he was in the right. But from the Lord's omniscient perspective, Peter was out of it.

As undershepherds, oftentimes our shepherds have a better understanding of the score than we do. They might have information that is not available to us yet. They just might know more about a matter than we think they do. Or maybe *their* shepherd is letting them have a wreck. In any case, what is our responsibility? Advise strongly and submit fully.

## Endnotes for Chapter 12

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- 1 The word translated rebuke is *epitimaō*. While it literally means “to place honor upon,” and is sometimes used in this fashion, it is usually used to issue a charge, or to point out a fault. The distinction is shown by the context. Obviously, this particular context does not show Peter giving Jesus honor! It is the same word used to describe Jesus’ rebuking of the demons.
- 2 *Kurios*, is the Greek word usually translated Lord. Vine’s tells us that it is normally an adjective signifying authority, ownership: Lord, Lordship; A. Nouns. 1. *Kurios*.
- 3 Peter, *Petros*, means *a small stone*.

## Study Questions for Chapter 12

1. What cause the majority of problems within the workings of ministries?
2. How has this problem affected me? What problems resulted? What was the optimum solution?
3. Analyze the reactions of the following men. Did they question? Did they submit? What was the result?

Job – Job:2; 9:32-10:2; 38:1-11; 42:1-17

Saul – 1 Sam. 15:1-26

Abraham – Gen. 17:1-8

## Chapter Thirteen

### ***The Fine Art of Being Congruent***

Many commentators, in their description of Peter's actions in Acts 10, will use the word *incongruent*. Webster has a very interesting definition for incongruent: Not corresponding to what is logical, usual, or correct.<sup>1</sup> He also provides some rather interesting synonyms: disconsonant, discordant, incompatible, and discrepant.

Now our goal, in the context of Hebrews 13:17, as undershepherds—as those who are placed somewhere on that organizational chart; as those who are desirous to make the church the most efficient and effective that it can be; as those who want our shepherds to rule over (serve) us with joy and not with grief—is to be congruent not incongruent. Our goal is to be consonant, not disconsonant; cordant, not discordant; compatible, not incompatible; and crepant, not discrepant. (OK, OK, so cordant and crepant aren't really words, but they should be.)

As a pastor, I have had the opportunity to attend many leadership conferences and seminars. I have listened to countless tapes and read many books on the subject of leadership. Oftentimes we are told as leaders that what we need to do in ministry is surround ourselves with people with the same vision as we have. That is what is needed for a congruent ministry.

Well, let's ask Peter what his vision for ministry was.

"My vision for this ministry is to see the Kingdom of God established and expanded," says Peter, with much the same confidence he spoke with at Caesarea Philippi.

What do we think Jesus' vision was? That's right. His vision was to see the Kingdom established and expanded. They both had the same vision. The problem was that they differed in their own particular philosophies of how the vision was to be carried out. This is an extremely significant distinction.

In our local church settings, most of us have the same vision. That's why we all go to the same church. But if we all had the same philosophy, then there would be much more harmony within the inner workings of the church's various ministries.

What's the vision of the worship team? To take the congregation and draw them into the presence of God. Every member of that team has the same vision. They all have the same goal.

The worship leader believes that this can best be attained by having the congregation stand during the first two songs and then stand again during the final song. However, the bass player thinks that it's much more spiritual to have the congregation stand for the entire worship. (After all, *he* has to.) Besides, he reasons, a little asceticism during worship is good for the soul. It's like short term fasting for the feet. Sore feet make for a soft heart.

What we have here is a clear case of like vision but differing philosophies. So the bass player approaches the team leader and tells him that he thinks he's wrong in his approach to worship. If he is not truly willing to advise strongly and submit fully, he will quickly cop an attitude. Then we will have incongruity.

This seemingly insignificant difference in worship format will grow into a major

theological rift. The bass player will be convinced that the worship leader is not concerned about true worship but “creature comforts.” And of course, it’s only a matter of time before he begins “sharing his concerns” with the drummer.

“Let’s have the church stand during the first two songs and on the last one,” says the worship leader.

“Not so, Lord,” replies the bass player. And so the undershepherd does not bring joy to his shepherd but grief. There is incongruity.

I’ve used the worship group as an example because at our church, that’s the type of music we employ. Other churches have choirs. The principle is the same. Also, it need not be limited to music ministry. It applies to all areas of church work. I use music ministry as an example because the person who said, “when Satan fell, he landed in the choir loft.” didn’t miss it by much!

Finding people with like visions is not difficult. The trick is for them to have the same philosophy. And for the undershepherd, the best philosophy that he or she can adopt is the one that says, “My philosophy is to bring my ministry leader joy and not grief.”

In Acts 20, we find Paul making his way back to Jerusalem. His desire was to arrive in time for the Feast of Pentecost. His journey was to take him in the vicinity of Ephesus where he had spent many years and had developed many close relationships. He could hardly bear the thought of passing so close to his loved ones without seeing them but felt certain that if he went into Ephesus, he would never arrive in Jerusalem before the festival.

So he sent word into the city, and had the elders from the church meet him in Miletus. What follows is one of the most touching reunions recorded in Scripture.

We’ll pick up Paul’s monologue to the Ephesian elders in verse 28:

*“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” (vv. 28-31)*

Jesus warned that the false shepherds would be like wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15). I’m reminded of the cartoon of the wolf that was trying to infiltrate the flock so he put a fleece across his back and made his play. The deception was evident to all, especially to the sheepdog. He looked like a mangy, scraggly wolf with an old throw rug on his back. Satan’s frontal attacks are usually this obvious.

The interesting thing about it is that if we were to survey the average church congregation how many wolves do you think that we would find? I know that Satan has infiltrated the ranks of the Church and there are actually Satanists and witches whose very jobs are to destroy the work of God. Usually, however, their efforts are about as obvious as the wolf’s in the cartoon.

But notice verse 30 of Paul’s warning:

*“Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”*

Was Paul's caution that this deception would come from the Church body as a whole or from within the ranks of the elders themselves? In any event, it was going to come from within the walls of the Church.

Most people, the above-mentioned Satanists aside, do not come into the Church with the expressed purpose of drawing others away from the truth and deceiving them with lies. They don't intentionally spread heresy. They don't purposefully cause division.

But it happens every day. Most of the damage done to the Church in this regard is done from its members—those of us who are actually doing what we think is right. Just like the bass player in the worship group. Just like Peter.

And while we are convinced that we are motivated solely by what we are sure is right, the Lord speaks to us in the same way that He spoke to Peter so long ago:

*“...you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”*

## Endnotes for Chapter 13

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- 1 Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary, 1984.

### Study Questions for Chapter

1. How do church members cause the worst damage to the church?
2. Have I ever disagreed with someone in authority over me. What were my thoughts? My actions? Were they proper?
3. Read the stories of Miriam and Aaron's and Korah's rebellion. How did God handle this insurrection?
4. What does God say about my superiors in Rom. 13:1 and Heb. 13:16?

## Chapter Fourteen

### ***Stamping Out Incongruency***

Incongruency and effectiveness in ministry are mutually exclusive. The privilege that we receive from the Lord to be able to serve Him mandates that we strive to be the most effective that we can.

What are some ways we as undershepherds can be incongruous? For illustration's sake, I have listed four:

#### **1. When we think we're right.**

This one we've covered already to a large degree, but it is such a common problem, I feel the need to expand on it further.

Many years ago, before entering full time ministry, I was working for a painting contractor. We were painting the 25' high metal roof deck of a new factory. Because of the configuration of the bar joists, sprinkler pipes, and air ducts, there had been some discussion as to what would be the best direction to push the scaffolds—either east to west or north to south. The foreman, who would be doing the spray painting, decided that it would be east to west.

Around noon, the owner of the painting company came onto the job to look around. He noticed the direction the scaffolds were pointing and remarked to the man on the ground who was pushing them, "Johnny Lee, I really think that it would be more efficient to push the scaffolds north and south."

To which Johnny Lee quickly began to explain to the boss the reasoning behind the move. About halfway through his explanation, the boss retorted somewhat heatedly, "I said, I really think that it would be more efficient to push the scaffolds north and south!"

As he began to walk away, he threw his hands in the air and said, "What difference does it make? As soon as I leave you're going to do it the way you want anyway!"

At that time Johnny Lee quickly responded by saying, "Jerry, you're the boss. You're the one who signs my paycheck. If you tell me to lay these scaffolds over on their side and begin dragging them through this building, then that's what I want to do."

Advise strongly and submit fully.

It should go without saying, but let me clarify one point. What we are talking about here are amoral choices and decisions. We are not referring to situations where a moral right or wrong is at stake. We are talking about opinions. Preferences. It is an undershepherd's duty and responsibility to never submit to an immoral request from the shepherd. But we'll talk about that more in Part 4.

#### **2. When we think that we're better.**

Another common cause of incongruity is when an undershepherd believes that he or she is more qualified than the shepherd.

Let's use our worship team illustration again. The bass player has been playing longer and knows more worship songs than the worship team leader. Besides, the Lord just blessed him with more talent. He is pretty well convinced that his spirit is more in tune with God's Spirit and often questions whether or not the leader would know the Holy Spirit if He came up and introduced Himself.

Why wouldn't God have the bass player leading the worship team instead of the person He has chosen? It seems like the quality of worship would suffer by having a less qualified person in charge and a more competent individual being squelched.

Several possible reasons come to mind. It could be that the Lord has the bass player in the undershepherd position to teach him a little humility. He could possibly be trying to show the bass player that we don't always get our own way and that He is more interested in how we deal with our disappointments than how to play riffs. Maybe God wants to show him that he doesn't have a corner on how to lead worship and there could be some valuable lessons learned by sitting down and shutting up.

Possibly, God may be trying to do a work in the worship leader by teaching him how to deal with contentious bass players. Maybe the leader possesses some characteristics that the Lord is more interested in than musical adeptness. Maybe the leader has the humble, teachable spirit that the Lord longs for in His leaders and would like the other members of the worship team to learn from his example.

The bottom line is that when there is this kind of attitude working among the members of a particular ministry, there is always a problem. The result is incongruity. The result is that the leader is brought grief.

I have been using the worship team as an example simply for illustration's sake. Let us not make the mistake of overlooking how this is manifested in other areas of ministry. Whether we're talking about the nursery personnel, the visitation committee, or the ruling counsel of the church, the principle is the same. The final word is still, "Advise strongly, submit fully." This is the best way that Hebrews 13:17 can be fulfilled.

### **3. When we are envious.**

At the outset, we could very easily look at this point and say, "Now wait a minute. Envy is a work of the flesh and I'm not going to admit to that. Anybody who would have that kind of problem shouldn't be involved in ministry in the first place." Granted. However, the fact is, this is a great problem—primarily *because* no one is willing to admit that that's what they're doing. Usually, we won't even admit it to ourselves. When we actually are jealous or envious of another's position, we manifest our displeasure by pointing out their faults and being critical of their every action.

Most of us, if we were to be totally honest, would have to admit that we have fallen prey to this sin. This, oftentimes, is like number 2 except that when I think that I'm better than the person over me, I am wanting myself to be exalted. When I'm envious of my leader, I'm wanting to have him brought down. I secretly rejoice when he fails.

### **4. When we disagree.**



The fourth way in which we can be incongruous is when we simply disagree. This can be similar to number 1. The difference is that we may not necessarily have a better idea or plan of how a thing should be done, we just don't like this plan.

Once, many years ago, I had called a certain individual into my office to discuss some problems we were having in our youth program. For several minutes, I laid out what I perceived as the shortcomings in this particular ministry and after I finished, I asked this person if he would be willing to help. He had shown interest in the youth ministry before and I believed that he had a lot that he could offer.

After a long pause, he let out a slow sigh (a sure sign for me to gird myself), and for the next several minutes proceeded to tell me all the things that he determined to be wrong with our youth program.

When he had finished, I looked across my desk at him and said, "You know, I think you're right. We've got a lot to work on. Would you please help? We could use your direction and input."

After what seemed like a long time but was probably only about one minute of silence, this person got up and walked out. For him, it was easier to complain about the situation than to offer help. It was easier to point a finger than to lend a helping hand.

There are some verses that we have a natural tendency to feel are primarily written for the "other guy." Phil. 2:14 is most likely a good example:

*Do all things without complaining and disputing.*

We never think that what *we* are doing is complaining or disputing. We're just sharing our hearts. Sometimes, we justify our murmuring by bringing God into the picture. We say, "The Lord revealed to me...", and then proceed to rail away at whatever circumstance or situation that has our goat this time.

Remember: Every time a sheep bleats it loses a mouthful of grass. And don't forget: Those who complain about how the ball bounces usually are the ones who dropped it. And of course there's the old proverb that says, "He who slings mud, loses ground."

The reason there are so many platitudes about complaining is that we have given the proverb writers much to write about.

Faultfinding can be as dangerous as it is easy. We will not rid ourselves of our own faults by finding them in others.

The worst part of it all is that it seems that when we complain, we do it to everyone except the person we're complaining about.

So the question is, how can we bring the "joy" that Hebrews 13:17 speaks about? How can we fulfill that? How can we be congruent? How can we take all the principles discussed in this section and put them into practice?

If we back up to the beginning of Philippians 2 we find Paul exhorting his friends...

*Therefore if [there] [is] any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, [being] of one accord, of one mind. [Let] nothing [be] [done] through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for*

*his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...* (vv. 1-5)

Paul says that if we want to fulfill his joy, the way to do it is to be like-minded with Christ. He goes on to say in vv. 6-8 that Jesus left the glory of heaven and set aside all prerogatives thereof in order to become a servant of His creation. Talk about lowliness of mind! Talk about esteeming others! Talk about looking out for other's interests first! And He never uttered one word of complaint. Never a single incongruent thought came to His mind. And we think that it is a tremendous injustice if the Sunday School supplies are not stocked to meet our specifications.

Just think of the joy that it would bring to our leaders, our shepherds, if were we to adopt this kind of mindset. It's important, however, not to think that we are doing this out of some sort of benevolent favor on our part. The Bible says that it is our reasonable service (Rom. 12:1). In other words, it's the least that we can do. The Living Bible renders it this way:

*And so, dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy—the kind he can accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?*

The Bible clearly explains that as Christians, if we gain any comfort from the fact that Jesus set Himself aside in order to serve us we should be like-minded. There is no better way for us to be like-minded than to serve our brothers and sisters. And, in most cases, the best way to do that is to strive for congruency in ministry—to bring our shepherds joy and not grief.

We have a good example of that also in Philippians 2:

*But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with [his] father he served with me in the gospel.* (vv. 19-22)

“I am surrounded by people,” Paul says, “who are consumed with their own agendas. They have their own desires and when that happens, they don't have the desires of Christ. But,” he tells us, “I do have Timothy.”

Timothy was like-minded with Paul. Which, according to Scripture, made him like-minded with Jesus. Does this mean that Timothy was Paul's “yes-man?” Of course not. The Bible doesn't condone that kind of relationship. What it does mean, however, is that Timothy was a man who advised strongly and submitted fully. And his faithfulness in the matter was born out by “*his proven character.*”

Let us all strive to be a Timothy—in all areas of ministry.

## Study Questions for Chapter 14

1. What are the "four ways to be incongruous" listed in this chapter?
2. As I prayerfully analyze my daily conversations, what words of criticism did I "share" all to willingly? What have I gained by this? What have I lost?
3. Read Pro. 25:6-7 and Jam. 4:10. Using these two Scriptures, determine how opportunities for advancement should be handled.

## ***Part Four***

**JOSHUA OR JOAB?**

## Chapter Fifteen

### ***Meet Mr. Joab***

We serve God. This is best done by supporting the individual that we are under. It is God Whom we seek to serve; to Him do we render obeisance; to Him alone do we bow. But He has shown us in His Word, that one of the best ways that this is accomplished, especially in our present context of ministry, is by unreserved support for those whom He has placed over us.

It is important that we maintain this distinction. Failure to do so can result in one of two problems arising. First, if we don't realize that it is God's will for us to serve Him through our leaders, it is easier for us to fall into rebellion when things don't go our way. That was the primary theme of the previous section.

Secondly, if we fail to understand that it is God we serve, but it is the leader we support, we may find ourselves idolizing the leader, blindly following him, and giving him what is reserved for God alone—complete and unadulterated obedience. The goal of Part 4 will be to help prevent us from making this second mistake. It is important for those of us who are called to the ministry to be able to make this distinction.

Thus far, we have learned that the vast majority of all ministry is executed from a secondary position—as one who serves others. In fact, this is the very definition of ministry. We have also discovered that most of this servanthood is done from an undershepherd's position—from the bottom up. In this final section, we will look at a couple of examples from Scripture and see how this is played out in the Bible. We will examine two men, both of them in supporting, secondary roles and how they related to their respective leaders.

Joab was a member of David's army. He had served David valiantly and faithfully throughout the years in hiding from Saul. After the death of Saul, Joab became David's military head. He was Roosevelt's Eisenhower or Bush's Schwarzkopf.

David didn't automatically become the ruler over the entire nation following Saul's death. He became king over the tribe of Judah, but the majority of the country followed Saul's son, Ishbosheth.

Abner had been the leader of Saul's army and continued to do so after Ishbosheth ascended to the throne.

One day, Joab and Abner were out on patrols when they ran into each other. A battle ensued with David's men prevailing over Ishbosheth's. As Abner retreated, Joab's brother, Asahel pursued him.

Being younger and fleet of foot, Asahel quickly overtook Abner. Abner repeatedly pleaded with Asahel to relent but he doggedly refused. So Abner killed him in self defense.

Shortly thereafter, Ishbosheth fell out of favor with Abner. Abner decided to defect and join forces with David, bringing with him the remaining forces of Ishbosheth's army.

When Joab heard of these events, he sent word to Abner to meet with him. Abner joined him in Hebron, a City of Refuge—where accused criminals would be free from persecution until

they could be tried. Joab called Abner aside and murdered him. Joab justified his actions as an Avenger of Blood but did not follow the dictates of the Law.<sup>1</sup> He became a law unto himself.

Some might say, “Well, he broke the Law, but it was a crime of passion. After all, Abner killed his brother.”

Well said. And our story might end there if it were not for the fact that Joab’s pattern continued.

Let’s read 2 Sam. 12:26-28:

*Now Joab fought against Rabbah of the people of Ammon, and took the royal city. And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, “I have fought against Rabbah, and I have taken the city’s water [supply]. Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, lest I take the city and it be called after my name.”*

Joab had successfully completed a campaign against the Ammonites and all that was left was the mopping up. So he sent word back to David for him to come for the final battle in order to give the king the recognition for the victory. Joab had seen the problem that had been caused when the people cried out...

*“Saul has slain his thousands,  
And David his ten thousands.”* (1 Sam. 18:7)

He wanted no part of that. He wanted David to receive the glory for the victory. He was just the servant. David was his king.

This sounds rather admirable, doesn’t it? This sounds like Joab had it in his heart to be the perfect support person. The quintessential number two man. It looks as if he had a proper handle on his position on the organizational chart.

Let’s look at another event that took place just slightly before this.

Remember when David saw Bathsheba bathing on her roof? He called her to come to him and they committed adultery together. It was shortly after that that David found out that Bathsheba was pregnant with his child.

Knowing that she was married, David found himself in a quandary. He sent word to Joab on the front lines to have Uriah, her husband, return home. David tried many times unsuccessfully to get Uriah to go to his house and sleep with his wife, but in each attempt, Uriah refused believing that it would be unfair to his compatriots on the battlefield.

So David concocted a plan.

*In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent [it] by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die.”* (2 Sam. 11:14-15)

He wrote a letter to Joab, sent it by the hand of Uriah, and in effect, ordered Joab to have Uriah murdered!

Here’s where it gets sticky. Joab was a good support person, right? He always submitted to his leaders, correct? The Bible teaches us to do that, is that not true? No. Not always. Not if

the leader is asking us to do something wrong. The Bible *never* condones sin—not under any circumstances.

Joab should have refused his orders. He should have said, “No!” But instead, he became an accessory to murder.

With this example, we are beginning to see a profile emerge. Joab doesn’t desire the limelight. He has no aspirations of being number one. He’s plenty satisfied with being number two.

As we shall see, he has enough power and position to meet his agenda. He’s satisfied with that. If submission fits into that agenda, fine. But if he wants something else, then that’s fine too. Scruples and morals are not part of the equation—only his personal desires.

While Joab may be an extreme example of what we are talking about, it’s important to realize the “Joab syndrome” is easy to fall into. Usually we justify our actions and compromises to deceive ourselves into thinking we’re actually submitting and living in the perfect will of God. This is where a lot of the politicking within our churches originates.

## Endnotes for Chapter 15

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- 1 For a further explanation about the Cities of Refuge and the Avenger of Blood, see Numbers 35:9-34.

### Study Questions for Chapter 15

1. What is one of the best ways to serve God according to this chapter?
2. Consider a leader, past or present, whose followers viewed him/her as a god. What was (is) the condition of the followers? What causes this kind of behavior in a nation?
3. Joab looked like he was supporting David but when it came right down to it, his own agenda came first. Read these three stories of men who put God's agenda first:

Daniel 3

Daniel 6

Genesis 39-45



## Chapter Sixteen

### ***The #2 Man And The #3 Son***

David had many wives and many children. His firstborn son was named Amnon. His third son was Absalom. Absalom had a sister by the same mother named Tamar making Amnon a half-brother to the other two.

The Bible tells us in 2 Sam. 13:1 that Amnon was in love with his half-sister Tamar. *In lust* was more like it.

At the urging of a friend, he faked an illness and requested his father send Tamar to minister to him. After she had prepared him some food, he told the rest of the attendants to leave the room. That is when he brought his dastardly plan to fruition.

*Now when she had brought [them] to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." And she answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing! And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you." However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her. (2 Sam. 13:11-14)*

Amnon raped his own sister! When Absalom found out he was livid! He spent two full years planning his revenge.

When Absalom felt the time was right, he lured Amnon to a banquet. When he had become drunk with wine, Absalom had him murdered.

When news of this reached David, he mourned the loss of two sons—Amnon who had been murdered, and Absalom who fled David's anticipated wrath.

2 Sam. 13:39 tells us that eventually, David forgave Absalom for the death of Amnon. For years, however, Absalom remained in exile. All the while his father pined for him but was too proud, however, to send for him.

Enter Joab. He devised an elaborate scheme to cause David to realize his need for reconciliation.

Again, it looks as if Joab simply wants to do the right thing. It appears as though he's only interested in David's welfare.

Maybe it was for political purposes. Maybe he just wanted to have Absalom where he could keep an eye on him. Whatever the reason, it is obvious from 2 Sam. 14:29-33 that it wasn't because Joab was altruistically interested in the king's family.

Absalom was brought home, but we all know what happened then. The breach between David and his son grew and Absalom plotted a coup at the city gates.

He would catch people on their way to see the king and tell them, “The king’s too busy with affairs of state to be concerned with your problems, but if you tell me what’s wrong, I’ll do what is needed.”

Slowly, he began to win the hearts of the people. After nearly four years, Absalom made his move.

He had so successfully swayed the hearts of the Israelites, that David and his people were forced to retreat from Jerusalem. Absalom established himself in Jerusalem and King David found himself once again ruling from the wilderness.

After some time, however, David mustered his forces and divided them into three battalions. They prepared themselves for battle against Absalom’s men. The captains, Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, insisted David remain behind because he was too valuable to risk losing in battle. David agreed giving them this final parting command:

*“[Deal] gently for my sake with the young man Absalom.” And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains orders concerning Absalom. (2 Sam. 18:5)*

The inevitable battle ensued with David’s forces prevailing. Absalom attempted to retreat on his mule. He had extremely long hair (2 Sam. 14:26) and as he passed under the boughs of a terebinth tree, his long locks became entangled in its branches.

A member of Joab’s division saw what happened and reported it to his captain.

*So Joab said to the man who told him, “You just saw [him]! And why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten [shekels] of silver and a belt.” But the man said to Joab, “Though I were to receive a thousand [shekels] of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king’s son. For in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, ‘Beware lest anyone [touch] the young man Absalom!’” (2 Sam. 18:11-12)*

To which an angry Joab immediately took three spears and thrust them through Absalom’s heart.

Wait a minute. Didn’t David give explicit orders not to kill his son? Isn’t Joab in direct violation of his king’s command?

How could Joab justify such an action? I know. I know. He knew better than David, right? He knew this problem had to be settled once and for all. David would just have to get over it.

But as we saw in Part 3, this is simply a case of insubordination. Joab was in rebellion. There is no excuse for his refusing to follow his king’s directions—even if what he might have felt were true.

That would have been David’s problem. When David stood before his Maker, he answered for his role as king. When Joab did, it was for how he supported the king.

Joab stands before us as an example of what could have been an excellent ministry support person. Unfortunately, he was motivated by his flesh. Sometimes he did the right thing. Sometimes he didn’t. His true motivation wasn’t what was right or wrong but what he wanted at the time. If what he wanted at the time happened to be right, fine and dandy. If it happened to be wrong, it didn’t matter.

You see, submission is not an act, it's an attitude. It's not something we do, it's a disposition of the heart. Joab would be "submissive" when it suited his purposes. Otherwise, forget it.

That's why he seems to be such an enigma. He's hard to figure out because sometimes he's good and sometimes he's not—whatever was comfortable, whatever was convenient. Sadly, we have no example in Scripture of him ever learning from any of his mistakes.

I guess you could say Joab didn't do windows.<sup>1</sup>

## Endnotes for Chapter 16

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- 1 See Chapter 2.

### Study Questions for Chapter 16

1. What do you think of Joab's support? List the four principles for successful support of our leaders.
2. How well have I done each one? List steps for improvement.
3. If Joab's decision to disobey David's order regarding Absalom's safety was for the good of the nation, why was it wrong? Do you agree that it was wrong?
4. What do you think is meant by the statement that Joab didn't do windows? Do you agree with that statement?

## Chapter Seventeen

### ***Getting Our Agendas Straight***

The Children of Israel had just left Egypt and had crossed over the Red Sea to enter the Wilderness. God had demonstrated to the Israelites that He would provide for their needs by giving them manna and water from the rock. Now they were ready for their next lesson/trial.

*Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands [became] heavy; so they took a stone and put [it] under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (Ex. 17:8-13)*

The nomadic Amalekites had come up against the Israelites somewhere along the western coast of the Sinai Peninsula. Moses looked over his people and chose Joshua to be the leader of the Israelite forces.

It's important to understand that the Israelite forces were drawn from a group of people who have just come out of centuries of slavery. They were shepherds and farmers and brick makers. Their weapons consisted of sticks and shepherd's crooks. Only a few spears and swords were available. Joshua's naiveté as a military commander was only equaled by his army's inexperience as a fighting machine. Their greatest human asset was their sheer number.

The battle began with Moses, Aaron and Hur observing from the top of the hill. An odd and peculiar thing occurred. Whenever Moses held his hands up, Israel prevailed; whenever he lowered them, Amalek would begin to win.

It's a good thing Moses wasn't a practical joker. He could have reeked havoc upon Joshua and his compatriots. "Watch this, Aaron," Moses could have said mischievously and dropped his hands abruptly. Then just at the last minute, he would raise them up again. Up and down and up and down Moses could have flapped his arms like a bird until he became bored with the game.

Of course, we know Moses didn't make a game out of it. This was serious business. However, I do think at some point Joshua figured out what was going on. As he looked up to his leader for support and guidance, eventually he began to notice a pattern emerge. "When the

boss's arms are up, we win," he thought. "When they fall, so do we."

I would think that after a while, the position of Moses' hands would begin to have a major influence upon Joshua's countenance. He would swing his sword just as hard when the arms hung, but it never seemed to hit its mark.

Eventually, when Moses became weary, Aaron and Hur seated him on a rock and stood on each side of him to help hold his arms up.

*So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (v. 13)*

As amazing and amusing as this story may be, the question is asked, "Why?" Why would God do it this way? Was He playing some sort of cosmic game? Was *He* the one in a mischievous mood? Was He showing off before His heavenly court?

Or is it possible God was trying to teach some lessons? And if so, to whom? Could it be God was trying to teach Joshua at this early stage of his ministry just Who was in charge? Maybe God wanted Joshua to get a firm handle on that fact before he went anywhere else. There wasn't anything magical or mystical about the position of Moses' hands. It was simply that God wanted Joshua to learn the only legitimate agenda was His.

Joab never learned this. We see him give only lip service to the Lord and His will. He had his own agenda and was bent upon keeping it. His whole approach to ministry was, "How does this affect me?" If it affected him positively, he was for it. If it affected him adversely, he rebelled.

He didn't see his service as to the Lord. He didn't look at it as though he were serving God by supporting David. I believe he was simply serving Joab. And when we are serving man instead of God and the going gets rough, it's easy for us to rebel.

God had plans for Joshua, however, and before he learned anything else—before he learned the blessings, the faithfulness, the grace, and the mercy of the Lord—he had to learn that the battle belonged to God.

In fact, we learn from Numbers 13 that Joshua's name originally was Hoshea. Moses changed his name when he sent the twelve spies into the Promised Land. Joshua was one of the twelve. Ten came back with a negative report. "There are giants in the land!" they said. Only Joshua and Caleb believed they could conquer the land because they remembered the Lord had promised it to them.

The significance of this is that the name *Hoshea* means *salvation*.<sup>1</sup> The name *Joshua* means *Jehovah is Salvation*.<sup>2</sup> Joshua had learned from the battle with the Amalekites that God was his only source of strength. It wasn't Moses' arms. It wasn't even his own abilities. It was the Lord alone.

Just think of the pain and discomfort we would all avoid if we could learn this as easily as Joshua did. Then whenever things didn't make sense—whenever it seemed as if God was simply playing some sort of mean game—or when we found ourselves at the edge of the Promised Land and everyone around us cried out, "There are giants in the land!" we would know for sure the battle belonged the Lord.

## Endnotes for Chapter 17

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1. Brown, Driver, and Briggs Lexicon. Reference, *Hoshea*.
2. Ibid. Reference, *Joshua*.

## Study Questions for Chapter 17

1. In Chapters 16 and 17 we read about Absalom, Joshua and Joab. From their actions, is it possible to determine their relationship to God? Why or why not?
  
2. How has God tried to teach me that the battle is His? Have I let Him?
  
3. When I find myself in unexplainable circumstances I am to trust in the Lord and by faith stand firm. Using a concordance, list 10 Scriptures that tell of God's faithfulness.

## Chapter Eighteen

### ***Learning An Important Lesson***

Shortly after the defeat of the Amalekites, the Children of Israel camped at the base of Mount Sinai. The Lord called Moses to come to the mountaintop to meet with Him. Exodus 24 tells us Joshua went at least part of the way with Him.

As Moses ascended, God descended. Soon he was enveloped by the cloud and the fire and thunder and the lightning that was the glory of the Lord.

The people below saw the awesome scene taking place on the mountain and began to believe God had consumed Moses. They were sure he wouldn't return. This laid the groundwork for Aaron's golden image.

The interesting thing about this is Joshua, from his vantage point, saw the same thing the multitudes saw. As this mountaintop pilgrimage was entering into its second month, what was it that kept Joshua's faith from wavering? The only obvious difference was Joshua fasted for 40 days and nights, just as Moses was doing.

What did Joshua do during those long days and nights? Play solitaire? Count his money? I'm pretty sure he spent the time encouraging himself in the Lord and putting into practice the lesson he'd learned a few weeks earlier.

After the giving of the Law, Moses settled the people into a camp. God had given Moses instructions concerning the construction of the Tabernacle. But prior to its completion a place called the Tent of Meeting was erected outside the camp. This is where Moses would conduct business and receive instructions from the Lord.

*And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood [at] the door of the tabernacle, and [the] [Lord] talked with Moses. All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing [at] the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshipped, each man [in] his tent door. So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. (Ex. 33:9-11a)*

What rich times of communion God and Moses must have had! I can almost picture them sitting at a table—Moses pouring a cup of coffee for the Lord while God poured His heart into Moses.

Then each evening Moses would return to the camp, but notice the rest of verse 11:

*And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.*

When Moses went home at night, young Joshua stayed right at the door of the tabernacle.



Why? Why do you think Joshua did that? It doesn't appear as if he were under any specific orders from Moses. I think he wanted to be there just in case—just in case Moses needed something—just in case something came up. If it did, Moses would know where to find him.

Joshua was the third type of servant we learned about in chapter 2. He was the kind who looks for ways to serve. He was an Isaiah here-I-am-send-me kind of servant. He just wanted to be there in case Moses came up and said, “Josh, I need someone to go clean the pigeon stuff out of the bell tower.”

So far as we have looked at the two examples of Joab and Joshua, it is clear which one gives the best illustration of the servanthood that Jesus calls us to.

“Wait a minute,” some of Joab's defenders might be saying. “You found some good things in his example as well. Are you saying Joshua never blew it—that he never operated out of the strength of his flesh?”

No, not at all. However, as we look at Joshua's failings, let's also look at what distinguishes him from the Joabs of ministry.

In Numbers 11, Moses gathers 70 of the elders of the people around the Tent of Meeting and the Spirit of the Lord descends upon all of them. They all began prophesying.

*But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one [was] Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they [were] among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.” So Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, [one] of his choice men, answered and said, “Moses my lord, forbid them!” (vv. 26-27)*

“This can't be!” Joshua exclaimed. “They're not doing it right! They're not part of the club; not part of the clique. Moses, stop them!”

Moses' response is most interesting.

*Then Moses said to him, “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets [and] that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” (v. 29)*

In Luke 9, the Samaritans refused to help Jesus and His disciples so James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven. Jesus' reply was the same as Moses':

*But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.” (Lu. 9:55)*

“No, Joshua. You're wrong.” Moses said. “Clubs and cliques are not what it's all about.”

There are a number of things that Joshua could have done at this point.

He could have copped a major attitude: “Why, I've just been held accountable! I didn't ask for that! Where did Moses get off thinking he could slam me like that?”

Or he could have felt like he was a failure. “I knew that I couldn't do it.” He might have said. “I can't now and I never will. Moses, why don't you just get yourself another boy Friday. I'm not worthy of anything.”

He could have grouped a number of people together and started his own church. He was well respected. He was a good leader. Many people would've followed him.

He could've gone back to the camp and begun to "share his concerns" about Moses. "After all," he might have said to Korah and Abihu (because he *knew* that they would listen and understand.) "Things aren't like they used to be. Moses has changed. I think he might be getting a little too old for this job. He's not leading us the way he used to."

Please allow me an important digression at this point. There is probably no more damage that is done in ministry than that which is accomplished through gossip. Almost everyone will agree, but no one will admit to doing it! We all see gossip as something the other person does. What we do is "share concerns."

Dear reader, please, I implore you, if you have concerns, there are two places where you can scripturally take them—either to the person for whom you have the concern or to God. Anything else is carnal.

Now bear in mind that I'm not talking about seeking counsel from a pastor, elder, or other recognized counselor in your church. But I am referring to the "prayer request" that we drop on the phone to brother or sister So-and-so.

The importance of this cannot be understated. But back to our story at hand.

Joshua didn't do any of those things. In fact, from what we see in Scripture, he didn't do anything. Except grow. He saw this as a learning experience, and he grew from it. He had a wreck and from it became a better driver. He messed up, repented when confronted and went back to the tabernacle door—ready for service.

## **Study Questions for Chapter 18**

1. What was Joshua's mistake in Num. 11:26-27?
2. List the four improper responses Joshua could have had to Moses' rebuke.
3. As I analyze my personal response pattern, what is my inclination? How can I change?
4. List the Scriptures the Lord has used in your life to correct your thinking and/or actions.

## Chapter Nineteen

### ***How To Be A Success In Ministry***

Some might be thinking at this point, “Are you saying that in order to be successful in ministry, you have to be a ‘yes-man’?” Not at all. Joab was a “yes-man.” When David said, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom,” he said, “Yes, man.” and then did whatever he wanted.

And isn’t that what ‘yes-men’ do? They tell us what they think we want to hear to our faces but do something totally different behind our backs.

Joshua, like Peter, was a true disciple. He was a learner. He was a *mathetes*. While it was true both men had “wrecks in their futures,” they learned from their mistakes. And when the time came for Moses to appoint a successor, Joshua was the natural candidate. Joshua was Moses’ Timothy. He had no one else as like-minded.

So the question remains for true disciples: How can I be a successful supporter of my leader? What are some principles that I can put into practice will enable me to be what God would have me to be in ministry?

I think that there are four:

#### **1. Develop a quality devotional life.**

There is no way we can learn how to serve God by supporting His people unless we get to know Him. We can only do that by choosing the one thing that’s needful (Lu.10:42). The only way we can be led of His Spirit is by knowing His Word and spending time with Him in prayer.

Without this, we will inevitably perform our ministry in the flesh. Our fuel tank will at some point run out. Without the strength and guidance of the Spirit, we won’t be able to discern whether our submission is “*as unto the Lord*” or the commission of a sinful act. Nor will we be able to resist our natural, fallen tendencies to rebel against authority.

How do I begin to have a devotional life if I don’t already have one? First of all, make a reasonable commitment. Covenant with yourself that you’re going to spend time with God and in His Word daily.

A good place to begin is the Book of Proverbs. The Proverbs are straight forward and usually easy to understand. Read a chapter a day. Don’t get hung up on the difficult passages. They’ll become more clear in time. A good way to do it is to read the chapter that corresponds to the day of the month. As you grow, then expand your reading to other areas of the Bible. The important thing is to be consistent.

Secondly, pray each day. Don’t worry about how “King James” your prayers might sound. Just share your heart with Him. And listen. Remember prayer is two-way communication. Just keep in mind that the heart is deceitfully wicked (Jere. 17:9), and what you *think* might be

the Lord telling you something may just be last night's pizza. Check it out with Scripture. If you are unsure, seek counsel from a mature Christian.

## **2. Get to know the person you support and accept them.**

Remember your leader's are human and as such have human failings. While this is not an excuse for carnality, the fact remains we all fail—even leaders. Give them grace.

One of the worst mistakes we can make in supporting our shepherds is to put them on a pedestal. If we do, they will fall off. The pedestal is reserved for One only. If we revere and exalt our leaders, we'll eventually see how unworthy they are of that adoration and we'll begin to resent them for their frailty. But if we can get to know them as human beings and accept them as people whom God is working on just like us, their shortcomings won't seem so significant.

Maybe he's not a morning person or maybe she uses a particular word improperly and means something entirely different whenever she uses it. Get to know facial expressions that might be misleading if you didn't know the person better. In short, get to know them. If we do this in the proper fashion, we're bound to realize that they're idiosyncrasies are no worse than our own.

Again, let me emphasize I'm not excusing carnality. Carnality is sin. What I am talking about are the characteristics and peculiarities that are common to all of us. They just vary from person to person.

## **3. Remember a leader is one who leads.**

1 Pet. 5:2-3 tells us to...

*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;*

While this was covered extensively in the first section, I feel it bears repeating here. A shepherd always leads his flock, he never drives them. They are not cattle. They are sheep. One of the best ways we can as undershepherds support our shepherds is to provide good shepherdship to those who entrusted to our care.

Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, CA is quoted as saying, "I want to be a visible representation of a servant to the flock at all times." That's what being an example is. That's what a shepherd does.

You go from point A to point B and the sheep will follow. *You...press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* (Phil.3:14)

## **4. Remember whose agenda it is.**

No matter how high in ministry we may progress, the highest rank we could ever attain would be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Remember, though, that there will always be a Commander-in-Chief and it will never be us. We are simply soldiers, fighting a spiritual battle for the glory of our King.

If our eyes are fixed upon the Chief Shepherd with the constant aim of pleasing Him, we

will never be guilty of promoting our own agenda.

The fact remains, however, that most likely, most of us will. Because we are so easily self-deceived, it will be a constant battle to deny ourselves. As John MacArthur once said, "People always say you shouldn't talk to yourself. Well, I talk to myself everyday. I say, 'Self, No!'"

Remember Joshua's lesson. God is always in charge. It is always His battle. Our mission is simply to be His agent in accomplishing His agenda.

## **Study Questions for Chapter 19**

1. List the four principles for successful support of our leaders.
2. How well have I done at each? List steps for improvement.
3. Make a point and commitment to read your way through Proverbs, one chapter a day. Make notes of the wisdom God imparts. Maybe this would be a to begin a journal if you don't already have one.

## ***Conclusion***

Lastly, dear readers, let us make it our straightforward goal to make whatever ministry the Lord may have us in the most effective it can be. Too much damage has been done to the Church by poor leadership and inept followership. Truly this is not the will of God.

Serve God. Be someone's Timothy.

Strive to let harmony rule. Remember, God has called us to peace (1 Cor. 7:15b).

What a gracious and merciful God He is to allow us the sublime privilege of serving Him. May we seek to glorify Him in that service.

Let us focus on what is truly important and leave the insignificant matters to those without the lofty callings that He has bestowed upon us.

Remember Lot's wife. Our calling is too lofty to turn back.

Let us remember the words of our Lord as He spoke in Matt. 4:19:

*"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

It is my heartfelt prayer that this manual has served to help in that regard.



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