

Leading With Purpose **The Value of Teaching, Unity, and Working Together**

Introduction:

1. “Following a comprehensive study of leadership, a major business corporation stated this definition of a leader: ‘One who can generate, communicate, and sustain commonality of purpose’” (Joe Ellis, *The Church On Purpose*, p. 129).
2. As leaders in the Lord’s church elders are to generate, communicate, and sustain this commonality of purpose. (Preachers, Bible class teachers, parents, every member should work to do the same, but elders have a primary responsibility.)
 - a. Elders generate commonality of purpose by defining the work that God has given the local church to do. They ask, “What are we supposed to be doing?” They look into the Scriptures to see what God wants His church to do.
 - b. They communicate this common purpose to the congregation. That is, they work to persuade the members of the congregation to accept this purpose as their purpose so that they contribute to its accomplishment.
 - c. They sustain the common purpose. That is, they keep people focused on the purpose so that they don’t go off on tangents or simply not see the objective and fail to accomplish the work of God.
3. Such leadership is modeled in the life of Jesus and in the life of the apostles.
4. In this lesson we will focus attention upon teaching, unity and working together.

Discussion:

- I. While the word “elder” may conjure up the idea of decision-making it may be the words “shepherd” and “overseer” that are more reflective of “purposeful leading.”
 - A. A shepherd’s responsibilities might be said to include providing everything that the flock needs to thrive.
 1. This involves feeding the flock, strengthening the sick, healing the diseased, binding up the broken, seeking and bringing back the lost (Ezek. 34:1-4).
 2. Eph. 4:11ff identifies “equipping the saints for the work of service” as part of this pastoral/teaching responsibility. Notice the close association between pastoring and teaching in this text.
 3. Teaching is one of the primary responsibilities of elders. This is a work that they should work hard at (1 Tim. 5:17-18).
 - B. The word “overseer” focuses attention on the managerial responsibility of elders.
 1. Thus he must be one who manages his own household well. If he is unable to do this how will he manage the church of God? (1 Tim. 3:4-5).
 2. Teaching comes up in overlapping fashion here to. He must be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). He must hold fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able to both exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (Titus 1:9).

3. His being above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed relates here as well (Titus 1:7). He operates for the good of the flock of God, not himself.
- C. Now we may focus on his responsibilities to keep the flock from moral corruption. He is supposed to do this, but that is not all. He is not the keeper of a "safety deposit box." He is to equip and train for the work of service.
- D. Part of his responsibility involves generating, communicating and sustaining commonality of purpose (Cf. Eph. 4:14).

II. Characteristics of spiritual leaders who can lead us in accomplishing the work God has given us to do.

- A. Elders must know what the work is.
 1. Perceived visually.

Operational objectives:

Transcendent objective:

GOD GLORIFIED

Making disciples

Teaching them

- training them in personal Christian living
- training them to function as a member of the body
- training them to function in the world

by-products
social changes

2. The training of disciples involves three major areas.
 - a. Personal Christian living—personal moral virtues, not lying, not stealing, respecting other people, how to get along with marriage partner, etc. Focuses on me and my relationship with God.
 - b. As a member of the body of Christ—what role do I play in the work of the church; how do I work together with other Christians to accomplish the work. Focuses on me and my relationship with other Christians.
 - c. Function in the world—as an employee, employer; how do I get along with non-Christians; my neighbors, etc. Focuses on me and my relationship with non-Christians.
- B. Elders must be personally committed to the accomplishment of the purpose.
 1. The objective is specified by God.
 2. Leaders who are not committed to the objective either through ignorance of what the objective is or through a tenuous commitment to it he will not be a good leader.
- C. Elders must know how to lead the congregation in accomplishing the objective. Not only must the elder know where he is going he must know how to get there.
 1. He must know the process through which the congregation must go in order

to accomplish the objective. Necessitates constant learning—what works in one period of history may not work in another. Ex. Gospel Meetings in the 1800's and early 1900's brought out lots of non-Christians to hear. Not so much today. Now we use them to strengthen the saved.

2. He must address himself and his followers narrowly to the purpose.
 - a. Cannot go off on tangents.
 - b. Must recognize differing responsibilities (Acts 6:2-4).
 - 1) Preaching and teaching the word—pointing the way, guiding, motivating, challenging, inspiring, devising and executing plans, keeping the vision clear.
 - 2) Leg work—finding resources, developing the ways and means, administering the programs.
- D. Elders must be able to excite trust within those they are leading.
 1. The followers must perceive a commitment within the leader to the accomplishment of the purpose they have given themselves to.
 2. Must perceive that the leader knows what he is doing, that what he is doing is facilitating the accomplishment of the objective.
 3. This trust is excited by the elders teaching and preaching role.
 - a. Through teaching and preaching they persuade followers to willingly obey the Lord.
 - b. Followers do not become followers by decree. They are won by persuasion to commonality of purpose. Too many Christians have as their purpose going to heaven when they die. Heaven is our destiny; our purpose is to glorify God as we persuade others to do the same.
 - c. Trust in elders to lead in this purpose creates unity rather than division. It creates respect (1 Tim. 5:1) and obedience (Heb. 13:17).
 - d. This is reflective of the style of leadership that is to characterize these elders (1 Pet. 5:2-3). They are not lords over the flock issuing commands and threats, but as the Chief Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11) they create trust in the hearts of those they lead.

III. Such teaching results in unity, which results in people working together to accomplish the same objectives.

- A. "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:15-16).
- B. "Just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom. 12:4-8).

- C. Those at Corinth seem to have missed the purpose of their variety of gifts. Using them for personal status rather than for the common good (1 Cor. 12:4-30).
- D. A few disciples who know what the purpose is, who have committed themselves to it, who are unified by this work together can do magnificent things. A large group all headed in multiple directions accomplishes little.

Conclusion:

1. Although we have focused on elders/shepherds/overseers everyone of us leads!
2. We lead through our teaching, our example, and who we are. We are parents leading children. We are grandparents leading grandchildren. We are preachers, and Bible class teachers, and song leaders, givers, exhorters, those who serve and those who show mercy. People gifted by God to accomplish His purpose.
3. Let us lead in a way that serves his purpose.
4. Sir Winston Churchill is most recognized for the ability that he had to rally people to a common cause.
 - a. Without him the allies may not have been victorious in WW II.
 - b. On one occasion he gave a speech in which he rehearsed several events that were occurring in the war. To be honest things were not looking good.
 - c. He ended his speech with the call: "Never give up," he said. "Never. Never. Never. Never. Never.
 - d. With that he called on people to rally to the cause, to use every ounce of strength and when exhausted to give some more, because the cause was worth it.
5. God's leaders rally people to the cause of Christ. There is no greater cause than seeking and saving the lost.