

## **“Jesus Models Effective Leadership”**

### Luke 6:12-19

Several months ago, in our study from Luke’s gospel, I presented a message titled “Jesus Models Effective Ministry.” In that study we noted several factors that showed how Jesus gave us a pattern for successful ministry. That pattern is still applicable. In our text for today, we’ll see Jesus modeling effective leadership; showing us how to lead in a way that blesses others.

Years ago, I saw a poster with a picture of a group of Pekin ducks on it. Beneath the picture were these words; “Lead, follow, or get out of the way!” That simple poster made a significant point. There are only three kinds of people in the world – those who lead, those who follow, and those who refuse to do either.

In all phases of life there need to be leaders and there need to be followers. In business, in politics, in civic affairs, in the home and in the church, no one is in either of those positions 100% of the time. In fact, personal experience and biblical revelation make it clear that the best leaders are those who first learn how to be good followers. We see this truth exemplified in the relationship of Jesus and His disciples.

In an earlier portion of our study from Luke’s gospel, we saw Jesus inviting Simon Peter, James, and John to follow Him. Luke 5:11 records; “*When they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him.*” These three men must have been among His earliest, most committed followers.

As we continue in our study of chapter six, Luke records Jesus choosing and appointing the twelve apostles. These men would become the core group of His followers. Into them Jesus would pour His life and His energy. In a sense, the kingdom He came to establish would rise or fall on these men! Because of this, Jesus’ choices carried great significance.

As we begin our study let’s read our text, Luke 6:12 to 19. Listen carefully, because here now is God’s Word to us from **Luke 6:12-19**.

Heavenly Father, we thank you in the name of Jesus for your great love and mercy to us. Without Jesus, my friend and I would have no forgiveness for the past, no peace for the present, and no hope for the future. In Jesus, we have all this and more.

Now Father, I pray for the anointing of your Holy Spirit on my friend and me as we open this portion of your Word and study together. Help us to see clearly the events of this Scripture portion that give us a clearer understanding of how “Jesus Models Effective Leadership.” I ask this in the precious name of Jesus, Amen.

Leadership is basically a series of actions one takes to motivate others to reach the desired goal. In this text we observe the ACTIONS Jesus took to model effective leadership.

The First ACTION is,

### **He Prayed for Guidance**

John Bunyan said, “You can do more than pray, after you have prayed; but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.” It was Alfred, Lord Tennyson who said “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.”

If Jesus felt the need to spend all night in prayer prior to making this decision, how much more do we need to pray for guidance in the decisions we face? If you are a leader in the home, the church, in business, or in government, and you are a follower of Christ, this is where all your leadership decisions begin - with prayer! Why? Several reasons immediately come to mind.

First, as a human being, you are unable to clearly see the future; so you need wisdom beyond your own. The decision you make will have a far-reaching impact on your life and the lives of others. Many of us have either seen or experienced first-hand the results of hasty or poorly made decisions. Another issue is our selfishness. We tend to make decisions based on what is best for us, rather than best for our family, company, church, or whatever. A good leader seeks what’s best for all. Finally, you must remember your decision will set in motion a series of consequences which cannot be cancelled and from which there is no escape! That is a sobering reality that is too often overlooked.

Reading verse 12 gives rise to an interesting question. Why did Jesus, as God Incarnate, spend all night in prayer prior to calling the twelve apostles? As God, did He not see the potential in the lives of these men? Could He not see how the lives of each of them would develop under His leadership? Did He not know that one of them would become His betrayer? Did He not know how these foundation stones of the church would fulfill their destiny?

I do believe that Jesus could see all this and more. But, He also understood and modeled the concept of submission to authority! While He was the leader of the disciples, His was not the final authority. He was submissive to the will of His Father. Philippians 2:6 and 7 tell us that Jesus, *“though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (or to be hung on to at any cost) but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men.* Jesus modeled how to be a leader by being a follower – of His Heavenly Father.

I believe Jesus also prayed specifically for these men. He knew their character flaws just like He knows yours and mine; but according to John 15:16 He chose them and us anyway. Jesus knew these men better than they knew themselves. He understood it wouldn't be easy to develop them individually and collectively into a group that would “turn the world upside down.” His patience would be tested as they quarreled among themselves about who would be the greatest; and when they seemed so “slow of heart to believe all that the prophets [had] spoken.”

Jesus also knew the pressures these men would face in following Him. Already in two separate occasions the Pharisees had questioned the disciples about Jesus' activities. It seems they were attempting to plant doubts in the minds of Jesus' followers about His legitimacy. They used the age old strategy of divide and conquer. He knew that, eventually, the opposition and hostility would turn to violence. How would His followers respond in that moment of crisis?

And what about Judas Iscariot? Wouldn't it take special grace to love, teach, and mentor one whom you knew was going to betray you? I know, Jesus was fully God; but He was also fully man. The Scriptures clearly state that He was tempted in every way we are, yet He did not sin. I believe Jesus prayed for Himself in that all-night prayer time, that He might respond properly to the challenges of leadership.

Jesus modeled effective leadership by praying for His followers and for himself. We are called to follow His example!

The Second ACTION is,

### **He Appointed the Twelve**

After spending the night in prayer, Jesus called His disciples together. We can logically conclude this was a large group, because it was from these that He chose the twelve.

Here we see another important characteristic of a leader; he knows that he can't do it all. So he chooses a few key people to inspire and involve in his mission. We hear a lot today about the importance of mentoring. That may be a relatively new term, but it's certainly not a new concept. Jesus chose the twelve to mentor and train to be His messengers or ambassadors. He knew He could not effectively teach the whole multitude, so He singled out those whom God revealed to be His close associates.

What we know about these men varies significantly; especially at this stage of Jesus' ministry. The gospels and the epistles fill in what knowledge we have. About some of the apostles we know very little.

Peter is probably the most well known. Bold and impetuous he quickly became the spokesman for the group. He was followed by Andrew, the first to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. James and John, nicknamed the "sons of thunder," were cousins of Jesus. In Luke chapter five we were introduced to Levi/Matthew, one of the hated tax-collectors known as *dounier*, or 'little Mokhes'; the one who actually sat in the customs house by the shore of Galilee at Capernaum. I'm sure his was a unique contribution to the group.

We learn from John chapter one that Jesus invited Philip to follow Him and Philip invited Nathanael (or Bartholomew as he's called here in our text). Add to the mix Simon the Zealot, from the town of Cana, Judas of James (better known as Thaddeus), Thomas the Twin, James the son of Alphaeus, and Judas Iscariot. Each of these men had their strengths, their weaknesses, their prejudices and their honor.

In his book, "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah," Alfred Edersheim points out that while the apostles came from a very narrow circle of Jewish life (they were all Galileans except Judas *Ish Kerioth* [from the town of Kerioth in Judah], they thoroughly represented the kinds of people who would gather around Christ. That last phrase is the important thing for us to remember; Jesus' disciples "thoroughly represented the kinds of people who would gather around Him."

As Jesus chose these men, He had to be thinking about the Church as His body and His building; two analogies used frequently in the New Testament. He saw the need for a diversity of personalities and gifting that would correspond to the different members of the physical body and their function. In His analogy of the Church as a building He knew that an attractive and

functional building does not rely nearly as much on uniformity as it does on unity. Such a diverse group would be blended together by their commitment to their leader and the goals they shared.

Likewise, a good leader does not surround himself with copies of himself and ‘yes-men’. He does not try to develop a personality cult; a temptation faced by all human beings. Instead, he values opposing viewpoints and varied perspectives and seeks to blend them together in reaching the goal. He is not threatened by the strengths of others or his own weaknesses because each member of the group is there to assist the others. Good leadership acknowledges the weakness of others but accentuates their strengths. In this, Jesus modeled effective leadership.

The Final ACTION is,

### **He Provided an Example**

Effective leaders lead by example. Notice verse 17. *“And He [Jesus] **came down with them and stood in the plain**, and the company of His disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases.”* Jesus knew nothing about “leading from behind.” He took the initiative and led the apostles down among the people, to minister to their need.

As I think about his final action, I remember a rather insignificant incident that happened a number of years ago. I had gone down to the storeroom in the basement of our offices at Heralds of Hope to get some supplies for the men’s restroom. As I was coming up the steps with the supplies in my hand, I met one of the other staff members who worked with me. She said, “I don’t think the president of the ministry should be the one getting supplies for the restroom!”

Because this person was older than me, and I wanted to be respectful, I don’t recall that I made a verbal response. But I certainly didn’t agree with her perspective! My first question to myself was, “Why is this beneath me?” Of course the answer was; it is not beneath me. In my growing up years, my mom had some rules for our family. It applied to all of us, whether parents or children; if you empty it refill it; if you open it, close it; if you mess it up, clean it up. Joyce and I have that same rule in our family today. Good leaders follow the rules!

Why do I mention that? Because I believe that as a general rule, an effective leader will never ask a person to do something that he is not willing to do. Let me repeat that. “As a general rule, an effective leader will never ask a person to do something that he is not willing to do.” And Jesus modeled this truth. He didn’t say to the disciples, “OK, I’ve chosen you to be my

followers, now get down there and meet the needs of those people.” No! Instead, He led them down among the people and began to show them by example how it was done.

One thing we will notice as we continue studying Luke’s gospel is that each of these men had mistaken ideas, prejudices, and false assumptions about people and about ministry (are there any of us who don’t?). But Jesus was right there with them to bring new understanding and enlightenment. Their failures became teachable moments. So He took them down among the diseased, the unclean, the hopeless, and the demon possessed. He showed them how to minister among “the least of these.” He communicated to them the inestimable worth of every person. In this, He began to communicate to them His expectations and goals for them. He was walking with them to model servant-leadership. We need more servant-leaders in every level of society!

The evidence today tells me that too many leaders who profess to follow Christ are following the world’s philosophy of leadership rather than Jesus’ example. They’re relying on the wisdom of men to guide them rather than the wisdom of God and His Word. Instead of seeking God in prayer, they’re reading the latest books from some business guru who is successful by the world’s definition.

And then there are others who feel they have a vision and calling so unique that no one else can be entrusted with it. Everything must be done their way. They see someone with more ability or skill than they have in a certain area and immediately they feel threatened. These insecure leaders either push out those they feel threatened by or they make life so intolerable that others leave voluntarily. And as they become brittle and harsh their vision narrows until they see only themselves. Like Jesus, if we want to see our vision become reality, we need to invite others to share and embrace that vision.

My friend, if you are in a position of leadership and you want to be effective, then Jesus is your model. It doesn’t matter whether you’re a leader in business, in civic affairs, in the home, or in the church, this model will work for you. Seeking God’s wisdom, choosing key people with a variety of gifts, and leading by personal example are three actions that will make you effective in any leadership role God gives you.