

Humble Meeting: November 6-8

Theme Title: “**CHALLENGES OF LEADERSHIP: Leadership Lessons from The Scriptures**”

Fri PM – The Critical Need For The Right Kind Of Leadership (Leadership is about much more than just being in charge. It is about leading with a heart that is obedient to God and concerned for the flock.)

Sat AM – The Ladder Of Leadership (What is it that constitutes leadership? Is it just matter of having a position of authority? The lesson identifies what leadership in God’s kingdom truly is.)

Sat AM – Leadership In the Most Unlikely Places (Does a person have to be an elder in order to influence people? The lesson looks at a man in the Old Testament who was a surprising leader.)

Sun AM – My Congregation, My Shepherds, And Me (Explores God’s plan and purposes for our gathering in worship—and relates it to accountability to our shepherds.)

Sun AM – Great Churches Do Great Things (The lesson looks at seven things that evangelistic churches are doing that others may neglect. These seven things begin with those who lead the congregation.)

Sun PM – More Than Followers (To be sure, Jesus wants us to follow Him. But as we grow in our abilities as leaders, He wants us to become something more. Do you know what that is?)

THE CRITICAL NEED FOR THE RIGHT KIND OF LEADERSHIP

Challenges of Leadership

Max Dawson

Introduction:

1. One key to success in a local church is found in having good shepherds, Acts 20:28-32.
 - a. God expects these leaders to be of high character and sound moral fiber.
 - b. What is true of leaders in the church is true of leaders in every place—the home, work, in parenting, and in the community. “Everything rises or falls based on leadership” (John Maxwell).
2. There is a critical need for leadership in the church—a critical need for the *right kind* of leadership. Whatever one’s leadership role might be, there must be the right character within the heart of that person in order to be the kind of leader God wants him to be.
3. There is a man in the Bible who was not an elder; he was not even part of the New Testament church. Yet he demonstrated that he could fill the critical role of leadership. He had the character a leader needs. The man was a father, and as a father, he serves as a model for those who would “rule well their own houses, that they might also take care of the church of God,” 1 Timothy 3:5.
 - a. Joshua was not only a great military leader, he was also a great family man, Joshua 24:14-15.
 - b. His statement in this last sentence shows his determination to lead his family in the right way. There are lessons for leaders today to be learned from Joshua.

The Lesson:

- I. **Five lessons for fathers from Joshua.**
 - A. Concern about danger. The danger Israel faced was spiritual in nature—idolatry. God’s leader has the same concern whether leading nation, family or church.
 - B. Courage to think for himself. The world looks with disfavor on a man who thinks for himself. A father must think independently of current fads and opinion.
 - C. Conviction to stand alone. Joshua was one who was able to march to the beat of a different drummer. A godly father not only exercises authority in the home, but does so in the fear of God. He is not independent of God’s influence.
 - D. Commitment to influence others. Joshua took responsibility for what others would do with their lives. Good fathers don’t let their kids run without direction.
 - E. Confidence to speak for others. Joshua is not a boaster; this is a humble statement of commitment and determination, that as far as he can influence his family, he will do so. We must learn to express confidence that our children will do right. We cannot say with absolute certainty what our kids may do, but we can expect them to serve the Lord.
- II. **Five lessons for leaders in the church**—particularly those who shepherd the church. Qualities that make good fathers—can make for good bishops in the church, 1 Timothy 3:4-5. Character exhibited in one’s own house prepares him to lead God’s house. These points extend beyond the eldership.
 - A. Concern about danger. He is not merely concerned with physical things, but about spiritual things. In the early church elders guarded against dangers from Judaizers, Gnostics, pagan

influences, etc., 2 Corinthians 11:2-3; Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:9. There are countless modern dangers that elders must be on guard against. The devil has not quit making his assaults on the church. This is the elders' first responsibility. We pray, "help the elders...good decisions." But, decision-making is not the main thing they do; to be alert and watchful is!

- B. Courage to think independently. They are under pressure; they live in the same world as you. They watch TV, read newspapers and face the same pressure to conform as you do. They are under pressure of family. Elders may make a decision, go home, and face family pressure to change the decision. He goes back and says, "We can't..." He would rather face three other elders than his wife and kids. He is under pressure from preachers. An elder who allows a preacher to control him is unworthy to be an elder, yet he can't be self-willed. Elders can face pressure from other churches. They can't ask what other churches will think, but "Is this right or wrong? Is this God's will or not?" The Lord's authority must rule those who oversee God's flock.
- C. Conviction to stand alone. God's leader concedes matters of judgment. This is not the place to take a stand. But, the elder has no right to compromise what God has said—matters of faith! The church is not a democracy, but a kingdom. In a democracy, authority comes from people, from beneath. In a kingdom, authority comes from above. (This isn't to say that elders give no ear to the people; they ought, in matters of judgment.) But, in matters of right and wrong, the voice that is listened to is the voice from above, 1 Peter 5:2-4; Acts 20:28. Elders must be assertive in insisting that God's will be done. Timidity is not modesty. Lack of leadership is not humility. Shepherds need to be in the forefront of leading in the way that is right.
- D. Commitment to influence others. God expresses what the elders' goals must be in Ephesians 4:11-16. They are to prepare the saints to be ministers to edify the body of Christ. To bring to the unity of the faith; to make the body a united, working unit. To bring to Christlikeness; that all may imitate Christ and be mature in him. To bring to stability in conviction; that all may know and do what is right. To bring diligence in teaching. This causes the growth of the body unto edifying of itself. When this happens, those shepherds are successful. No matter what else may be said of a church—its attendance, contribution, plans—if this isn't happening, the eldership is less than God wants. Elders are responsible to see to it that God's house is faithful to God.
- E. Confidence to speak for others. He must be willing to say, "This congregation is going to be loyal to God." There needs to be encouragement, not berating. The congregation needs to see itself as a united body of people who love God and one another. Just as a child has an image of self, so does a church. Churches have to have faults pointed out, but constant berating benefits little.

Conclusion:

1. What is the why of it all? Just so the church can run efficiently? The bottom line has to do with souls.
2. Elders are in the soul business, Hebrews 13:17. It is a love for souls, a desire to see souls in heaven. That is why elders not only care for the souls already saved, but must encourage the church to be aggressive in evangelism. Let us all seek souls.

THE LADDER OF LEADERSHIP

Introduction:

1. Across our nation churches are in crisis. Some mainline denominations are collapsing from within. Others are stagnant or uncertain about the future. Should we also be pessimistic about our future?
2. We are not doomed to repeat the errors of the denominations. We firmly believe in God's plan and pattern for His church. God's kingdom is a kingdom of greatness and success (Daniel 2:44).
 - a. Men and women must step up and be the kinds of leaders that God needs in His kingdom.
 - b. God needs leaders today like Timothy, Priscilla, Aquila, Phoebe and Ephaproditus. All of these were servant-leaders. That's what leaders are—*servants* to God and to His people.
3. There is a leadership ladder that exists. Knowledge of that ladder is fundamental to our success.

The Lesson:

- I. **The First Rung: Learning about the need for leaders.**
 - A. Without effective leaders, everything breaks down.
 1. Lack of leaders spells doom. Everything rises or falls based on leadership (*Maxwell*).
 2. Old Testament Israel met its doom because of a lack of good leaders, Ezekiel 34:1-10.
 - B. The need for leaders among God's people.
 1. There may be no greater need in the church today. It is not difficult to see that need.
 2. Leaders have vision, goals and objectives. Leaders influence people in the Lord's way. Leaders are able to see what needs to be done and then do it!
 - C. Hear what Jesus said about the need for leaders, Matthew 9:36-38.
- II. **The Second Rung: Learning what leadership is.**
 - A. There are many misconceptions about what constitutes leadership.
 1. *Intellect* doesn't necessarily make one a good leader.
 2. *Achievement* is not to be confused with leadership.
 3. *Management skills* do not always translate into leadership skills.
 4. *Position* doesn't make a man a leader. Some believe if a man is given a position, that makes him a leader. Saul was given a position, but was a poor leader, 1 Samuel 14:45. He made foolish decisions and misdirected the nation of Israel.
 - B. "Leadership is Influence."
 1. Jesus is the greatest leader of all time. Jesus has influenced millions to follow Him. He has no equal. He has been, and continues to be, the greatest influence on human history.
 2. The essence of influence involves getting others to follow. If no one is following you, then you are not a leader—regardless of your intellect, achievement or position!
 3. "Leadership is influence." That definition was first given by J.O. Sanders in his book *Spiritual Leadership*. "Leadership is influence." It is nothing more or less than that.

III. The Third Rung: Learning from Lord about leadership.

- A. Bookstore shelves are filled with leadership books. Some may be helpful for God's people.
- B. But the one book that is most important is also the most neglected book in the world.
 - 1. The Bible is a book about leaders—about prophets, priests, princes and kings; it is about apostles, deacons and shepherds—all leadership roles.
 - 2. The Bible shows us good and bad leaders. It shows how leaders were trained. It instructs us about mentoring and selection of leaders, and what part leaders play in God's service.
- C. Do we believe 2 Timothy 3:16-17? If so, then the Bible is our leadership book!

IV. The Fourth Rung: Learning that leadership requires growth.

- A. We are not born as leaders, but we are born to be leaders.
 - 1. Becoming a leader is a process, not an event. An event may give a person a *position*, but it requires growth to become an *effective leader*. Remember King Saul.
 - 2. By contrast, look at some leaders in the Bible who did grow.
 - a. Josiah was king at age eight, 2 Kings 22-23. His life is about personal growth.
 - b. The Apostle Peter grew as a leader, overcoming his impulsiveness and impatience.
 - c. Young Timothy began his work as a boy, but achieved much as a man. His life is about learning, of being mentored by Paul—until he became a mentor, 2 Timothy 2:2.
- B. The story of Joseph is a classic example that demonstrates leadership requires growth.
 - 1. He had to overcome obstacles in order to be second in all of Egypt (Genesis 41:40).
 - 2. We must understand that Joseph *became* a great leader. He was not born as a leader. Numerous obstacles in his life had to be overcome for him to be what he became. In spite of all these obstacles, Joseph rose to a position of leadership in Egypt.
 - a. He had developed and demonstrated competence in Potiphar's house.
 - b. He was unswerving in his faithfulness to God. He believed God's way was best!
 - c. He consistently demonstrated patience and integrity in dealing with others.
 - d. No single event in his life qualified Joseph as a leader. Rather, it was a long, slow process from age 17 to 30 (13 years) that equipped him to be a leader.
 - 3. God worked behind the scenes to make him a leader! When you go through disappointments, maybe God is using those things to prepare you for leadership in years to come. If you would be a leader, have faith, persevere, live right, and grow!

Conclusion:

- 1. Joseph shows what can happen when the right things are consistently practiced. It was his faithfulness and consistency in what he did every day that made him the leader that he was.
- 2. Calvin Murphy (Houston Rockets, 1970-1983) at 5'9" was an NBA star. His *skills were the result of growth!* Growth doesn't happen overnight. Like Joseph, his success came from what he did every day. *No single event* made Murphy a star. It was on the court that he showed he *was* a star, but he *became* a star because of his daily routine. It happens that way with every leader, even you!

LEADERSHIP IN THE MOST UNLIKELY PLACES

Challenges of Leadership

Max Dawson

Introduction:

1. Some of the great leaders in history are those who would never have been thought to be leaders.
 - a. Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison before becoming president of South Africa.
 - b. Abraham Lincoln, born in a log cabin and raised in abject poverty, became our 16th president.
 - c. Moses, at age 80, became the leader of God's people, setting them free from Egypt.
2. These are special men who are known around the world. But there are other leaders who also come from very unlikely places. These leaders may not be in the history books, but they are leaders, nonetheless. They are leaders used by God for His purposes. We are talking about leadership in the Lord's church—what we call "Leadership in the Most Unlikely Places."

The Lesson:

I. Leadership is for Saints.

- A. Let us address a fallacy: "Leadership in the Lord's church means being an elder." That sentence works if inverted: "Being an elder in the Lord's church means leadership." But, there can and should be many leaders—both men and women—in the church who are not elders.
- B. Leadership is for saints.
 1. We cannot emphasize too strongly the need for leaders in a dozen areas of service.
 2. Do we need leaders in evangelism? Both men and women can lead in evangelism.
 3. Do we need leaders in caring for the sick and shut-ins? Women are often the best leaders when it comes to planning and carrying out this kind of work.
 4. Do we need leaders in teaching children? What were Lois and Eunice in 2 Timothy 1:5?
 5. We need to see leadership in a very different light than what we have traditionally done. Leadership isn't strictly just for elders and deacons.
 6. Can you be an influence for good among your circle of friends in the church? If so, then by the definition we are using ("Leadership is influence") you are a leader.
- C. Be convinced that leadership is for saints—and is not limited to a few select people.

II. Leadership requires Sight.

- A. Someone has to see the need that a friend has for the gospel. Someone has to see the need to care for a shut-in. Leadership requires sight. It often involves *seeing* what others don't see.
- B. Consider Nehemiah—a leader in the huge task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.
 1. Yet, when we first meet him, he is the cupbearer to the King of Persia (Nehemiah 1:11).
 2. When he learned of the condition of the walls of the city, he acted, Nehemiah 1:1-4.
 3. But what could he do? He was no construction worker or foreman or stonemason.
- C. But Nehemiah was a leader. Leadership requires sight. He could see what others could not see. Before Nehemiah ever left Persia, he knew what his task was.

1. He saw **farther** than others. He saw Jerusalem's place in the plan of God. Can you see your congregation's place in God's plan of God? Do you see your part in the plan of God? *You do have a part, Ephesians 4:16.*
 2. He saw **more** than others. He saw what could be done. God is looking for those who see possibilities—and not just in building projects! What do you see in evangelism?
 3. He saw **before** others. When he went to Jerusalem, he convinced others to work with him in building the wall. Maybe you can show others the possibilities you see.
- D. But why Nehemiah? Why not someone who was already in Jerusalem? There were thousands of Jews who already lived in Jerusalem. Why had they not rebuilt the walls? Maybe instead of making brick and mortar they were making excuses.
- E. Rebuilding the city walls was a massive undertaking, but it was accomplished in only 52 days (Nehemiah 6:15). An amazing task! But Nehemiah, rather than being a dreamer, was a realist.
1. He knew what could be done and did it! He began with the end in mind—a finished wall.
 2. In order for Nehemiah to be successful, he needed the ongoing support of others in his work, Nehemiah 2:17-20. Maybe you can be one of those who supports others!
 3. Nehemiah—what an incredible story of leadership in the most unlikely places!

III. Leadership is about Servantship.

- A. That's what Nehemiah was. He was a servant to God and to His people.
1. Jesus is both the greatest leader and greatest servant of all time, Matthew 20:25-28.
 2. We call Paul a great leader. Why? Because he saw himself as a servant, Romans 1:1.
- B. The story of a servant: sister Lourie Suits. A story of leadership in the most unlikely places.
1. She was loved by everyone at the Emerson Avenue church in Indianapolis. She was an elderly woman who had numerous handicaps but was a leader in the church!
 2. Sister Suits was looked up to—respected—by every member of the congregation. Both young and old would go to her for advice. Preachers and elders sought her counsel.
 3. Our churches are filled with women who serve God with the same dedication as sister Suits. You can name several in your congregation who are godly, kind and generous.
 4. Not every leader in a congregation has a formal position of leadership!
 5. Sister Suits was a gentle soul who *reached out to others* and touched many lives. In spite of her many handicaps, she helped numerous people find their way home to God.
- C. When you are a servant and reach out to others, others will trust in you and seek your guidance and counsel. You can help them find their way home to God. It is about servantship!

Conclusion:

1. Indeed, leadership is sometimes found in the most unlikely places. We serve a God who is able to do things with people—things we would not expect or anticipate.
2. Will you let God use you? Set your heart on being a servant. Live a godly, humble life so you can influence others for good. Imitate the Master.

MY CONGREGATION, MY SHEPHERDS, AND ME

Challenges of Leadership

Max Dawson

Introduction:

1. One man joked about being a "Bedside Believer." He said he worshipped at "the chapel of the tube." He stayed in bed on Sunday, woke up about 10 AM and caught a religious program on TV.
 - a. For some people that's much more than a joke. We live in a time of self-directed spirituality where people do their own thing. There are those who refuse to get near a worship assembly.
 - b. They often claim they can get more out of a walk in the woods than from a gathering of saints.
2. Can a Christian survive without being part of the worship assembly? Some Christians have no choice. They may be trapped in a hospital bed, or in a nursing home. God is certainly sufficient to meet the needs of those saints who find themselves in such a situation.
 - a. Even though, in such cases, it's possible to live a Christian life apart from being present in the local assembly, it's certainly not the norm.
 - b. When you became a Christian, you were called into fellowship with God, 1 Corinthians 1:9, and to fellowship with other Christians, 1 John 1:7. Fellowship is both vertical and horizontal.
3. A prime aspect of fellowship with other Christians is a gathering in the local assembly, Acts 20:7-8. Let us focus on that word gathering (congregating) as we begin our study.

The Lesson:

I. God's Plan for our Gathering.

- A. The idea of Christians living in isolation from the assembly is foreign to the gospel, Acts 2:42.
 1. The New Testament never classifies Christians as church members and non-church members? Modern religion tries to classify them that way, but the Bible does not!
 2. From the very time the church was established, the New Testament assumes that every Christian is part of the local congregation and participates in the local congregation.
 3. The idea of salvation in isolation is foreign to the gospel. Wherever Christians are within range of each other in the New Testament, they meet; they are part of a local assembly.
 4. When the Apostle Paul came to a town where there were no Christians, he won a few converts to the Lord and immediately organized them into a congregation. (See Acts 16.)
- B. It is the norm for God's people in the New Testament to gather for worship. Acts 20:7 shows the practice of the early church: "...on the first day of the week, the disciples came together..."
 1. For Christians in every location, regular gathering was a vital part of their spiritual lives. And so it is today. Christians gather at set times (typically established by shepherds for definite purposes). Those purposes are determined by God, but they are executed by your shepherds. God expects the local church to be a united group, working together under the oversight of shepherds, Hebrews 13:17.
 2. Can I emphasize this is "my" congregation? I want it to function as well as possible. I want it to excel, not fail. I want it to increase and be victorious, not decrease and suffer defeat.

3. I would also add these are “my” shepherds. These are the men the Holy Spirit has appointed as my overseers (Acts 20:28). They are to see to my well-being (Hebrews 13:7, 17). To resist God’s Scriptural plan is to resist God.
4. Nobody in the Bible ever argued (as some do today) that membership in the local congregation is not necessary to their spiritual growth and relationship to God. Nobody in the Bible ever insisted that Christians need not submit to shepherds in the local church.

II. God’s Purposes for our Gathering.

A. *His Worship and Glorification.*

1. While it might be true that—in a limited and personal sense—we can and do worship apart from the local assembly, assembly worship is an integral part of our Christianity.
2. Our text in Acts 20:7 mentions the breaking of bread and preaching. Those acts of worship, along with the giving, singing and praying are all part of our gathering on the first day of the week. The gathering of the assembly is a gathering to worship and honor God.
3. In addition to the first day of the week assembly, sometimes there were other gatherings on other days where disciples worshipped the Lord, Acts 2:46-47a.
4. Singing is a part of our worship. It is a “one another” thing, Colossians 3:16. This cannot be done without saints gathering together. We praise God in song when we join our voices together in the midst of the church (the assembly), Hebrews 2:12.
5. What encouragement we receive as we gather together and share our mutual love for Jesus in the Lord’s Supper, as hearts unite in song, and we send our petitions heavenward! And what glory our God receives when saints gather as a united people to praise Him!
6. Your shepherds have arranged congregational assemblies for the worship of our God!

B. *Functioning of Gifts.*

1. Did you know that most gifts possessed by Christians in the New Testament were not miraculous? In Romans 12:4-8 only one of the seven was miraculous. The others were natural skills and qualities that God had either given or developed in individual saints!
2. All Christians have some abilities, skills and qualities that are from God. They are called gifts and they are to be used in the functioning of the body of Christ.
3. According to 1 Peter 4:10-11, God does not give gifts in the church for one’s personal benefit. These abilities are not provided to make you feel good; they are abilities that must be used for the common good! We are to use these gifts to help each other. (See also 1 Corinthians 12:7). Have you considered that your brethren genuinely need you?
4. What gifts has God given you? Gathering in the assembly for worship is not a spectator sport. We don’t gather to watch each other worship. We gather to participate in worship. It is God’s desire and design that each Christian participate—even if he (wrongly) thinks he is of little value to the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:14-22.
5. Your shepherds arrange classes and worship assemblies so gifts may function properly.

C. *Edification of one another.*

1. This is the effect of the functioning of the gifts, Ephesians 4:11-16. The concept of gathering is more than just being at church services. It means being a part of the local church. It means contributing what I have and what I am to build up my brothers and sisters.
2. To edify means “to build up.” It is one of the most misunderstood elements of the gospel.
 - a. According to Ephesians 4:13, it is to build me up and make me mature in Him.
 - b. If my congregating with other saints in the assembly doesn't make me more like Jesus, then something is wrong—and the problem is likely in me. If others around me are growing in faith, why am I not? I may need self-examination, 2 Corinthians 13:5.
 - c. Edification involves *learning* the gospel, *applying* the gospel, and *living* the gospel. If these things are not happening, then my life needs some changes. It also means *reaching out* to others with the gospel. It makes me like Jesus—a seeker of the lost.
 - d. The gathering of the saints is to be a wonderful time of mutual edification. The New Testament is full of “one another” commands. We are to comfort one another, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, build up one another, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, and provoke and exhort one another, Hebrews 10:24-25. Many more passages could be offered.
3. Your shepherds arrange gathering times so you can grow and be edified in Jesus.
4. I have found that the person who is most edified is the one who most seeks to edify others! He who gives the most gets the most! I am sure you have seen that in practice. Edification of my brethren means serving my brethren, Galatians 5:13b.

D. *Accountability in the Lord's Body.*

1. God designed the church as a place where spiritual leaders could watch out for the welfare of the saints, like shepherds guarding the sheep, 1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17.
2. We are Americans; Americans love their individuality and freedom. We don't like the concept of accountability. We want to be answerable only to ourselves. Yet, in the plan of God, accountability to other Christians is a good thing and is for our personal benefit.
3. A Christian who answers only to himself can easily rationalize sinful attitudes or actions; regular interaction with other saints can keep us spiritually alert and wise in our choices.
4. Accountability to others is essential to our Christianity and is part of God's plan. It is not God's will that Christians just drift in and out and away and be answerable to no one!
5. We must avoid the consumer mentality that treats the church like Wal-Mart. “The church exists to provide a product. If I like the product, I will come. But I have no accountability.”

Conclusion:

1. An ultimate gathering will take place on the last day, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2. This final gathering is a gathering together to Christ. It is much like Ephesians 5:27. This is a gathering unto glory.
2. There is a larger gathering on that day—a gathering to judgment, Matthew 25:31-46. This gathering will result in a tragic end for millions. Which group will you be in on that final day of gathering?

GREAT CHURCHES DO GREAT THINGS

Challenges of Leadership

Max Dawson

Introduction:

1. In the past several years I have visited a number of local churches. I have seen a few churches that are holding their own, and some that are dying. I have also seen some that are doing incredibly well; they are growing and prospering. How do we account for these differences?
2. It is apparent that successful churches are doing some things that others are not doing.
 - a. Every church has a personality. That personality is influenced a great deal by the leadership of that local church—by the attitudes, dispositions and actions of those leaders.
 - b. There are certain things that great churches do that make them great—hence, our title. Here are seven critical elements that make for a great church. These things start with leaders!

The Lesson:

I. Stand For Truth Without Compromise.

- A. The church is the pillar and support of truth, 1 Timothy 3:15.
 1. Churches must not depart from the truth of the gospel, Galatians 1:6-8.
 2. Not every church stands for truth. If we don't get this right, nothing else matters. Some churches believe they will succeed if they water down the gospel. Succeed at what? In the final analysis, churches that don't stand for truth do more harm than good.
 3. Teaching on salvation, authority of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, the nature of Christ and the church must be crystal clear. We cannot run from any controversial issue.
- B. Great churches grow and thrive by tackling tough issues and addressing them with truth. Satan hates both the stand and the growth—but God loves both the stand and the growth!

II. Promote An Evangelistic Culture.

- A. Evangelism is God's great work! It is a work given to us, Matthew 28:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:8.
 1. We are on a mission from God...really! We answer the call, Matthew 9:37-38.
 2. Some churches—and their leaders—do not take seriously the work of saving souls.
 3. Does God want more evangelism or less? What does the devil want? What do you want?
- B. Great churches have leaders who set the tone in evangelism. Here are four simple things you can do to promote an evangelistic culture: Shine, Speak, Invite, and Welcome.

III. Consistently Practice Church Discipline.

- A. This is the point where some people want to balk at God's will.
 1. The local church and its shepherds have obligations to souls and to God, Hebrews 13:17.
 2. God commands that erring Christians be addressed, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15
 3. It is commonly believed that obeying God's will on this matter will cause a church to decline. Actually, churches that do this fare much better in the long run!
- B. Great churches know that God's way is best and right. They do God's will, not the will of men.

IV. Reject Cultural Barriers.

- A. Sunday continues to be the most segregated day of the week.
 - 1. In some towns there are black churches and white churches. Is that God's will?
 - 2. God's will is expressed in texts like 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27-28.
 - 3. God's church is the answer to racial issues in our culture. It is not the problem!
- B. Great churches are made up of people from every cultural background, people who have a common bond. That common bond is our faith and love toward Christ Jesus.

V. Promote A Spirit Of Excellence.

- A. Our God is an awesome and excellent God! He deserves our best, Malachi 1:6-8, 14.
 - 1. I am troubled when I see kingdom work given a half-hearted effort: dirty church buildings, passionless singing, sermons thrown together. Dare we insult the great God—our God?
 - 2. In no place in Scripture do you find that God is pleased with mediocrity!
- B. God is great. Great churches are made up of people who believe "good enough is not good enough." Striving for excellence must begin at the top; leaders set standards!

VI. Promote A Spirit Of Unity.

- A. It is not just strong teaching that produces unity; it is determination on the part of brethren.
 - 1. It is leadership that says, "With God's help we can solve every issue and stay together."
 - 2. It is our obligation to promote unity, Ephesians 4:1-3. It requires diligent effort!
 - 3. It is not our obligation to quickly divide and start a new congregation down the street!
- B. Great churches are made up of people who have the rugged determination to hang in there, stick together and work out problems and disagreements by following the Scriptures.

VII. Have Growing Leaders.

- A. There are a lot of churches that have leaders who love God, truth and souls. But one of the things that sets great churches apart are leaders who know they have not yet reached the pinnacle. Those churches have leaders in every rank who know they need to grow.
 - 1. Those kinds of leaders want to do their jobs better; they study Scripture that addresses their work; they talk through strategies for handling difficult issues and situations; they hold each other accountable as they strive for excellence, Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:28-32.
 - 2. This must be done at every level of leadership. We must motivate one another.
- B. This is something great churches do. They have leaders who are completely satisfied with God's pattern and will as revealed in Scripture. But they are unsatisfied with mediocrity and their own present level of knowledge and accomplishments. They are determined to grow!

Conclusion:

- 1. These are seven things from the word of God. And these things are observable in great churches!
- 2. I will add one more that may be the sum of all seven. It is faith, trust in God that His ways are best and right; it is belief in the success of God's kingdom; belief that it will all work! Do you believe?

MORE THAN FOLLOWERS

Introduction:

1. In Luke 5:27 Jesus said to Levi, "Follow Me." Levi—also known as Matthew—followed Jesus.
 - a. But, Matthew and all the apostles, were *more than followers*. They *equipped others to lead*.
 - b. Among the last words spoken to these men was the great commission, Matthew 28:19–20.
 - c. These disciples obeyed Jesus and were eminently successful in impacting the world for Him.
2. What caused them to be successful? That's the question we will explore in our study.

The Lesson:

I. Jesus, the apostles, and you and me.

A. What Jesus Did.

1. In three and one-half years of ministry—He did not focus on merely gaining followers. If His mission was only to gain followers, He wasn't very successful. When He left earth, He had about 120 disciples who seemed to be loyal to Him. Not a very good showing.
2. Instead, Jesus focused on training a few men to do His work after He left earth. (Matthew 10:16, 27; John 17:14, 20 show us something of how Jesus prepared these men.)
3. Three and one-half years were consumed in equipping these men for the greatest task of all time. Only after these years of training did He send them out, Matthew 28:19-20.

B. What The Apostles Did.

1. While Peter, Paul, James and John taught thousands to follow Jesus, they were also involved in something else that was just as significant—training others to be leaders!
2. Consider the work of the Apostle Paul. From Acts 13 onward, Paul never seemed to go anywhere or do anything without having someone at his side.
 - a. On his first journey he ventured out with Barnabas and John Mark (Acts 13:2, 13).
 - b. On his second journey he travelled with Silas (Acts 15:40).
 - c. Paul had barely begun his second journey when he chose young Timothy to be at his side as he travelled and preached (Acts 16:1-3).
 - d. As Paul and his party were about to go over into Macedonia, it is apparent that Luke was part of his group (Acts 16:9-10).
 - e. At Corinth, it was Priscilla and Aquila who labored with Paul (Acts 18:1-3).
 - f. At least seven men are part of Paul's company as he headed for Troas (Acts 20:4-5).
3. Were these other Christians merely co-workers with Paul, or were they something else?
 - a. Read 2 Timothy 2:2. Paul did the same thing as Jesus. He mentored others.
 - b. Now Paul tells Timothy to do as he has done. Timothy was to train others!

C. What We Must Do.

1. For three and one-half years Jesus mentored and equipped His disciples. For more than 20 years Paul mentored and equipped others to do the work of God.
2. The task now falls to us. The task, not just of teaching others, but of mentoring and equipping others to do the Lord's business. We are building kingdom leaders.

3. We have a mission to equip the next generation, Ephesians 4:11–13. Are you a teacher? Teach another to teach. Are you an evangelist? Instruct another in evangelism.
4. There is a genuine need for more workers, Matthew 9:36-38. We have a worker shortage. If you prepare more workers to do some of what you are doing, you will make a ton of progress. One man, or a small group of men and woman, cannot do the work by themselves. Did someone take time to train you to serve? You were trained, now train others.

II. You can impact the future.

A. *That's what leaders do.*

1. We mentor others to do what we are doing. Each of us who serve should do that.
2. Jesus changed the world through 12 men. He impacted the future. What are we doing?
3. Moms and dads need to mentor kids. It's called being a parent, Ephesians 6:1-4.

B. *That's what shepherds do.*

1. Bishops in the Lord's church impact the future. First, they impact the eternal destiny of men and women. Second, they are deeply involved in the training and equipping others.
2. Elders must replicate themselves. They are leaders who lead others to be shepherds!
3. Why do some churches no longer have elders? They did not prepare the next generation.

C. *That's what Jesus did.*

1. Jesus planned beyond the present—with a plan to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).
2. He thought long-term! Here are seven things Jesus did as He mentored His disciples.
 - a. **He saw their potential.** He saw, not what they were, but what they could become. He took deeply flawed men and changed them by His life and teaching.
 - b. **He focused on the best potential leaders.** Jesus did not try to make everyone an apostle. Why not? Because not everyone would make a good apostle (or qualify).
 - c. **He was patient with those He trained.** He knew their weaknesses, but didn't give up on them when they fell short of His expectations. See Peter in Matthew 16:21-23.
 - d. **He treated them as individuals.** He gave the apostles individual counseling and guidance. Jesus did that because individuals have differing needs. See John 14:5-9.
 - e. **He Invested time in individuals.** While Jesus often dealt with large crowds, it is equally true that He spent private time with the apostles. See John 13:1-5.
 - f. **He asked for an enormous commitment.** Jesus did not soft-sell what would be required of them. He sought a massive commitment from them, Mark 10:28.
 - g. **He prepared them to succeed.** Jesus believed in the success of His kingdom, Matthew 16:18. He believed in the success of the work of the apostles, Acts 1:8.

- D. We can use every one of these things as we train and mentor others. Elders, deacons and teachers need to mentor others to serve. You need to mentor someone to take your place.

Conclusion:

1. What is your place of service in the kingdom? You *do* have a place, Ephesians 4:11-16.
2. If you recognize that you have a place, then mentor another to fit into that place.