

Sunday Sermon

2/25/24

Series: Made for More

Passage: Matt. 20:20-28, Mk. 10:35-45

Title: Developing Spiritual Leaders

Good morning church! So glad to be back together again. If you are new this morning, we welcome you. I am so glad you are here. Today, we will be continuing in our series Made for More. This is a series about the Church, God's people – that we are a people Made for More. That God desires his people to have purpose and passion beyond themselves and targeted at a world that he loves.

This is our third week in this series. **So far we have seen that God desires his church to be a people who engage cross-culturally, and that a people "made for more" are a people who live missionally in this world.**

Today, we will be talking about the concept of raising up or **developing spiritual leaders**. Now for many of us, our first response to that might be, "I can't do that" or "I'm not a leader, much less a spiritual leader." **But here's the truth: you can.** And whether you are someone gifted in leadership or not, we all can have a profound impact on raising others up to know and love Lord and have great impact for God's kingdom.

Part of what it means to be an authentic community is that we believe that we are all in a process of becoming, not arriving. Everyone has a next step that we can take in our spiritual journey with the Lord. Therefore, as a people "made for more," we all have a personal responsibility not only to serve and to use our gifts to participate in the work of God's kingdom but to reach and teach the next generation so that, as the spiritual leaders of today, we can pass the torch to the spiritual leaders of tomorrow, that they are too a people who know and love the Lord. That is what it means to be a healthy church.

So as we jump in this morning, church let's pray. Because try as we may, it is arrogant for us to think that developing spiritual leaders is a work that can be done without the Lord and the work of the Holy Spirit. **(Pray)**

When I first started coming to church as a freshman in high school. There were a few people who really took me under their wing. Two of which were Mike and Amy Sharpe. They were my youth leaders at the time. They were not educated in youth ministry. They didn't have a ministry degree. They weren't even on staff at the church. They were volunteer lay leaders who were willing to invest in the lives of the next generation. Listen: I would not be here today, I would not be who I am today without the spiritual leadership of Mike and Amy Sharpe.

More than I remember my youth group experience I remember my dinners over at their house. They used to do Friday drop in nights where who ever wanted to could go hang out at their house. It was life on life. Over time I became good friends with their boys.

I think it was Thomas Kolditz who originally coined the phrase, **“Leadership is caught more than it is taught.”** There is a passion, an urgency that a leader carries in them that inspires and encourages those around them to follow.

I just saw in Mike and Amy that they were really honestly passionate about this Jesus guy. For whatever reason he was a big deal to them. And who he was became evident in the kind of people they were. How they loved those around them. How they communicated with one another, and they introduced me to him. They lead me to the cross of Christ. They lead me to the throne of God. They lived out the verse, **“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”** That’s spiritual leadership.

Listen: Spiritual leadership is at the foundation of the church. And I mentioned before, developing spiritual leaders is essential for a healthy church. The more that people, the more that individuals, within the body of Christ are built up, and equipped, and empowered the stronger Christ’s church becomes.

Now I’m not interested this morning in all the definitions of leadership or in talking about all the qualities of a good leader, you can just google that. What I’m interested in is our understanding of what leadership is at its core. Simply put, leadership is influence. It has been said that the first test of leadership is to look behind you and see if anyone is following. Right? But the truth is that we all have the ability to influence, and on the flip side, we all can be influenced. Now it is true that some people have a unique gifting of leadership that others don’t have and are not called to, but that doesn’t change the fact that we all have the capacity to lead and to influence those around us.

When I looked it up this week, I learned that scripture uses the word “lead” or “leader” over 400 times? What this tells me is that God has something to say about leadership; he’s concerned with it. And we can learn a lot about leadership and about God’s heart as it pertains to leadership from his Word. **Because here’s the truth, not all leadership is created equal.** Good leadership can lead people or organizations to sustained health, blessing, and growth. Poor leadership can lead to a place of dysfunction, or devastation, or bondage.

And what we find out fairly quickly in reading God’s Word is that **God’s way of leadership is very different, sometimes completely counter, to the world’s leadership.** And that’s where this idea of spiritual leadership and its development among God’s people becomes a critical issue. Because we have influence. And God is very concerned that our lives are a direct reflection of him.

Turn with me to Mark chapter 10. Mark is about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through your bible. The second book of the NT. Chapter 10. We’ll start in verse 35. In this passage Jesus is walking on a road toward Jerusalem with his disciples. And on the way James and John, the sons of Zebedee – approach Jesus and request that they would be put in a place of leadership, and place of authority, on Jesus’ right and left in his kingdom.

Now Jesus will tell them that it doesn't really work that way, but I want us to look at the question Jesus asks them before he answers the request. Do you see it there in verse 38? First he says, ***"You do not know what you are asking."*** In other words, you have a concept of leadership that is skewed, it misses the mark, when it comes to God's kingdom.

First, they were think it's an earthly kingdom Jesus is setting up. It's not, it a spiritual kingdom. But second, the framework they were looking at leadership through was a power framework. I stand in a place of authority to lord the power that I have over you. After all that is what the world does, that is how that world leads. Those in power lord that power over others. Those in control seek to keep that control at all costs. But Jesus is about to turn that framework upside down by asking them a question. He asks them, ***"Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink, or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"***

Now they say yes. The real answer is no. Jesus is borrowing OT imagery here. The terms "cup" and "baptism" or "washing" are frequently used as images for divine judgment. That was a road specific to Jesus that he would walk, but as it pertained to the disciples, the cup is participation the baptism is a new way of life. But what Jesus is doing here is that he is pointing an arrow toward himself saying, "I'm leading differently." And he tells them, "You will follow my example, but it's not going to look like what you think it looks like."

Verse 42, ***"You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be (doulos) slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."***

I found out this week that another mega church, mega influence pastor, Aaron Ivey was fired this week after it was discovered that he showed over the past 13 years "a very clear pattern of predatory manipulation." Church, this makes my heart sad. The devastation this leader has caused the individuals involved, and God's church. The hypocrisy. The unchecked, unsubmitted sin patterns. The depravity and bondage. This was a worship pastor, charged with leading people to the heart of God, has instead exercised his influence in ways that grieve the Lord and repel people from him.

It's a critical issue – leadership. Henry Blackaby, a Christian who has written many books on leadership, targets spiritual leadership this way. He says, ***"Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda."*** – Henry Blackaby That's not bad, and if you need something simple that's a good definition, but for me it only hits half of what spiritual leadership actually is.

So here's my working definition this morning:

Spiritual leadership is both the influence we have on the spiritual growth of others (when it comes to developing people, discipleship, moving people on to God's agenda – it's that) **and the capacity we have to lead others with the same attitude and the same heart as the Lord.**

To me it's got to be both. It's the why we lead, but it's also the how we lead, that identifies the work as good spiritual leadership. Listen to these verses:

"Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; LEAD ME to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against my foe." – Ps. 61:1-3 (David)

Spiritual leaders are, themselves, led by the Lord. Seeking him, attentive to his voice, desiring him, attached and dependent.

And then hand in hand with that you have Solomon:

"Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?" – 2 Chron. 1:10

Spiritual leaders lead from their relationship with the Lord.

Listen: God desires his Church, not the building but us, his people, to be strong spiritual leaders who know and exemplify his character as we influence others toward him.

True spiritual leadership is an imitation of an example. ***"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."*** – 1 Cor. 11:1

Question: Can we say that?

Turn with me to Ephesians 4:11-14, because out of that we see that God gifts his people with purpose and unique strengths that we can develop and then use to encourage one another, and build up the body of Christ, and spur one another on, and grow one another to maturity.

It says, ***"He [God] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine..."*** – Eph 4:11-14

How are spiritual leaders developed? By the body. Different giftings within the body are useful for shaping something within us. Apostles call the church to pioneer new ground. Prophets call the heart back to God's Word. Evangelists get us fired up about sharing the gospel. Shepherds care for and guide our souls. And teachers build us on a strong foundation. 1 Peter 2, ***"we are like living stones being built up together into a spiritual house."*** We need one another. We learn from one another. God's design is that we would rub up against one another so as to be shaped by one another.

Some churches have super robust discipleship programs, moving people systematically through a process, the best pipelines. And so often our thinking becomes: if I can just get people into the pipeline, development will take care of itself.

It doesn't work that way.

Don't misunderstand me, a healthy system can help the development process, but much more important are the living stones.

The mentoring, coaching, teaching, training, and doing life together, and being on mission together, serving alongside one another, life on life, sharpening, inspiring, loving, responding to one another in grace. That is how spiritual leaders are developed.

It's sitting across the table at Bill Gray's talking about what fires you up about Jesus.

It's bringing someone with you as you serve the world around you.

It's calling people to a higher walk with the Lord by the example you set in your life.

It's offering wisdom from your own life experiences and walking others through what a life of faith and dependency looks like.

Alongside my own encounters with Christ, it's the passion of others which has often inspired me to grow in my own faith journey and knowledge of Christ.

But this leads us to another truth: We cannot lead others where we ourselves are unwilling to go.

I tell all of my marriage counselees, "Two half people don't make a whole person in marriage. Two whole people do." Your marriage can only be as healthy as you are. The same concept is true of developing spiritual leaders. If we are lukewarm, the church will be lukewarm. If we don't have urgency, the church will reflect that lack of urgency.

As followers of Christ, we have personal responsibility in the spiritual development of others. It's not someone else's job. It's our job. Whether we are leading from the pulpit or investing in a small group community, or serving on a community outreach project. God calls us to do so with a sense of urgency. That the work is important. That the message is important. That the investment is valuable.

Why? Because it is! 2 Cor. 4:7, "***We have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.***"

Are we experiencing this surpassing power of God? Are we living by faith? Are we allowing God to encounter us in such a way that it jacks us up, and we can share that passion, that experience, with others.

I'll close with 2 Timothy 2:1-2 which says, "***You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus...***"

In other words, gird/fortify your life with it, get jacked up by it, because it's awesome! I was lost but now I'm found. I was blind but now I see. I was dead but now I'm alive, and my sins have been forgiven, and the power of the HS lives inside me, and I've been made now to be more than a conqueror, I'm an overcomer. And the old is gone and the new is here and I could never lose it or be separated from it. It gives me hope and covers me and sets my identity. Would you give your heart to Jesus this morning and follow him?

Be strong in him Christ follower, in his grace, and then ***what you have heard give it away to others who will be faithful with it and who will, in turn, teach others also.***"

Made for **MORE**

Made for More: Targets for God's Church

- 1) A people who engage cross-culturally.
- 2) A people who live missionally.
- 3) A people who develop spiritual leaders.

Made for **MORE**

“Leadership is caught more than it is taught.”
- Thomas Kolditz



“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

- 1 Cor. 11:1

Made for **MORE**

Understanding Spiritual Leadership:

1) God's way of leadership is very different, sometimes completely counter, to the world's leadership.

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“You do not know what you are asking.”

- Mk. 10:38a

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or be baptized with the baptism with which
I am baptized?”***

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“You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you...”

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“But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

- Mk. 10:42-45

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God’s agenda.”**

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“You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house...”

- 1 Pt. 2:5

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- 4) We cannot lead others where we ourselves are unwilling to go.

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“You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses give it away to others who will be faithful with it and who will, in turn, teach others also.”

- 2 Tim. 2:1-2

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