

# LESSON ESSENTIALS

## EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

### LESSON 9: MULTIPLYING LEADERS

When you consider that, through the Great Commission, Jesus sends us out to make disciples of all nations, you may be overwhelmed by the size of the job and you might start to wonder how He can possibly say that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. However, the Lord instructs us through His Word what this ‘making of disciples’ looks like and how the work ought to be shared.

Depending on your personality, the thought of getting help in leadership, and in training others to share your responsibilities can be relieving, terrifying, humbling, or irritating! The Lord intends for His work to be accomplished by all of His people, and so we must learn to invite new leaders to come alongside of us and to come up after us.

Adding of responsibility on to one believer can only go so far. You are only one person and cannot be expected to do everything for everyone. Not only is that unhealthy for you personally, it is also unhealthy for the Church body.

If you are in leadership and are serving the Lord wholeheartedly, it may feel like an insult to hear someone suggest that you need help in doing your work. You may feel judged or hurt or unappreciated.

However, the Lord does not intend for any one of us to be solo workers.

Jesus used the phrased 'being born again' to describe coming to faith. If we stretch that analogy a little farther, we see that the process of discipleship is like 'growing up again.' When you are new in the faith, the spiritual responsibilities on you are not great. The church and your mentor should give you time to read the Word and to learn the spiritual disciplines so that you can be strengthened in your faith and understanding as the Spirit transforms your heart and mind.

But after a time, as the Lord continues to do His work in your life, you likely find that you are placed in roles of leadership, whether at home, in one-on-one relationships, in small groups, or in the larger church meeting. This is an appropriate response to seeing Christlikeness in a new believer: increasing responsibility in response to evident faithfulness (see Luke 16:10).

However, that adding of responsibility on to one believer can only go so far. You are only one person and cannot be expected to do everything for everyone. Not only is that unhealthy for you personally, it is also unhealthy for the Church body.

In Exodus 18, a very helpful account is given of Moses being counselled by his father-in-law, Jethro. Moses had been acting as judge and advisor over all the people of Israel, helping them come to resolution and understanding in their questions and disputes. When Jethro saw the crowds and lines of people waiting to hear from Moses, and when he saw that this would surely monopolize Moses' entire life, he lovingly confronted Moses and said that what he was doing wasn't good and that he needed helpers to share the work.

Moses' response is most helpful for us. He doesn't get proud and defensive. He could have said, "But I'm the one who hears from God! I'm the only one wise enough to know how to answer their questions. These Israelites just fight and grumble all the time: how are they fit to lead? Are you saying I'm not doing a very good job?"

And perhaps you feel that way. If you are in leadership and are serving the Lord wholeheartedly, it may feel like an insult to hear someone suggest that you need help in doing your work. You may feel judged or hurt or unappreciated.

However, the Lord does not intend for any one of us to be solo workers. He also does not intend for any of us to shirk other responsibilities for the sake of this one task that is becoming all-consuming. Consider the leadership roles that you have. Perhaps

you are a small group leader at church. Are you also a parent, a friend, or an employee? Do you have parents to care for and neighbours to love? If you are overburdening your time and energy in your church leadership, then you will not be able to attend to the other roles the Lord has given you. Are you neglecting your leadership of your family because it feels more rewarding to lead in the church? Are you too tired to care for your aging parents because of your leadership at the church? Suddenly, the Lord's yoke does not feel easy and His burden does not feel light, and this is because we are not following His way to accomplish His tasks.

This is where we need help. The Church body is made up of many members, each with different skills and strengths (see 1 Corinthians 12). It was the Lord's intention for us to function together; in this way we can get more done corporately than anyone of us could ever accomplish on our own.

Not only is it right to work together so that we can accomplish more, it is also right that we give each other an opportunity to serve. It may seem humble and servant-hearted to say, "I'll do that, too. You just sit back and let me serve you." But the Lord has commanded each of us to serve. So while you may truly desire to love someone in your church by working for them, you are also denying them the joy of serving the Lord themselves. Romans 12:3-8 speaks to all the different gifts the Lord has given to His people, and it calls every believer to use those gifts. If you are reluctant to step out of leadership, or to share leadership, you are making it very difficult for the other believers in your congregation to follow the Lord's instruction. Also, practically speaking, no one of us will be able to serve forever. There will always come a time when we need to step out of leadership (whether because of health issues, relocation, or other life changes) and if we have not been proactively preparing for our own departure out of leadership, then there will be a disruption in that particular area of ministry that will slow down and hinder the work of the Church. Planning ahead for times like that is being a good steward of the resources God has given, and is having a long-term perspective on the health and function of the church.

Building up new leaders can be hard work. Not every person that you mentor will quickly or willingly jump into leadership. It will take time and patience to model what godly leadership in the church looks like. However, once we clearly see the great need for more leaders, and once we see the clear call in Scripture to share leadership, we will have the motivation to persevere in the training of leaders. It will be a great benefit to the work of the Church to

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have many labourers. It will be a great joy to share the work with likeminded believers. Let's be willing to be humble enough to admit that we all need help, and let's be praying that the Lord will direct us in our efforts to multiply the leaders that He is calling.

## IN REVIEW

- It is unhealthy for individuals in the church, and for the church as a whole, for only a couple of people to take on all the leadership in the church.
- It takes humility to admit that we need help in our service, and to develop the leaders that will help share our burden.
- The Word is clear that the church is made up of many members with many different gifts and that all are necessary for the church to function well.
- The time and effort necessary to train new leaders is worth it as we see the church thrive, and as we see the joy in obedience to His Word as all the members learn to lead and to serve with the gifts God has given.

## HAVE YOUR SAY

- Take some time to remember how you were called into leadership. Which parts of your experience can you use to help you mentor a believer to work alongside of you?
  
- Examine your current life circumstances: are you in a season with lots of time for serving in the church, or are life responsibilities currently taking up more of your time and energy? Pray for wisdom to know how to spend your time, and for discernment to know if this is a time to step out of some roles in order to thrive in others.
  
- Pray about the believers that you know and ask the Lord to reveal who you ought to be encouraging into new roles of leadership.
  
- If you are struggling with the thought of sharing your leadership role, or eventually being replaced, take some time to pray for the humility necessary to remember that all of our service is truly the Lord's work, not our own. May we all have the humility to serve the Lord together.

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