

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason, I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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Spiritual Leadership

Introduction

This month's teaching letter continues the thoughts that we were developing in last month's issue on "Restoration". We will pick up with how the Lord develops spiritual leadership.

Quote from last month's issue:

"When I look back over my 50-year walk with the Lord, I am forced to assess a number of failings on the part of the leadership of the people of God. When the Lord builds His Church, His Ecclesia, He also builds His leaders, which He has given as gifts to His people [Eph. 4:11-16]. What we fail to realize is that God's leadership does not look like nor function like the leadership of the world systems [Mar.10:42-45]."

This seems to be where the various movements over the years have failed. They were unable to make the transition from worldly leadership and authority to the proper Godly leadership and authority of the Kingdom of God. It doesn't matter how powerful a ministry you have developed, the Lord doesn't allow you into His leadership until you have developed in you the Father's heart and have adopted His goals and desires for His people.

The world's hierarchical authority structure will not function in the Kingdom of God, including the Church. It will not produce properly functioning Godly government. This is one of the areas where we must "pluck up, break down, destroy and overthrow" before we can build and plant Kingdom government."

The first area of leadership restoration is in our own mindsets—the way we think. Isaiah says our ways are not God's ways and our thoughts are not His thoughts [Isaiah 55:6-9]. We can't substitute our ways when God expects us to use His ways. We must learn God's ways and conform to them if we want to walk in the fullness of what the Lord has for us. Perhaps nowhere is this truth more apparent today than in Christian leadership.

When we accept the world's methods of leadership, we make the word of God ineffectual. Jesus said in Matthew 15:6, "...**And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.**" He was speaking of the application of the commandments to our lives and how some would try to circumvent the requirements of the Lord by using man made traditions.

Renew the Mind

In other lessons I have discussed the necessity that we be “transformed by the renewing of the mind”. We tend to gloss over this idea by relegating it to eliminating “bad thoughts”. However, the Scriptures mean something much deeper than that. Of course we must bring our thought life into obedience to Jesus but we also must change the very **way** that we think—**how** we think not just **what** we think. This is the essence of renewing the mind. It is a process of changing how our minds think.

This becomes very clear in Jesus' rebuke of Peter.

Matthew 16:21-23 NASB

From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. (22) Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." (23) But He turned and said to Peter, **"Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."**

Jesus told His disciples what was about to happen to Him. They should have understood that this was the Father's will and that it had been prophesied of Messiah by the Old Testament prophets. However, Peter wanted to correct Jesus by saying that it would never happen to Him. Peter had a mindset that was steeped in the traditions of the Jews that had an incorrect understanding of the purpose and actions of Messiah. Jesus gave a harsh rebuke to Peter calling him a stumbling block because his mind was on man's interests and not God's. Another translation says that he was “thinking like mere men”. (*People with worldly oriented mindsets are always stumbling blocks to those who are trying to do the will of the Lord because their thinking processes are like those of men and not the thinking processes of the Lord.*)

Nowhere is this change of thinking process more necessary than in the area of leadership. We must learn to think like the Lord. It appears that all of our understanding of leadership in the Kingdom of God has come from the principles of the world system. I was a VP of sales in a multi-million dollar computer company and later became an executive of a billion dollar national conglomerate. I understand the world's idea of leadership because I have lived it and taught it. However, as my mind has been renewed in the ways of the Lord, I find that the Kingdom of God operates by very different principles than the world system. This is especially true of leadership.

Some Differences

The primary difference between leadership in the Kingdom of God and the world system is in the design and use of authority. To understand this we need to see how authority is utilized in both.

World System

The world system operates from a hierarchical authority structure. That means that authority is based on your position in the hierarchy. The further up the authority pyramid structure you are positioned the greater your authority to direct and control those under you. (*Authority in the world system is the right and power to control and direct people, usually toward a corporate goal or purpose but many times just for the advancement and recognition of those who are above you in the hierarchy.*)

A leader in the world system is a person who has the ability to mobilize and motivate people to buy into or fulfill the leader's goals or ambitions. This is presented as being a “team player” when in fact it means “get on board with my plan”. Any questioning of the leader's plan or strategy causes one to be branded as “not a team player”, a troublemaker, and ousted from the team by being fired or sidelined.

Worldly leaders use people to advance their cause. They look for people with natural abilities that will accomplish the leader's purpose. They call this good people management because they desire to utilize people to their fullest capabilities. A good world system leader causes people to feel privileged to be recognized for what they are doing and slowly leads them into basing their self worth and identity on their job performance.

What happens when this mindset of leadership is brought into the Church and Kingdom? We have hierarchical denominational structures operating like any other corporate entity. We have Pastors setting up individual kingdoms for their own benefit. We have self appointed apostles who set themselves up over a number of churches milking the offerings from God's people for their own lifestyle excesses. None of which even remotely resembles God's plan and pattern for His leaders.

Worldly leaders build successors who will institutionalize and preserve their work. They are more concerned about what was and what is than what is to come. They build museums to the past so that their vision can be maintained..

Spiritual Leaders

Spiritual leadership has a mindset that is centered around relational authority. This is family authority that is exemplified by fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters. A Spiritual leader is one who has the heart of the Father and operates according to the desires of our Heavenly Father.

Because spiritual leaders have a viewpoint, a mindset of the Father, they interact with people not according to **who they are now** but according to **who they will be** in the Lord, who God created them to be. They see in the Spirit a person's calling and they desire to help that person fulfill his calling. Their fathering heart sees the Heavenly Father's intentions and helps people move toward their fulfillment.

A spiritual leader does not position himself between the Father and His children. Instead, he becomes a helper, a partner with the Lord to assist the children to move on to maturity and accomplish their destiny.

Spiritual leaders are concerned about inheritors not successors. Their concern is that those who come after will be able to build on the work of the previous generation and carry it forward according to the plans and purposes of God. They stand in the prophetic stream and desire heirs who will also stand and flow in God's prophetic stream.

Kingdom leaders understand that they have no authority over people. Only the Lord has authority over people [*John 17:2*] and He has never delegated that authority to anyone. Kingdom leaders lead people from a father's heart, entreating them and directing them from their heart's desire for their good and their sincere fatherly love for them.

Leadership Prerequisites

In II Cor. 10:18 Paul is reminding us that while youthful zeal, talent, and self confidence look good

in man's eyes, they are not necessarily God's prerequisites for leadership. Some people think because of grace and the fullness of Jesus' work that there is no such thing as prerequisites or qualifications in the Lord. While this is true of our identity, who we are in the Lord, it is not true of our work. There are no qualifications for our place in the Lord. Jesus took care of all of that. However, there are many qualifications for what we do. To perform the work of the Lord requires that we be called and trained by the Holy Spirit. In other words we have to qualify for our work.

What is man's part in the selection of leadership then? God chooses leadership, man recognizes it and confirms that leadership by the act of ordination. Paul and Silas followed this procedure in Acts 14:23 where they ordained elders in every church and they committed them to the Lord. But this is not an arbitrary choice on their part but they were confirming the leadership the Lord had already given. Paul makes this plain in his farewell to the Ephesian elders in Act 20:28 where he talks about the overseers which God has made for the Flock.

God's choice of leadership is not determined by a maturity already achieved but by potential. The Lord knows our hearts and He sees the end from the beginning. He already knows the outcome. In fact, God often calls men whom the world considers unqualified and proceeds to pour some of His most powerful ministries through them. Their ministries are not based on their abilities, but on the Lord's. It is important for those chosen for leadership to know that the choice was not made on the basis of their own talents. The minister will grow into the fulfillment of his ministry provided he remains humble and faithful. In I Cor. 2:3-5 Paul himself follows this pattern. He completely discounts all of his own brilliance and intellectual ability and gives all of the glory to God.

Christians have developed a warped view of what constitutes mature Christian leadership. The more mature a Christian is the more natural he is. He shares the truth God has entrusted to him in a way which accurately reflects his own personality. He does not project a false piety or a fake holiness that separates him from people. He gets credit for his ministry to God but the glory is put on the Lord where it belongs. He does this without false humility. He is secure but not complacent in the task of performing his ministry. He has also learned not take himself too seriously.

To prevent this Teaching Letter from being too long, we will pick up next month with "The Qualifications of an Elder", which are the local leaders of the Church, the Ecclesia of Jesus.

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For comments or questions contact Art Nelson at this address:

artnelson@lifestreamteaching.com