

TALKING POINT #16
LIVING IN THE CHURCH COMMUNITY #9: LEADERSHIP

“A GOOD LEADER NEEDS FIRST TO BE A GOOD FOLLOWER”

Over the last 25 years, there has been a great deal written about effective Church leadership. Whereas Church leadership was once simply seen to be about keeping the Church functioning internally, with the rise of a post-Christian Western World, Church leadership has necessarily become more mission-focused.

Some bemoan this change from an internally-focused leadership to a more outwardly-focused emphasis, while others see this as necessary progress in a society that is becoming increasingly hostile to the Church. But, is it really a case of having to choose between these two? Perhaps it's not a case of “either-or?” Perhaps it's not even a case of “both”. Rather, I think the Bible presents these as two faces of the same coin of Biblical leadership and that's what we try to foster at Forest Lake Baptist Church.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

There are many passages in the Bible dealing with leadership of God's people, stemming from lessons learned by Moses (delegation and succession-planning), through Joshua (leaders stepping out in faith), through David (the importance of a heart that follows God), through Nehemiah and Ezra (having a clear and communicated God-given purpose), down to the prophets (the importance of integrity in the people and the leaders).

But the leader *par excellence* was, of course, Jesus, who made this startling statement about leadership, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matt 20:27-28). There it is, the Christian leadership principle, leadership equals servanthood!

But who is it that Church leaders serve – those in the Church or outside the Church? Well, let's look at how Christ saw his ministry. Whom did Christ serve – only the Israelites or all people? Of course, the answer is all people (John 3:16). Clearly then, Church leaders serve everyone – both in and outside the Church.

Hence, the New Testament gives instructions regarding leaders' responsibilities in the Church and outside the Church. Leaders are to seek both edification (building up the Body of Christ) and evangelism (spreading the Word of God). This goes for all leaders – not just the pastor or even the elders and deacons but *all leaders*.

NOW FOR US AT FOREST LAKE

The application of this principle to the modern local Church is both simple and profound. It is simple in the sense that our role as leaders is clear – to see to the care, instruction, discipline and well-being of God's people within the Church, helping them reach their potential in Christ (1 Peter 5:2) but also to lead the Church in spreading the amazing Good News of Jesus Christ locally and to the World (Titus 1:7). This applies to all leaders in our Church, and therefore to all ministries. Every ministry of our Church has two focal points (edification of the Church and evangelism of the World) but one goal, the glory of God.

It is also profound in that when we model effective, humble servant-leadership, we are modelling Christ!

CONCLUSION

So then, it is not a case of leaders having either an outward priority or an inward priority. Christian leaders have one priority – to serve as Christ served. Hence, a good leader needs first to be a good follower, in that they must follow the example of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. Serving inside and serving outside are simply two arenas for the same act of Christian leadership – service. And, can I say, it is a pleasure and an honour to be your servant! Is God calling you to step up to leadership at FLBC?

Next month, we'll continue our series on “Living in the Church Community” as we look at “Giving to Church.”