

Developing Leaders Like Jesus

"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do." - John 17:4

Scholars have different views as to what Jesus was referring to here when He told the Father that He had finished the work He had been given to do. Since this was before the cross, to what was Jesus referring?

Some suggest that our Lord was referring to the cross and resurrection being seen eternally as already accomplished. After all, Jesus is said to be *"the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world,"* (Revelation 13:8).

But others have suggested that He is referring to preparing His disciples to carry out the work of the church after He had returned to heaven. It is right on the heels of our Lord's declaration here that He prays for those the Father had given Him and for those who would believe because of their message - that's you and me!

Jesus was confident that His disciples were prepared to lead His church. Why?

1. Jesus prayed for them.

He prayed for His disciples in John 17:6-19, and, no doubt, that was part of what He did every time He got apart by Himself to pray to the Father (Luke 22:32). And, of course, we know Jesus prayed about who should be among the twelve (Luke 6:12-16).

Likewise, we should pray for those who are and could be leaders in our church:

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'" - Matthew 9:36-38

2. Jesus recruited them.

Jesus actively recruited His disciples from among those who were part of the crowd that came out to hear Him or that He personally encountered. Likewise, Group Leaders should actively recruit people to join their Connection Group from those they meet in Sunday services, other church events, at their place of work, or in their neighborhood.

Chad Hill, an Executive Pastor who writes for the Unstuck Group, in an article, entitled, "Building a Leadership Development Cycle," points out that Jesus developed leaders by finding ordinary people and bringing out the extraordinary in them.

Hill uses the parable told by Jesus about the treasure in the field to illustrate how Jesus raised up leaders and how we can do the same:

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." - Matthew 13:44

We here read about a man who found a hidden treasure in a field. Upon finding that treasure, he sold his belongings and purchased the entire field. Why? Maybe he thought, *"If there's one treasure in this field, there's bound to be more!"*

What if God has purposely placed people in our lives to be found and developed? What if the leaders needed to take our church to the next level are sitting in worship with us or live next door? Like Jesus, we need to actively recruit people to join our Connection Group so they might be discipled and developed.

3. Jesus trained them.

In Chad Hill's article that we referenced earlier, he points out that one of the first steps of leadership development is creating ways to discover *who* has the potential to lead. In the parable, the man *found* a treasure, which implies that he was looking over the field.

Hill correctly says that we need to look for the egg, rather than the bird. By that, he means that we tend to look for already developed leaders instead of leadership potential. When we look for the egg however, we are looking for people who have potential inside of them. They are waiting to hatch and spread their wings!

Jesus didn't find Peter the apostle; he found Peter the fisherman and developed him into an apostolic leader. Jesus didn't stumble upon Matthew the disciple; instead, he found a tax collector and developed him into a disciple leader.

Hill points out that in the parable, the man sold what he had and bought the field. Developing leaders requires us to find people with potential and invest in them. What does this investment look like?

Anytime we excavate treasure, we must be willing to deal with the dirt. **As leaders, we must be willing to invest in people by helping them deal with their dirt (we all have it) and grow into a deeper walk with Christ.**

By involving people in our Connection Group, they are placed in an environment that promotes authenticity and transparency. They find they are not alone in their struggles or challenges and can be helped to move forward to wholeness as well as holiness.

4. Jesus held them accountable for assigned tasks.

Jesus was not afraid to trust His followers with responsibilities He thought they could handle. Neither should we. And Jesus always incorporated accountability into the training of His leaders. In Luke 10:1-24, we read of how Jesus sent out the 72 and then how He had them report to Him afterward.

5. Jesus released those He trained to recruit and train others.

In Luke 9:1-6, we read of how Jesus had sent out the 12 on a similar mission as the one He later sent the 72 on. One cannot help but wonder if the 12 were involved in the recruitment and training of the 72.

We must be intentional about teaching new leaders the importance of going back into the field where their potential was first discovered. It then becomes their mission to search for "buried treasure" (Matthew 13:44), help those potential leaders deal with their dirt, and build them up to lead others.

6. Jesus accepted the fact that despite His best efforts, not all would respond well.

When Jesus said that He had finished the work the Father had given Him to do with the ones given to Him (John 17:4), that also included Judas, the one Jesus knew would betray Him. Sadly, while we must make it clear that everyone is welcome to participate our Connection Group, not everyone will respond to your efforts as the Group Leader to grow in their walk with Christ and their responsibilities as a servant/leader, but do not take their rejection of pursuing discipleship personally. Jesus respected a person's free will, and so must we.