

Raising Up Leaders and Managers *to Lead Like Jesus*

The Key to Leadership Development Is Understanding Three Important Biblical Principles

By Edward A. Smith

One of the most important aspects of the life of any organization is the quality of its leadership, not leadership at the top but throughout the organization. Jesus himself developed leaders from among everyday people.

The key to training leaders and managers to lead like Jesus is in releasing the God-given potential within every individual. The extent to which a church or ministry is able to develop, cultivate and release the leadership potential of its paid and volunteer staff determines its ability to fulfill God's purposes for it.

By practicing these principles, our church, Zoe Christian Fellowship, Whittier, Calif., has been able to grow by God's grace from 15 people meeting in my living room to more than 3,000 active members with more than 400 volunteers involved at every level of ministry.

The key is in training our people to understand and embrace three biblical principles: to lead and manage with the heart of a shepherd, to be fruitful in their work, and to multiply themselves.

Lead With the Heart of a Shepherd

We begin by helping our people understand that they should not lead from a secular point of view, but rather with the "heart" of a shepherd. In Matthew 9:35-37, Jesus saw the multitudes responding to his ministry. Rather than being impressed and excited, he focused on the

people's needs. He saw them weakened with many personal problems, scattered and unattached, without protection—like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus' response was not jubilation, but compassion. A true shepherd always sees beyond the raw numbers to the pain and needs of people. Jesus recognized the enormous task ahead of him, and humanly speaking, he knew he couldn't begin to address all the various needs of the people by himself. He needed to mobilize his disciples, teaching them to seek the Father through prayer, asking for wisdom. They were encouraged to see their service as an extension of Jesus himself, the Good Shepherd.

Through regular teaching, management modeling and organizational support, the staff can begin to see themselves not only as a delivery mechanism of ministry services but to accept responsibility to see that the real needs of both the staff and those it serves are properly addressed. Once they do, you'll be surprised how creative and resourceful they can become.

The way we train our leaders and managers to meet the needs of people is by encouraging them to always seek God's wisdom in how they address those needs—which are often very great.

Lead With the Heart to Bear Fruit

The second principle is helping people be fruitful in every area of their lives. Jesus makes it clear, in John 15:1-8, that our

Father expects us to bear fruit. As we minister and train leaders, we don't ignore the lack of fruit in their families, and in their health and personal finances, which, if not addressed, can become a drain and distraction, ultimately causing them to become ineffective as spiritual leaders.

We help our leaders and managers understand the biblical mandate to be fruitful and multiply. Remember the parable of the sower in Matthew 13. Only the ground that bore fruit was considered good.

In Genesis, when God created the heavens, the earth and mankind, we see he wanted everything he created, including man, to be fruitful and multiply. And he called everything he had made "very good." God calls everything that bears fruit good.

That's why Scripture says in Proverbs 13:22 that a good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children. It's important to train our young leaders to have a vision for a legacy, as God originally intended.

Lead With the Heart to Multiply Yourself

God's way of doing things, we've learned, is to help leaders and managers become more effective by multiplying themselves—this also addresses growth in the ministry. The principle of being fruitful and multiplying isn't limited to financial prosperity. It's truly a Kingdom principle established from the beginning and taught by Jesus in John 15 and

Matthew 13. Our ability to maximize our fruitfulness will be greatly limited unless we learn to multiply ourselves.

We train our staff and volunteers to recruit, train and release other members to do things they'd enjoy doing, but don't have the time or capacity to do themselves. We share the vision and the overall responsibility of the ministry with those who are willing to embrace the vision. When they do, we encourage our paid and volunteer staff to share their skills with them so the ministry can extend its reach, becoming more fruitful. By providing an environment for people to serve and lead according to biblical principles, we've found it

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brings out the leadership potential people never knew they had.

Jesus not only taught us how to lead, he modeled it. Through God-honoring relationships, Jesus shared the principles of life with the men and women he was in relationship with, training them to be fruitful and multiply themselves in the lives of others. Our church is just one example of this. To God be all the glory!

Edward A. Smith is pastor of Zoe Christian Fellowship, Whittier, Calif., and a member of CMA's board of directors. You may email him at dearpastor@zcf.org.



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