

Proverbs

Sunday 6/30/2013

We had talked about going down to a Turnaround; they had a mentor's appreciation night. We had about 35 people who went down there, and it was a great night. Every time we get a little more involved with those folks, we find out a little more about their heart. I thought it was a great time, with some great speakers, and you got to really see where those people's hearts are at.

I did not get a chance to tell you this last Sunday, because I did not want to embarrass him, but last Sunday we had our first Turnaround guy, a mentor, who showed up for church. He could not be here again this morning. Many of them are in the halfway house down there, and they are limited on their time, but he really enjoyed the church. It is only the beginning of what God is going to do. I was excited about that, to hear about that, and I enjoyed the meeting down there. They are so impressed with you folks, with what you have done. I am telling you right now, we are going to have an opportunity to impact some people down there, and it is going to be an incredible thing.

Along those lines, in a couple of weeks, we are going to start to talk about the book of Proverbs. I told you that I wanted to take a couple of weeks before we get into that book and really look at it. I wanted to talk about leadership. I think it is important that we go into that book understanding not only all the Proverbs and how they relate to us, but I think as a whole, how the book really figures into our life.

We just finished 2 Corinthians, and I told you how 2 Corinthians was the handbook on ministry, and that is so true. But just as 2 Corinthians is the handbook on ministry, the book of Proverbs is the handbook for leadership. That is why before we really get into it, I want to set your mindset. I want to get you to understand where we are at and how this thing all fits together here.

As far as I am concerned, I see the church probably differently from anybody else. All you see it from is your little segment. This is not true of everybody, some of you, it is not true, but most people, you look at the church, our church, and you see it in the little segments that you see and understand. I have the ability or the privilege to look at it on a large scale and see it in its entirety. I never just focus on one small section. You may be involved in this or you may be involved in that, and you view everything through that prism, so to speak. I do not. I look at it on a total, complete picture of what I know I want to accomplish, what needs to be accomplished, and then see you in that concept.

I have to tell you that if we are talking about potential leadership and people who have what I think are the basic leadership skills, our church is an untapped goldmine. Most churches, and this is not a slam toward the older folks because I am an older folk too, but most churches, and you know this is true, and most pastors that I talk to, they struggle with getting young couples in their church. Most churches, their people, the average people, are over 60, over 70; they are older folks. Not that they are not invaluable and can be invaluable with all the experience they have, but when it comes to reaching families and reaching young couples, it is going to take other young couples. That is very important, and our church is probably 85 percent of you are that. That makes you a prime candidate for me to look at you as a potential leader.

I want to talk about leadership today. I want to dispel some myths about leadership. Then I want to bring it back to biblical principles, showing you what a leader really is, what I have learned over my life by looking at it, studying it, and following through.

If there is any one thing that I have learned in life, and you have heard me say this a thousand times, I honestly live and die by this. This is absolutely, if somebody would say to me, "Bob, what is the number one thing that you think about pastoring or the ministry or people or churches? What would be one thing that you would tell me that rises above all the rest?" It would simply be this, and you hear me say it all the time: everything. I mean everything rises and falls on leadership; everything. To me, it is the pinnacle of everything that everything will rest on.

Over the next couple of weeks, I want to show you some good examples of leadership in the Bible, and I want to show you some really bad examples of leaders in the Bible.

1 Corinthians 10

1 Corinthians 10 talks about that the Old Testament was written for our ensample and our examples. You remember I have told you that an ensample is something that you are. An example is something that you do. In both cases, we emulate that to people that are around us, and they see it in our lives. I want you to see these ensamples and examples through the lives of real leadership of men in the Bible who were, some of them were great, some of them were not so great.

I also want you to learn, and this is what we are going to focus on today, I want you to see and understand the fundamentals of what it takes to be a good leader. I want to destroy some myths about leadership, as I already said. Then I want to develop for you fundamental principles of good leadership. I want you to see this because, let me just explain myself here as I go on through. So today, I want to lay down for you principles of a good leader. I want to show you some things that you need to understand, some things that I look for. But before we venture any farther, let us go to the Lord today and ask His blessing upon our time.

Father, we do thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. I thank You for those that have come out today, for those that are here, and I pray Your blessings upon what we have to accomplish today. I pray that in this group here, Lord, today You have here who You want to have. I look at it, and when I have a message that I think is so vital, the human side of me always looks at who is not here because you would want them to hear it. But the truth of the matter is, You are sovereign, Lord, and You have here today who You want to hear this. So, let us take what we have today. Let us take the men and the women that have made their way here today. Lord, help me to convey to them these great principles that You have taught me over the years that I have seen in good men and I have seen in bad men. Lord, help us to glean from it, to learn from it, and we will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name for the sake we ask it. Amen.

I. The Pastor's Role in Leadership Development

Personally, I think the job of any pastor—I know a pastor wears many hats. He has many things he is responsible for, and he has many things that he has to accomplish. But fundamentally, as far

as I am concerned, the job of the pastor is simply to build and develop good leadership. I think the success or failure of any church depends on it.

You get that model from Paul. I know Paul was not a pastor, but he was an evangelist, and he built churches. You will see the first thing that he did—and this is what an evangelist from the Bible standpoint does. Today, evangelists—we use the term, but they are nowhere, shape, or form in vogue with what the Bible defines them to be. I am not saying that is wrong, but I am saying that so you understand it. In the Bible's time, in the book of Acts, an evangelist was someone that went and started a church. Paul, we now know, was given the ability by God to go out and really unleash the church age on the Gentile world. That is what he does. As an evangelist, what he does, he goes in, he starts churches. Then what he does is he develops leadership within that church. So when he gets the leadership to a certain point, then he moves on and he develops another church, develops more leadership.

When you look back through Paul's life, you begin to see that. You begin to see Timothy. You begin to see Titus, Philemon. All these guys were pastors. You begin to see a couple named Aquila and Priscilla who had a church in their home. These are people that he not only won to Christ, but he developed, turned them into leaders, and then moved on.

I am telling you, personally, I think the job of any pastor is simply, fundamentally, his job is to build and develop leadership. That has to be his primary job if his church is going to be solid and grow, because he has to produce good leaders. He also has to know how to develop them. He also has to know what to look for in somebody and begin to take it and develop them and develop their leadership skills and all the new people. Then he teaches the leaders who become leaders how to take the new people and develop the leadership in them. That is an ongoing process that never ends. Failure to do that, his church will, in time, fall into chaos and become, I would say, much like the church at Corinth we have already studied; it will fall into being a real mess.

A pastor should view every man, every woman that comes into his church for the potential of being in some form of leadership. Let me just say this: there are many levels of leadership. What I am going to talk about today, I am not talking about someday you are all going to pastor. I am not talking about someday that you are all going to be in some great position. Many of you probably will. What I am saying is that there are many levels of leadership. You do not have to be a pastor to be a leader. You do not have to be a deacon to be a leader. You do not have to have some position to be a leader. I will explain that as we go on here a little bit farther today as you begin to maybe understand it.

I think a pastor should look for those traits that you want to see in people. Then go to work to develop them to see what they can do, giving everybody the same chance. I am an equal opportunity pastor. When you walk in that door, if you have a three-piece suit on that costs \$700, or you come in with a ripped up t-shirt with a pair of shorts and no socks in one shoe and could not find the other one, you are all the same in my sight. Because I realize that the measure of a man or a woman is not the clothes that they wear. It is the inner qualities that you look for. Sometimes those inner qualities have to be worked through some things to get to that point. You

do not ever throw people on a trash heap just because they do not meet what your expectation should be.

The longer I am in the ministry, the more I understand in dealing with people that it takes time. It takes patience, and it certainly takes persistence. But building leadership, I think, is imperative in building a strong church. I know that all churches are the same, and I know that our church is as good as it is. I know I am partial to it because I love you all. But I know that all churches are basically the same in some aspects. Every church has people who are never going to do anything. It does not make them bad people. Some churches have bad people in them. It just comes with whatever you get and whatever a church is. A church cannot grow and get large and people come in. In any event, I do not care what it is, there is always going to be people who just want to be spectators in the thing. I have learned over the years that that is okay because in time, sometimes they will catch the fever and God will do something with them and they will go from there.

But I want to talk to you about some things that I think are absolutely vital. Most people, men anyhow, not so much the ladies, but most people fancy themselves to be leaders. Most people who are not leaders fancy themselves to be leaders. It is much like me fancying myself to be a Brad Pitt look-alike. In their case, it is a dream. In my case, it is a nightmare. But people fancy themselves. I have seen it all my life. They fancy themselves to be leaders. But to be a real leader, there have to be some character qualities. There have to be some qualities that a true leader has. Many people do not have them, or many people have them but they never get developed.

You can go out and buy a t-shirt and say, "I am a leader" on the front. It does not make you a leader. You can give someone a title, make them a pastor and make them a deacon. You can give them ordination papers. You can do all of those things. None of those things makes a person a leader. Because a man becomes a pastor or a man becomes a deacon does not make him a leader. It makes him the leader, but it does not necessarily make him a good leader.

II. The Foundation of Leadership: Faithfulness in Little Things

The Bible teaches, first of all, one great aspect of leadership. I think it is the fundamental foundation by which, and I am going to give you six principles of leadership today that I want you to look at. This is not one of them. This is the foundation by which I think all these things are built on. But there is one fundamental principle in the Bible that I think is absolutely key to what it takes for a man or a woman to be a leader. It is found in Matthew 25:21. It is a great principle. It is one that how many times I have watched you guys do things that you do not know I am watching? How many times I have watched some of you not do things when you do not know I am watching? That principle comes to mind because it is the fundamental base by which everything of anybody who is going to ever aspire to be used of God to do anything for God, it is. It simply says this:

Matthew 25:21

Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things:

So simple, but so profound. It simply says that a leader, the key quality that they have, before we even get to the six, the key quality that they have is someone who is faithful in the little things, not just the big things. I have seen it all my life with pastors. I am sure you have too with Christians. I have seen it with Christians too. You have people who always want to be in the limelight of things, always want to take the spotlight, always want to do the thing that we all, but when it comes to the little things, the dirty little things, the things that need to be done to make the big things work, they are never found and they are never around.

If you are ever going to aspire to be a leader and you are ever going to be on whatever level you are at, and I will explain that for you here in a little bit. If you are ever going to get to that point in your life where you ever become the leader that God wants you to be, you will get there fundamentally by starting by being faithful in the little things that God gives you to do. It is just that simple.

We have our prayer groups. What a great aspect it is to our church. I think probably one of the single greatest things that we ever worked through, we got to in time as we grew as a church. We talked about the concept of iron sharpening iron, and that is so true. The great accountability groups for all of you, they help you. Your prayer groups, they help you. You ladies build bonds. You men build bonds. You do everything you try to do and they work great in our church. I mean, it is one of the single greatest concepts we ever implemented. But to you, it is that. To me, it is more than that. You look at it through your little prism. "I am in this prayer group and I have a great leader and I have great people in it." How many times have I heard you say after we switch them over, "I have a great team. I have great people." Do you look at it through that prism?

I look at it through the prism of, to me, the little prayer groups. It is a test tube. It is a lab experiment. It is watching what you do when you are in charge. It is watching how you—it is not just about the lessons. It is not just about how well you teach the lessons. I am not interested in that. It is not about your ability to resource material and do all of that. That is great. I am glad. But that is not what I look for. No, no, no. What I look for is, are you faithful in the little things?

You see, you can do the greatest lessons in the world, but how many times does Bob have to dog you to turn your reports in? A leader is someone who takes care of his faithful in the little things. They are not just somebody who wants to get up and teach or get up and say, "Well, I have a prayer group," but then forsake the little things that make those prayer groups successful in the overall scale of what we are trying to do in the church. I look at them as a lab experiment in your life of your leadership skills, how you take and do that responsibility. As I said, not just the lessons, not what you teach, not just getting all of your people together, but how do you take care of them and how do you take care of the little details that have to go on? Are you faithful in the little details? Are you just one of those people who wants to do the big things, but not do the little thing?

I look at the same way in softball when you take on to be a captain. I do not care how many games you win. I do not care how great you play. I look at what you do with those people's lives.

I look at you as a potential, as someday you have a team right now, and I know you are not going to go in there and teach them the Bible from beginning to end. I know that is not your function, but I watch for those traits in you that show me that you can handle that now, down the line. You can handle something else.

To me, I look at everything you do. You look at what you do, and you see it, as I said, in your little prism of where your world is. I look at every one of you, of what you do or do not do, based on the potential I see that God could develop in your life. I do not get mad or I do not count you off or check you off if you do not jump through those hoops. I realize it takes time. I realize that it takes patience. I realize that sometimes bad things happen in our lives that throw us off track a little bit. You have to have time to work through that. That is what it is. That is what it has to be. That does not stop me from trying to motivate people because that is my job.

III. Six Principles of Leadership

Now I want to talk about six things that a leader is. Then next week, we are going to take these six things. I am going to show you two men in the Bible, and I am going to walk you through their lives, and I am going to show you how these six things really, really, really work and play in every aspect of it. Next time, I am going to show you the number one greatest leader in the Bible as far as I am concerned. Then I am going to show you the worst leader in the Bible as far as I am concerned. You are going to see it. I am going to give you these six things today. We are going to talk about each one of them so you get a general understanding of it. Then next week, we are going to come back when we start to look in the Bible at these guys. I will remind you of these, and you will see these things because these are the fundamentals. These are what you have to have. They certainly are.

- 1.) Good Leaders Are Always Good Followers
- 2.) Leaders Preserve and Keep Order and Discipline
- 3.) Leadership Follows a Code of Biblical Principles
- 4.) Leadership Is Not About Ability, But Responsibility
- 5.) Leaders Are Not Born, But Transformed
- 6.) Leadership Will Always Begin With Your Own Family