



Christianity in Real Life-Part 9

Seeing My Growth for the Good of Others

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, if you have traveled to various places on the globe, you know that depending on where you are, you need to be careful which cab you get into. You need to kind of carefully size up the cab driver before you get in and say, "Let's go." I was reminded of that on one of the trips that we've led here in the church. We've done several parts of the world, and one time on one of our traditional trips to Israel, we had some folks in our tour group get in a cab, and then we didn't hear from them for a long time. "Oh, what happened to you guys?" And the story was, well, our cabbie took us deep into the embattled West Bank to take us to his uncle's, you know, olive wood shop or something and wouldn't let us go where we wanted to go. And I thought, I guess I should kind of incorporate that into the training when we go to various parts of the planet—that you should really think through which cab you get into and size up the driver so he doesn't have ulterior motives.

I thought of that story when I was reading this text that we're preaching on here this week in our morning sermon on Luke chapter 6, when Jesus is giving advice basically about who you trust to lead you. It's a good text for us to look at and to remember that throughout this "sermon on the plain," Jesus is giving some very practical and important—not just advice but—direction to disciples of Christ, that if you don't take heed to what he says, you'll not only have travel problems; rather, you will have serious, lasting consequences.

Now today, you'll look at this text—it's such a short text, Luke chapter 6, verses 39 and 40—and really, there's so much here. It should have, I suppose, and could have been incorporated into what we're going to deal with next time. But this is such a principle that needs to be looked at from every angle, that I thought it would be helpful for us just to examine it on its own. So we'll get the larger context of this next time. We've actually already begun to get the context from last time. But if you would, look at this text with me—Luke chapter 6—and let's recognize, contemplate, and kind of think through the implications of what happens if we don't take heed to what Christ is telling us.

Now, if you look at this in verse 39, you'll see he's taking it to an extreme place, almost a humorous place, when he says this. The Bible says, "And he also told them a parable." Which, by the way, I guess I should comment on that—don't stumble over that. Sometimes you think of "parable" as some long, drawn-out story with characters and dialogue and all that. The Bible uses the word "parable" in a lot of different ways, and certainly even down to the place of just an illustration. I mean, it's a very short illustration, but he says this: "Can a blind man,"—asking the rhetorical question—"lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?" I mean, think about that. It's like getting into a cab and saying, "Take me to the mall," or whatever, and he turns around and he's blind. That'd be a cab you'd want to pass on. You want your cab driver to be able to see. And in this analogy, he says, it's not good for you to be following someone that doesn't have the sight to know where they're going. If you need help getting somewhere and you don't know how to get there, you better have a guy that knows how to get there.



Then he makes this clear as to what he's speaking about, verse 40: "A disciple is not above his teacher." Now there are words we can directly identify with. We don't need the analogy of the blind man. But we get the point here—there's a connection here. Who you choose to be your teacher—that's important. Because he says, "Everyone, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher." In other words, you may think, "Well, I'm going to take the information and filter it out," and all of that, but in reality, you're going to begin to reflect the teacher. You're going to take and incorporate his leadership or her leadership in your life, and you're going to start to emulate that. And that's just a natural part of the process, because we are, as people, called in almost every area of life to take some direction, some training, some education, some mentoring from somebody.

Now, this is pretty clear. Let's just kind of focus in on verse 39, when he says, "Can a blind man lead a blind man?" That's a rhetorical question, which I guess you could say theoretically, "Well, of course," but it doesn't sound like a very smart thing. Then he says, "Won't they both fall into a pit?" Well, there's the revealed danger. And the rhetorical answer, of course, is "Yes, they're going to be in trouble—going to hit a light post, they're going to fall into a pit, you know, they're going to go clean off the cliff." You cannot take direction from someone who doesn't clearly see where you should be going and is not effective in leading you there.

Let's just think that through in terms of the clear exhortation that's right on the surface, and that is number one on your outline—let's jot it down: you need to choose your leaders wisely. You need to choose your leaders carefully. You need to choose your leaders discerningly and judiciously.

Now, just saying that right there, some of you will lean back, cross your arms, and say, "Oh, you know, that's for the lowly folks that need leaders. I don't—I don't need a leader." Now, some of you that really think that way aren't even here, because why would you be in church if you don't want to be taught something? Well, trust me, I do think that while most of the people who are right in the center of the complaint I'm about to make—yeah, you're right—they're not here. But I think the spirit of those folks, sometimes we share some sympathy with, and we even have aspects of our thinking that's a lot like them. Let's talk about them—it's a lot less convicting when we talk in the third person about these people.

Anyway, there are people who say, "Well, I can avoid the whole problem of following a leader who may not see clearly—if you want to put it in an extreme form—might be blind and lead me into a pit. I can avoid all that just by not having leaders." When I think through people that think that way, they usually fall into one of three categories in my thinking.



Number one: either the folks I like to call the super-spiritual people. The super-spiritual people—the spiritual lasers—they look at their relationship with God and they say, “This is so personal, and it is so spiritual and so internal, that really, I don’t want anybody getting involved in that. I don’t want you to be talking to me about that. This is between me and God.” Matter of fact, they are the people who really buy that thinking. They are—they’re not here. They don’t even like church. They’ll tell you, “I don’t like organized religion. I just connect with God when I’m out surfing,” or, you know, “I just sit on a rock and take in the sunset, and I feel God in those situations.” You hear those kinds of people. And when it comes to, “Well, who’s your spiritual leader—your discipler, your mentor, your pastor?” they’ll say, “I don’t need any of that because it’s personal.” We’ve incorporated these phrases like “a personal relationship with Jesus” and think, “Well, what other kind is there?” You have a relationship with Christ personally—see, but we emphasize that in part because we want to say, you know, I get that. Now, I understand we come out of the Reformation tradition, and we don’t like the idea of some mediator between God and man. And we don’t have a confessional box in the corner that you have to confess to a priest—I get all of that. But don’t let the pendulum in your thinking swing so far away from the idea of people being involved in your relationship with God that you say you don’t need leaders. The super-spiritual people don’t like it; they don’t think that way. They don’t want you to be meddling, teaching, instructing.

Then there’s what I like to call the Mavericks. There’s kind of that attitude of that autonomous, independent—you know, Americans are just known for this in part—and they drag this into their Christian life. And they start thinking, “You know what, I just don’t really need it.” They would never put it this way, but in their thinking, they think, “I can’t find anybody smart enough or spiritual enough to be my leader, so I don’t really have them.” I meet those folks, and I usually say to them, “Well, then why don’t you start a church? Because so many people could benefit from your great leadership that’s unrivaled and unmatched in the world.” And, well, they don’t have time. A lot of people—they don’t fall into that. But the idea of that maverick spirit, I think, is alive and well even in this room. Because you may come here, and I see this in the way people treat church—you may say, “Yeah, I go to that church,” but they don’t have the sense in which that really is my church. “I’m a part of that church. Those pastors are my pastors.” They don’t speak like that. Matter of fact, sometimes I catch it just in the way they talk to me. They might even be here, but they’ll talk about the church—“your church.” They never call it “our church” or “my church.” It’s not—they don’t have that connection because in their minds it’s like kind of driving to Costco and getting a pizza once a week. And that’s just the way it is. And if they really like it, it’s a great deal—they come back for a hot dog on Thursday. But it’s not their home; it’s not their family. They don’t get the feeling as though, “Yes, you’re my pastors. You’re my leaders.” They don’t get involved in programs where they have a home fellowship group leader. They’re not involved in Partners where they have a discipler. They’re not into all of that. They just kind of breeze in and breeze out, and they have a maverick spirit about them.

Third category, which is increasingly popular—and I don’t want you to ever be swayed to be dragged into this—and that’s what, I mean, let’s just call them what they are (and they even call themselves this): they’re the home-churches. Which is kind of grown out of a mentality from the homeschoolers—which, nothing wrong with that—homeschooling, that’s fantastic. We’re all for it—great. But when you take the mentality of “I’m not going to delegate any of the training of my children to anyone else; I’m going to do all of that training,” they start to say, “Well, that kind of



works well for the schooling of my kids. You know what? I think I want to think that way about just my whole spiritual life and the shepherding of my family, and you know what? Every Christian family becomes its own little church. We do church at home.” This is popular, increasingly so. And even Christian publishers are publishing books about this—where you should just run your own church. You be the patriarch of your own family; be the pastor of your own little congregation. And, you know, when it comes to church and leaders and teachers and disciplers, you’ve got all that built right into the home—the home-churches.

Now, the super-spirituals and the Mavericks and the home-churchers—if you think through categories, and you can probably add six more categories—but if you just think through categories the way I do in terms of saying, “You know, I don’t need them; I don’t want them,” we need to look at the Bible and say, “Well, wait a minute—that is a problem.” Turn with me to one passage I know I’ve turned to here before in this regard, but it’s good for us to revisit this from time to time—Ephesians chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4. And one of the reasons I think this is so compelling is because of the context in which leaders are placed in this text. And that, I think, is helpful. It helps respond to the Maverick, the super-spiritual, and the home-churcher to say, “Wait a minute—you’re rejecting the leaders of God in your life. That’s the problem. It’s a problem. It’s a big problem.”

Look at the context, verse 8. Ephesians 4, quoting this text from the Old Testament, says in verse 8: “Therefore it says,”—the Bible says in the Old Testament—“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” Now, what he wants to camp on is that last phrase: he—God—gave gifts to people, to men. He’s going to take in verses 9 and 10 a little parenthetical moment to talk about the whole “ascending on high.” That’s why, by the way, your translations put that in parentheses. Do you see that? So let’s get on to his focus here, although those are great verses and we can discuss them sometime. But look at verse 11: “And he gave”—now here’s our verb again—“he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers,” or the shepherds and teachers—same word—shepherds/poimēn—pastors translated two different ways.

And if you’ve heard me discuss this, maybe this is helpful if you’re new here. The paradigm here: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers. The picture of the founding of the church on the apostles and prophets—which Ephesians 2:20 says—and then we have the building of the church—I guess I could build up—so: apostles and prophets; evangelists and pastor-teachers. You’ve got people in the New Testament founding the church and teaching the church with the authority of Christ—the miraculous events surrounding, authenticating their authority—founding the church. And then their writings become the fuel for the next generation of leaders—the evangelists, who are planting churches; and the pastors and teachers (or the shepherds and teachers) that are feeding the church. They’re shepherds, which means they’re more than just teachers. They’re leading. The shepherd is the flock captain. He’s leading and directing and guiding and saying, “This way; let’s go here.” And they’re teaching—they’re explaining, they’re exposing the truth of God’s word. And they do it with a Bible in hand. The apostles and prophets do it directly. The church was built on a foundation—the apostles and prophets. The church now has been maintained for 20 centuries with the evangelists and pastors and teachers.



All I want to say about that—when it comes to you being a part of a church that was founded by church planters, evangelists, and you’re now in a church with pastors and teachers—just think of how this is posited, how it’s framed. It’s framed this way: they’re gifts from God to you. Now, I know that causes people to pause, particularly when it comes to the pastor, and you say very disdainfully, “What—do you think you’re God’s gift to the church?” Yes. That’s what I’m saying. (No, that’s not for you to applaud. And I know most of you did not—I get that. I see who you are—that’s fine. That’s fine.) Here’s what I’m saying: albeit imperfect, the leaders of the church who lead you spiritually and teach you are God’s gifts. And all I’m saying is if you’re a super-spiritual, a Maverick, or a home-churcher, you’re looking at God’s gifts and saying, “Meh. Don’t want that. Don’t like that. I reject that.” I don’t think if God gives gifts to Christians, Christians should reject that. That, I think, is not good.

Now, you may want to re-gift your current pastor to someone else—I understand that. “Let them have him; I’m going over here.” Fine. I get that. I understand the priesthood of the believer. You may say, “This is not the guy for me.” Terrific. Matter of fact, that’s the whole point I’m making: choose your leaders wisely. If you do not think your leaders (who you all should have—a set of leaders in your life), if you don’t think your leaders have clear sight to direct you spiritually, then you should choose others. But you should not reject the category altogether. That’s what I’m trying to say.

So, I accept the fact that God has arranged my Christian life to require that I have some spiritual leaders in my life—the whole cascading structure of them if I really look all throughout the Bible. But when I look at that cascading structure of people who are going to lead me, keep me accountable, and direct me, and explain the Bible and help me interpret the Bible—all of that—I just want to make sure I just don’t listen to anybody who says, “I love Jesus,” and has a Bible in their hand. Because the Bible here gives us this great parable—Jesus does—about, you know what, the sight of your leader ought to be carefully analyzed and evaluated. You need to make sure that you have put yourself in a position to get direction and feeding and all the rest from people that you can look at and say, “No, this guy knows where he’s going. These people have a direction that I see is clearly aligning with the Scripture.”

As a matter of fact, that is our guide—to put it in terms that I think many of you have been exposed to in the past. It’s when Paul comes into the city and preaches—he’s gone from Thessalonica now to Berea—and he preaches. And Paul says, what noble-minded people. They were more noble-minded than the Thessalonians because the Bereans took what was taught, and they searched the Scriptures daily to see if what they were being taught was so. That’s something today we don’t like to do. “Oh, it’s kind of rude to really analyze the teaching of the teachers.” But the Bible says you need to be discerning enough and careful enough to say, “Wait a minute—that teacher is saying something that’s not lining up with the Bible.” And, you know what, “That teacher is saying something that is lining up with the Bible.” I need to reject that kind of leadership, and I need to be putting myself in a position to be led spiritually by people that have clear sight—to put it in terms of



2 Timothy 2:15—who can handle the word of truth in a right, diligent way. They can rightly divide the word of truth. That idea—critically important.

Because here's the thing: it's not only the church you go to, but you'll, you know, download podcasts and stream things and listen to Christian radio. You know, sometimes instead of just saying, "Well, they love Jesus and they're talking about the Bible—I listen to that every day," maybe you should rethink some of that. Because you need to actually be able to analyze the quality of the leadership of the people that are teaching you spiritual things. Can a blind man lead a blind man? If you need help—and as we all should—in understanding and applying the Scripture, you better make sure that you're putting yourself in the position of listening to, following, and ingesting the teaching of people that you say, "I'm confident they have clear sight to lead me."

We don't have time for this, but jot it down—2 Peter, chapter 2, verses 1 through 3—2 Peter 2:1–3. The whole book of Jude as well, if you want to throw in another one. There's so much in the New Testament about "Be careful about the false teachers." As I'm saying that, I'm thinking 1 John 4 is another chapter on this. When you start looking through the New Testament, you will see that the Bible says you need to be so careful to listen to those teachers and start to make evaluations as to whether or not—without becoming hypercritical—whether or not they are giving you what is biblically true. Because—to put it in terms of 2 Peter chapter 2—just like in the Old Testament there were a lot of false prophets, so in the New Testament there'll be a lot of false teachers. And here's what it says next—here's the real struggle, you know, the frustrating part of this: they will secretly introduce destructive heresies. Listen to that—secretly. Now, if you go to some Bible study or you flip on Christian radio, and you hear someone say, "Hail Satan," you know, "Go commit adultery this week," you go, "Oh man, that's horrible." Of course it is. That's not how Satan works. Paul says Satan and his emissaries—they go out and disguise themselves as angels of light. False teachers carry Bibles. They talk about Jesus. They preach sermons that may be 80% truth. But when it comes to what they're teaching, they include what the Bible calls "destructive heresies." And here's the word—secretly introducing them. So you need to say, "Wait a minute—this is important." And it may not be that my leader that I'm listening to is completely blind, but you know, there's a lot of real sight that's, well, cross-eyed. You know, they're really not shooting straight when it comes to the Bible. There's a lot of this other stuff creeping in that doesn't align itself with the truth.

Now, I'm not trying to train people to be hypercritical. But I am saying you better be relatively sure that the leaders that you listen to are leading you in the right direction. And one passage before we leave this point I think is worth us checking in on would be Matthew chapter 23, where Jesus not only rails here in this entire chapter against the religious leaders who were teaching destructive heresies—to put it in terms of 2 Peter 2—but he spends, in the middle of this chapter, a little time making you think that, you know, if you follow them, just remember, you are going to be led to a place where you don't want to go. As a matter of fact, the place you think you do want to go, you're not going to be allowed to get to.

All that to say this—verse 13: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,” Matthew 23:13. He said, “You’re hypocrites.” Here’s the part I needed you to catch: “You shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces.” Now think about that. They’ve come to the leaders, the spiritual teachers: “We want to hear about God; we want to know the truth of God; help me connect with God. We want to be a part of the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God.” And they come for instruction, and those instructors—the scribes and Pharisees—they take the door and they slam it in their face. “You’re not going to get in.” Now, wait a minute—do you see what a ruse this is? There’s a sense in which I’m learning about God; I’m learning about the Bible. I’m sitting there taking in spiritual truths—but in reality, because they’re wayward—because they’re, quote-unquote, “blind,” as we’ll see in this context—you are not even getting out of this what you think you are. Even if it’s 80% true, there’s enough destructive heresy in some of the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees where, in reality, this is becoming harmful—so harmful that really, if your leaders are blind, you’re going to end up exactly the same.

Verse 15—(I’m sorry, we didn’t finish 13): “You shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.” Verse 15: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte”—you know that word? What’s that mean? Convert, a disciple. “And when he becomes a disciple, a convert,”—you may—now underline this—“twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.” Another one you won’t see on a DaySpring card. This is not one under the painting of Jesus teaching on the Sea of Galilee that you’ll see the inscription: “And Jesus said...” No. Why? We don’t like that. And yet, here’s Jesus—gentle Jesus, meek and mild—who’s preaching and saying, “Be careful. You follow those guys—they’re sons of hell.” Wait a minute—they’re teaching from the Torah. They’re teaching about Yahweh. I get that. But they’re sons of hell. And if you listen to them and you become their disciple, you become twice as much a son of hell as they are. Scathing words from Christ.

Now, what does he call them? Verse 16: “Blind guides, who say...” Now, I guess we can get into this: “Anyone who swears by the temple”—“Eh, yeah, the guy doesn’t have to dig out a serious lesson—nothing. If anyone, though, were to swear by the gold of the temple, well, then you’d be bound by your oath.” Oh man. If you think about things, the Bible says—we just take the oath. We don’t do many oaths. But one oath we do is—we clear the center aisle, we have a girl that’s dressed up in her wedding dress and a guy in a tuxedo, and we say, “For richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, for better or worse.” “I do.” “I do.” You’re married. You made an oath before God and these witnesses. “I now pronounce you husband and wife. By the authority vested in me by the state of California as a minister of the gospel, you are now husband and wife.” You’ve committed to one another—for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, for better or worse. But then you come back for counseling: “He’s not making me happy, and our marriage is a mess.” You can have leaders who take the oath that you made and find an end-around for it. And the Bible here is using as an example sacred covenants made in the temple, and leaders will find a way to get you out. “No, you know, I don’t know—when you made that commitment to that person, it really—I mean, in part, I mean, it was the assumption that it would make you happy and that they were going to be the person they promised to be, and now they’re not. You know—it’s okay.”



Now, think about that. I don't mean to tighten the screws too tight right now in the beginning of the sermon, but think about how that is used in almost every modern setting that claims to say, "We believe in the Bible; we teach the text," but, you know, we're not going to be hardcore about stuff like oaths. They find a way around. What is his response to that? Verse 17: "You blind fools." See, when you have leaders that do not cut straight the way the Scripture puts it forth, and you follow those leaders under the name or title of "grace" or whatever you want to call it, the Bible says the problem is compounded in your life. And how did he put it? The leaders are sons of hell, and their disciples are—twice the sons of hell.

And you can go on in this text—we can only take a little bit of Matthew 23 at any given time—so I'll leave the rest for later. But Jesus is big on condemning poor leaders—which should give us a chill to say, "Wow—be super careful about who your leaders are. Choose your leaders wisely. Make sure they're cutting it straight in the Scripture. They're giving you the word of God. They're not compromised."

And by the way, this rant, I guess, I should repeat. I'm concerned about the way a lot of people choose leaders today. They want their spiritual leaders to be—here's the buzzwords—"real." "I want him to be one of us. I don't want them to feel like they're, I don't know, really a couple laps ahead of us on the Christian race. It'd be great if they just got up and said, you know, 'I've got all the same problems you do, and my marriage is a mess, and my kids are just terrible, and I'll tell you—half the time I don't even pray. And, you know, I don't know the word of God. I wake up in the morning and I can't even get into it. So, you know, just one beggar trying to tell another beggar where to buy...'" That mentality—if you've heard it—is so popular.

And I warned our home fellowship leaders about this. In a little weekly email I send out, I said, "When you discuss this sermon, watch out for that thinking." Well, I just finished sending that email, and I walk in and my assistant throws me the latest edition, the latest issue of [magazine], and I opened it up and the first thing—the first article I start reading, I haven't even sat down with it, I'm just standing up—is all about when you need "real pastors." And what's the article about? "We just need pastors to be just as big losers as everybody else." And they use phrases like this: "We don't want you putting your pastors on a pedestal. You know, no one's perfect but Christ. And if you are a pastor, why don't you get up and just share what a loser you really are to your congregation." Now, I'm paraphrasing, but read the article—that's the gist of the article.

And I thought what I often think when I hear that mentality: "But we just need to—oh, it'd be just so refreshing to hear the pastor say just that he's struggling with all these things, too." Now, here's the problem with that—you don't want that in any other area of your life. Your wife needs surgery; you're trying to pick a competent surgeon. "Say, how are you at this?" "Oh, not really good at it." "Really?" "I mean, I'm probably as good as you are at it, you know. I just—I mean—well, didn't you study it?" "Well, I did, but I, you know, I partied a lot in college like you did, so—I don't know. And who am I to stand here and act like some expert? I don't want you to think I'm perfect



or anything.” “Man, we got the greatest surgeon for my wife’s surgery—he’s so real and authentic, and we just love the fact that he’s one of us.” No one thinks that way.

And it ain’t just surgery. You pick a gal to teach your child piano, right? You want a piano teacher for your daughter. And you go to pick her—“So, tell me, how long you been playing?” “Well, I’ve been trying to play for a long time, but half the time my husband hears me playing he’s like, ‘Oh—awful!’ And I don’t know—sometimes it’s good, sometimes it’s bad. I don’t even know—your daughter could probably teach me as much as I can teach her.” Who’s going to sign up for that? Going to pay 50 bucks a week for that? No way. You want competence. And when your piano teacher that you choose—you are confident—is a few laps ahead of your daughter on the ability to play the piano, do you sit around and go, “See my piano teacher—so arrogant. Thinks she’s perfect. Always sitting there acting like she can play those notes the way they’re written—just arrogant. I need to find a piano teacher that’s ‘real.’” Nobody thinks that way.

You want to come here, and you want to learn how to live the Christian life. The Bible puts passages like 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 out there to say the leaders that lead you ought to have some competence in this area. Their prayer life should actually be happening. Their time in the word should be real. Their connection with God and the resistance of temptation—they ought to have some success in this. Now don’t go away—when you have a church where that’s the situation—“Arrogant! Do they think they’re perfect?” You don’t say that about any other area of your life. Why in the world do we do that when it comes to the church?

Don’t you want the people that stand up and teach your junior highers and high schoolers right now that are in the next building—do you want them to stand up, “Just so you know, I’m as big a loser as you guys are”? You want someone who is setting the pace in righteousness, in the application of God’s word. Are they perfect? Nobody’s perfect. We understand—that is a given. No one sits around saying because they’re competent in what they do and how they live or their mastery of the material—no one’s claiming perfection. Nobody needs—you don’t need to talk to our wives to find out we’re not perfect. It’s true—you could—but it’s true. That’s the reality. But you need to pick a church where you don’t have the wounded leader every week who wants to constantly remind you, “I’m just one of the boys, you know.” And I know—that would fill our church up. You think you have a problem finding a parking space now? If I got up here and sat here and said, “I’m as big a loser as the rest of you, and everything in my life is horrible and it’s out of control—my personal life, my thought life, my marriage, my kids—it’s a mess. And sometimes I smoke pot on Saturday. It’s just so awful. And, you know, I was drunk on Thursday—just, I had too much to drink—and after I beat my wife on Tuesday and kicked the dog, it was just...” You know—“Brother, if you’ve got those problems, I understand. Please—so real!” I could fill the church easily. We’d add services to have that kind of authenticity in the pulpit. Not what we’re looking for. Are we perfect? No, not perfect.



When you pick a discipler, when you pick a small group leader, when you pick a pastor, when you pick people that are going to train you—when you pick up a Christian book to read it, when you listen on the radio to a sermon—you want to find people who you can say, “I’m not following a blind guide. There’s some clarity of sight in understanding the Scripture, applying it in his or her life. I get it.”

All right—now verse 40, Luke 6. “Can a blind man lead a blind man?” Well, they could—that’s not a good idea. “Will they fall into a pit?” Yeah, they probably will. It’s not good. Make sure your leaders have clear sight. Make sure they’re leaders that you want to follow because they’re shooting straight—they’re biblical. They have some competency in applying the text that you’re trying to apply. Verse 40: “A disciple is not above his teacher.” Now, I like the fact that we’ve gone from the illustration of blind men leading blind men to words that we can directly identify with—there’s no analogy or parable now. We’re talking about what we call ourselves: disciples. And disciples have teachers. And “a disciple is not above his teacher. Everyone, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher.” That kind of spiritual reproduction—that’s how it works.

Now, I think to myself, when you start introducing words like “disciple” and “teacher,” I think, great—I’ve kind of read the parable in verse 39 from the perspective of the disciple, and I want to be a good disciple and listen to my spiritual leaders and incorporate that material. And part of even what makes me even a better disciple, I suppose, is recognizing that every disciple, as you read in the Scripture, is called to become a teacher in his Christian life. I start recognizing now, as an intuitive learner, that, you know what, I’ve got to get this information because everyone, including the people who heard Jesus say these things, is expected to grow to the place of becoming a mentor and a teacher and a leader and a guide to other people. You may not have a microphone. They may not record it and stream it—praise God for that, right? Because I have to live with a lot of things I say that I wish I’d never said. But what’s the point here? The point is that you will become a guide, a teacher, a leader, a discipler, a mentor to some group of people. It may not be on the radio, it may not be on a platform, may not be behind a lectern, but you are called to be a teacher.

Now, that’s a big claim for me to say this, basically—number two on your outline—that you should see yourself as a teacher. I’m going to flip this around from being the learner to now being the teacher. And you go, “Well, that’s a big claim. That’s a big shift in this text. Can you prove that?” Oh, I can. I can. Go to Hebrews chapter 5.

Once you jot down that simple statement—“See yourself as a teacher; you are called to be a teacher; every disciple is to become a teacher”—now, there are so many things I could say about this and several passages I could take you to, but I think this one is the most obvious. Because, yes, in the broader context—I should say this—if you read the book of Hebrews, there is a clear distinction in the Scripture in the 13 chapters of Hebrews of dividing the laity, if you will, from the leadership. In other words, he recognizes there are pastoral leaders in the church, and he distinguishes those. But here in this text, he’s talking to everyone. He’s writing to his audience. And

the preacher here—the leader, the instructor, the writer of Hebrews—is talking to everyone, and he says this:

Verse 11: “About this we have much to say”—this is Hebrews 5:11. What’s “this”? Look back at verse 10: Melchizedek. He was afraid they wouldn’t know who he was talking about. They wouldn’t understand the entrance of Melchizedek into the narrative in Genesis and that interchange with Abraham, and that prophetic promise in Psalm 110, and all of the things that the Bible says—which is not much—but in Genesis one, and a thousand years later in Psalms. He says, “I don’t even think I can say this. I’ve got a lot to say, but I can’t. It’s hard to explain—not because,” the writer of Hebrews says, “I don’t understand it, but you’re not ready to take it in—since you have become”—underline this phrase—“dull of hearing.”

That’s an interesting way to translate the little Greek word *nōthros*. *Nōthros* is the word that is translated in chapter 6, verse 12—if you want to look down or across the page at that (I think the ESV translates it “sluggish”). It’s translated in a lot of translations—or if you look it up in a lexicon, a dictionary, it’ll say “lazy.” “You have become lazy as learners.” See, that often happens even when you find yourself a good teacher, a good pastor, a good small-group leader, a good discipler. You kind of lay back in the La-Z-Boy recliner of Christianity and go, “I’m okay now, man. I’ve got a good church. I’ve got a good pastor. I’ve got an orthodox small-group leader. I’ve got a real godly mentor and discipler, and if I have trouble, I call.” And you just relax. You become *nōthros*. You become lazy, sluggish, dull of hearing, because you don’t recognize the obligation. And the obligation is that every learner needs to know that eventually the disciple becomes the teacher. Keep reading.

“You have become dull of hearing,” verse 12: “For though by this time you ought to be”—what’s the word?—“teachers.” Now he’s talking to the, if you will, the rank-and-file of the church, and he’s saying, “You’ve had enough time.” Two words for “time” in the Greek New Testament—*chronos* and *kairos*. Time sometimes—in the *kairos* word—means opportunity, season. It’s often translated that. You know, you could look at it this way: “Well, maybe, yeah, had I taken that online course, had I gone to class—you know, there were opportunities for discipleship, but I didn’t take advantage of those opportunities.” That’s not what it means here. This is the word *chronos*—you’ve had enough time. See, in this context, you should, with time, search out the *kairos*—the opportunities. If you’ve been a Christian for whatever amount of time it is—and I think we could speculate based on the timing of the writing of Hebrews and the writing of the apostles that he refers to in chapter 2, we probably don’t have any more than 15 years. So, in other words, he’s talking to a congregation, and there’s no Christian in the group that’s probably—at least not many—beyond 15 years old in Christ. And he says—and he’s speaking to all of them—so I’m thinking he’s talking even to five-year-old Christians and seven-year-old Christians and ten-year-old Christians—and he’s saying, “You’ve had enough time now. You’ve had enough years and months go by when you ought to be teachers.”



Two words for “ought” in the Greek New Testament—at least two—and the common one is *dei*, which is the word, you know: “You ought to write your wife a love note every now and then. You ought to call your mother once a week.” You “ought,” in other words, is a good idea—that would be a good thing to do. That’s not the word here. This is the legal accounting word—you “ought to” as in you “owe it.” It’s obligated. It’s like, “You ought to pay your taxes.” You see, that’s different—“Sometimes you ‘ought’ to call your mom once a week,” versus “You ‘ought’ to pay your taxes.” Those are two different “oughts.” And in this context, it’s the word for how to pay your taxes. Why? Because there’s huge consequences if you don’t. You’re obligated. You have a debt. You ought to pay your car loan; you ought to pay your house mortgage. You have an obligation to be teachers.

So, if you’re a brand-new Christian, I can cut you a little slack. You just became a Christian—fantastic. You know, let’s learn. Let’s be a great disciple. But it won’t be long until the ticks on the clock and the calendars flip by when you start feeling the obligation to become now a dispenser of the things that you’re learning.

Now, he gives us great instructions here as we keep reading. He says the problem with you—if you become dull and relaxed and chilled out as a learner—is that “you’ll need someone to teach you again,” bottom of verse 12, “the basic principles of the oracles of God.” You’ll need milk and not solid food. That’s how dull hearers are: “Tell me again about the grace of God. Tell me again about that great passage in John—what is it—verse 16?” Tell me more about those things. “Oh, it’s so good.” It’s the basics, and you need it over and over again. Why? Because you’re not really learning this. You’re not incorporating it. You’re not moving beyond it.

“For everyone who lives on milk,”—you can see the analogy here—verse 13—this great phrase bracketed—“is unskilled in the word of righteousness.” Now remember, this all kicked off with, you know, Melchizedek and Christ and the priesthood of Christ. “Oh, that’s right—you don’t even know what I’m talking about. It’s hard for me to explain it because you really don’t know the word of God. You’re not skilled in the word of righteousness—since you are just a—you’re just a baby.” Baby Huey, right? That’d be a good one to picture in your mind if you’re as old as me.

“Solid food is for the mature—for those who,”—great word—“have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” You want to feel the obligation? Here it comes. You’ve been a Christian a while. Let’s say this: let’s say I came—I’m stepping out to preach and I said, “Oh—I, you know, I’m a little concerned because I just came from a situation; I ran into a couple—they’re having really bad marital problems—and I put them back over here in the corner, and I just need someone to do some counseling. Just raise your hand if you’ve been a Christian at least, I don’t know, seven years.” Oh man—and they raised their hands. And I said, “Okay, you—come on. You’ve had your senses of discernment trained to distinguish good from evil. You’ve been skilled in the word of righteousness. You know how to apply the word of God;



you know the word of God. Now go over there, and I'm going to preach, and you go counsel them and fix their marital problem."

The Bible says—if you want to use the terms, let's say, of Romans 15:14—you should be so "filled with goodness"—which is the application of God's word—and "knowledge"—that's the intellectual learning of God's word—that you are able to *noutheteō* (it's the word "to instruct" is how it's translated in the ESV, but it's much more firm than that—it's the idea of correcting and directing). You ought to be so filled with the application of God's word and the data of God's word that you can instruct, correct, and direct other people in their Christian life.

And all I'm saying is—trust me, I don't have to get up on the platform and call you out to do that. God is going to put those problems in your face. And if you're constantly saying, "Well, you really should talk to a pastor about that. You really should call the church about that," then you're stumbling in your job. Your job is, as Paul said, to be so filled with goodness and knowledge that you're able to instruct each other—that you're able to be the teacher—because you're trained in the word of righteousness, skilled in it. That's a great text—"by constant practice able to distinguish good and evil."

"Therefore," chapter 6, verse 1, "let us leave the elementary"—this is chapter 6—"the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity." Can we stop just repeating the 16 favorite verses of yours? Can we move on a little bit more, looking at the deeper things of God and how to apply them in our lives? "Not laying again a foundation"—he goes through all the basics—"repentance from dead works, faith toward God, instructions about washings (or baptism), the laying on of hands, resurrection from the dead, eternal judgment." Let's move past those things—which, everyone likes to hear in a sermon because it's all, "Affirm what I already believe," as opposed to being taught and trained to put your knowledge and your application that you've applied in your own life to action in other people's lives.

That gets back to the subtitle of the sermon: I begin to see my spiritual growth as something to be utilized by God for the good of other people. Do you think that way? We need to think that way. Why? Because God expects every disciple to become a teacher in some form. All you need do is be a parent to recognize that that just falls in your lap when you're a parent. The idea is for you to train your children—to direct them and correct them in the instruction of the Lord. All of us have that responsibility as soon as we have kids—at least with them. Now, all I'm saying is: can you recognize that and feel that obligation beyond your biological family and start to see it as part of God's obligation in your life to your spiritual family?

So we have programs here at the church that put people's chairs face-to-face. This is the only one here that we have where the entire program is chair-side-by-side. I get up here and dump the



preaching on you on the weekend, and then we expect you to go to a home fellowship group where your chairs are face-to-face, and now you're helping, encouraging, instructing, stimulating one another to love and good deeds. That goes on as you take your experience in applying the word of God—your knowledge of the word of God—and using what growth has happened in your life for the good of other people.

If you want this on the front lines of just the—I mean, you want a program that we have that just does this and is designed for that—Partners. I mean, we talk about the thousand graduates in the Partners program. I mean, that should be two or three or four or five or ten thousand, because all of us are taking that information and turning around and discipling other people. I'll talk more about that at our Partners celebration that we're having. But if you don't even know what that is, you need to go out to the Partners table. It's a great way even for us just to spend time with a manual, with some material, with some Bible verses, just to say, "Can I take what I've learned about conquering temptation, my prayer life—whatever it might be—and help someone else to do the same in their lives?" "Well, I'm just new at this. I've only been a Christian for five years." Great—well, find someone who's been a Christian for five months. And you will be the expert in applying the word of God at least in the things that you are competent to speak on and apply because you've gone through it yourself.

Hebrews chapter 5, verses 11 and following, is a helpful reminder. It's a passage of Scripture that's so powerful and so convicting to help us see ourselves as teachers. And so is Romans chapter 15, verse 14, which I referenced in passing. If you want another one (which we always talk about when we talk about Partners), we talk about 2 Timothy chapter 2—that great text in verse 2, which is, "The things you've heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these"—Paul talking to Timothy—"entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." There's four generations in that verse. Paul takes what he's been taught; he teaches Timothy. Timothy takes what he's been taught and what he's seen in Paul's life, and he instructs and models that for another generation. And that generation are the people that can do it to the next generation. And that tier—that chain—of that information, of mentoring and discipling, should be taking place all throughout our church.

Lastly, verse 40, bottom of the verse—the scariest part of verse 40 in Luke 6—is the way Jesus words this: "Everyone, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher." Now, that's one thing, and it is something that helps us raise the bar in our, you know, standard in terms of teachers when I pick one—"Do I want to be like that person and the way he applies his Christian life or her Christian life?" That's one thing. But when you flip it around and say, "Wait a minute—you're called to be a teacher. And do you want the people that you affect for Christ to have their thought life look like your thought life? To have their prayer life look like your prayer life? To have their boldness in evangelism look like your boldness in evangelism? To have their marriage look like—you know—their marriage look like your marriage?" Do you see what I'm saying?



Speaking of parenting and kids—it's funny when you have kids and they get older and they sit there and say things in front of you, and both mom and dad look at each other and say, "They didn't learn that from me." Have you had those moments? Like, they do something wacky or critical or stupid or whatever, and you say, "Where'd that come from?" and you point at each other—mom and dad. Here's the thing: those are convicting moments because you realize—sometimes it's easy to see the connection—that the bad habits of Mom and Dad—you don't have to be biologically descended from your parents; you could be adopted—they start to pick up the patterns that you model for them.

The same thing in your Christian life. You need to know that you can talk all you want to about evangelism, but if the person in your small group never has any sense that you're actually engaged in it, they're not going to do it. If you're talking about prayer, but the way you pray, or the things you talk about, never reflect your engagement in prayer with God, they're probably never going to pick up the patterns and disciplines of prayer. Do you follow me on this? Your life is going to be replicated, even when we don't want it to be. That cause-and-effect relationship. I put it this way—number three: we need to anticipate the impact of our choices.

Why? Because you're called to be—let's put this—vulnerable in the sense that you're exposed. People see your life. Which, by the way, is not only a necessary evil; it's something the Bible says you should invite. Oh—here we are again: "I don't want to invite people to follow me—follow Christ. Don't follow me; follow Christ." But what does Paul say? 1 Corinthians 11:1—"Follow me, as I follow Christ." Do you see that? That's so important for us to catch. And the modern Christians, as a whole—"Don't look at me. I don't want your marriage to be like my marriage. I don't want your spiritual disciplines to look like my spiritual disciplines—just follow Christ. I'm just a beggar trying to show another beggar where to find bread." That's not the picture in Scripture. Over and over again, 1 Corinthians 4—"You know how you should—you ought to imitate me." The Greek word *mimētai*—you ought to be doing and reflecting and patterning the things that I do in my life, the way that I'm doing them. It says in 1 Thessalonians as well—you know how you ought to do this. You ought to watch my life and you ought to respond the way that I am responding. Paul's inviting people to do this.

Here's another one—Philippians chapter 3: he says, not only should you follow my example, you ought to note anybody else in your church that is following my example, and you want to keep your eye on them. This is all about the patterning of the application of the word of God. And that needs to put a little bit more pressure on how you exercise your liberties in Christ—where you go on vacation, what you do with your spare money, how you invest your time, how you serve in the church—what you do in terms of whatever it might be—because what you do is going to be observed, and ought to be observed. And you ought to have people in your home; you ought to have people that you eat meals with after church. You should be involved in relationships where your Christian life is on display—not as a prideful, "I'm perfect; look at me," but recognizing as someone who goes from disciple to teacher (in some level in the church), your life on display is so important. That is the template.



Which, by the way, I should say—when you see the word “example” in the New Testament, it translates the Greek word *tupos*. And the Greek word *tupos* is the word we get the English word “type” from. This is the type of Christian that you want to be. Another word—it’s translated “pattern.” It’s like the sewing pattern—you take your life, and you see the outlines of mine. And where do I stop in terms of liberty? And where do I go in terms of evangelism? And how do I restrain my words? And what kind of disciplined life do I live? You should follow my template—my *tupos*, my pattern. You want to mimic—right?—you ought to respond and mimic me—which is exactly what you want with your kid who takes piano lessons from someone: “Watch how I do this; you do that.” The golf coach for your kid: “Here’s the swing—how I do it; you do it.” That’s the picture in the New Testament.

But we’re always thinking about our choices and anticipating how our choices are going to affect others. And that’s when we really think about our spiritual growth for the good of other people. That’s very, I suppose, logical, because we’re looking at the correspondence of my behavior—people viewing it—and then just naturally thinking, “Well, I guess that’s how you do it. I’ll do it that way, too.” But let me step outside of that logical connection of correspondence and move to something that’s even more scary—just the spiritual connection—the way that God sometimes views us as part of the whole.

Let me put it this way: the effects that sometimes are taking place in a group are sometimes affected by the godliness of the decisions of individuals, even when those aren’t known or exposed. I think of Joshua, chapters 6 and 7. After the victory in Jericho—we’ll read this pretty soon in our daily Bible reading—there is that victory. And what happens? Well, God said, “Don’t take any of the banned stuff. Everything in Jericho is God’s. Don’t—anybody—take it.” Well, that’s hard to do when you just took a very wealthy city and there’s Porsches in the driveway with the keys in them. And you think, “Well, I’d like to have that.” And so people stole some of that—really one family. Everyone else was obedient. Achan was his name. He and his family were complicit in hiding the stuff that they stole.

And so then, with Caleb and Joshua with their feet up on the table, thinking about the next town they’re going to take (which is Ai—it’s a small town), they say, “Well, we don’t even need to send the whole army. Just send a few people out there—we can take that city, no problem.” Well, they lose. Israeli soldiers die. God’s blessing is no longer on the conquest. Then what happens? Well, then they all fall before God, the Bible says, and Joshua is at the head of the weeping team saying, “We lost. What’s wrong? This is terrible.” And God says, “Oh, poor baby. I feel bad.” No—that’s not what God says. God says, “Get off your face. Get up.” We cry about, “Oh—we lost, we lost, we lost the battle.” God says, “Why do you think you lost the battle? Because there’s sin in the camp.”



Now, think about that. There's somebody here with a private decision that they're making that is affecting God's interaction with the whole. And if you think, "Well, that's just a unique Old Testament situation," read Revelation 2 and 3—the seven postcards to the seven churches—and watch how often the behavior of a few is now God's response to the whole. That's scary. That means right now—if you're engaged in an adulterous affair, let's just say—you're sitting here with Bible in hand, but you are sleeping with your neighbor's wife, some coworker, your secretary, or whatever—think about that. Your private decisions have an effect on other people—not only that, have an effect on your family. Even if they don't find out, it has an effect on how God deals with our church—there is sin in the camp. All I'm saying is our decisions have cascading and reverberating effects on other people. I need to sometimes just sit back and view my spiritual growth and think, "Wait a minute—this has an effect on more than just me."

I think of it this way—do you want to think of it in the positive? When Abraham was negotiating with God about the destruction of Sodom, do you remember that? It's almost humorous. Here is God saying, "I'm going to destroy Sodom," where Lot lives. And here's Abraham: "What if there were 50 righteous people there? You wouldn't destroy it if there were 50 people there, would you?" God says, "No." "Oh, you wouldn't? Well, what if I was off by five? What if there was 45?" You remember that story—it goes on. "How about 30? How about 20? How about 10?" We got down to 10. And the most amazing thing about that was not Abraham looking kind of pathetic in this whole negotiation with God. The amazing thing about that is every time—every single time—God said, "No, I wouldn't destroy it if there were 10."

Now, I know some of you Reformers—you want to go back, "He's talking about absolute righteousness, and that's why we all need the forensic justification of God." Stop. That's not what's happening in the text. We're talking about the way—even in the New Testament—that Lot, who's not much for righteousness in our minds as we read the Genesis account, how Lot is described as a righteous man. He wasn't like everybody else—like Noah was described as a righteous man, like Job was described as a righteous man, like David was described as a righteous man. We're not talking about absolute perfection. We're talking about people who, at the preponderance of their life, sought the Lord and did the right thing. And what I'm saying is God looked at that entire city and said, "If I just had 10 people there—you're right, Abraham—I wouldn't destroy it." Think about that.

What kind of blessing exists on this church? I mean, I can scare you by saying, "You know, God is willing to look at us differently because of your individual choices," but let's flip that around. When you say "no" to temptation, when you invest in evangelism the way God asks us to, when you give faithfully and sacrificially, when you stand up for righteousness in the marketplace—whatever it might be—God now looks at our church differently when you make righteous choices. That doesn't sit well with some people's view of soteriology and justification—but that's how the Bible operates in terms of the sanctifying effect of Christians in any given organization. Even the home—do you remember 1 Corinthians 7? When here was the discussion about divorce and, "Is it ever okay to get a divorce?" Well, the text says even if your marriage is a mess, he said if your spouse will live with



you, you stay in that relationship. Why? Because your presence as a follower of Christ has a sanctifying effect on the whole thing. It changes the way God's even viewing that family.

That's an amazing thought about the power of our choices, to see God respond to the whole. I'm just saying not only is there a one-to-one correspondence in how I live and what people see and if they're going to emulate that—and while that's good for the church—my choices as a Christian have an effect on the whole. I just think if everyone took that seriously and said, "Wow—I need to consider the implications, the impact, of my choices," now we would be much more circumspect about our lives. And you know what—the blessing of God in terms of how he responds, when his blessing rests on a church the way we see it in the letters of Revelation 2 and 3—and I want God giving us a good report card. That in no way diminishes the forensic justification of what it means to be right with God and accepted by God as a child of God. I'm talking about the practicals of living out our Christian life and seeing God recognize that my obedience is never in a vacuum. My disobedience is never an isolated event. We need to feel that pressure. We're part of a team. We're part of a family. We're part of a church. You're part of a small group. My choices have impacts on other people.

Now, when I think about that, it sounds very costly—and it is very costly. It's going to change the way I relate to things even when I have the right to do it, and I don't do it—liberties we talked about. When I think about the paradigm—what God does and how he sees sacrifice for the good of others (which is what we're talking about)—I recognize it's an amazing thing. Every time God sees that, he promises in the Scripture with very—just—dramatic words in how he loves to respond to that. I mean, that's the pattern of Christ. "He was rich, yet for your sake," Paul said, "he became poor, so that through his poverty you could benefit—you could become rich." So, Paul later says, "You know what, I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls." He is patterning that example of, "I'm ready to be spiritually on track with God"—in that case, in ministry; in our case, in what we're talking about—just being the kind of Christian we ought to be because I know it has a positive impact on others. I'm going to sacrifice certain things because it is good for the whole.

Pray with me, please.

I thank you—to say it, even, it's so small—but thank you that you have taken our sin and removed it from us. And God, because of our forgiveness, we want to be motivated to walk forward in newness of life. We'd like to walk in step with you more faithfully, more consistently this week than we did last week. So God, enable us to do that. And let us realize that every victory that we have, everything that we're doing where we're seeing Christ's life manifested in our life—it's a good thing not only for us, and not only is it pleasing to you, but it has an effect on all those around us. Certainly as we have our lives intertwined and interlaced with people around us in the church, it affects our small group; it affects our ministry at the church; it affects the entire corporate identity of Compass Bible Church in heaven's eyes.



So God, let us be encouraged as well as motivated by that this week. Thanks so much for forgiveness. God, thank you for the cleansing work of the cross—that because of that, we will not ever have to do penance. There will be no purgatory. There'll be no paying back this debt because it's already been paid for. So for that, God, we're eternally grateful. Let that be a joyful motivation on our lives this week. In Jesus' name, amen.