

Lead Diligently: Taking Initiative to Minister to Others

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We are calling all who embrace the sacred charge to take initiative to provide some of the leadership in prayer meetings, Bible studies, outreaches, discipling younger believers, or in serving in practical ways. For those attending universities, a practical way to lead is to help lead weekly prayer meetings or a Bible study (focused on training forerunners) or in outreaches.

⁶Having gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith... ⁸he who leads, with diligence... (Rom. 12:6, 8)

- B. The definition of diligence: “The constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken with persistent exertion.” Diligence includes zeal to invest our energy and time in serving, taking risks, and developing our God-given skills.

- C. Many lead with skill, but without diligence they will never fulfill God’s full plan for their life.

⁴He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. (Prov. 10:4)

²⁴The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor...²⁷Diligence is man’s precious possession. (Prov. 12:24, 27)

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF A LEADER

- A. ***Sense of purpose:*** Leaders are those who are going somewhere and refuse to be denied. They have a clear picture of what they want to do now, in ten years, and in forty years. They do not know the specific application, but they know the general direction. I understood for sixteen years that I would lead a 24/7 house of prayer, but did not know how it would function or when it would start. A leader can clearly tell you what they want without being vague. Write out what you are determined to do. Multi-talented people can do many things, so be focused.

- B. ***Take initiative to act:*** Leaders take action. Many people wait in frustration for years to be asked to serve in a ministry. They are praying that a leader will “discover” them sitting idly in the congregation. They confuse this with the humility that waits to be asked to be ***promoted***. I only ask people to take a leadership position after they have taken initiative to serve diligently for years without being asked. This is what separates real leaders from lazy dreamers.

⁴The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich. (Prov. 13:4)

- C. Leaders take responsibility to start or strengthen a ministry. They do not wait to be asked and they blame no one for not giving them an opportunity or if their new ministry does not succeed.

- D. ***Take risks:*** Many wait until a ministry is successful before they commit to it. The Holy Spirit can correct mistakes we make as we are moving forward. No one can steer a parked car. Many hide their fear and laziness behind many spiritual excuses.

²⁴“He who had received the one talent...said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown...’²⁵I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground...’²⁶His lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant...’” (Mt. 25:24-26)

- E. **Faithful in smallness:** Many wait for a platform leadership position to open before they serve. I started out small by leading daily prayer meetings while waiting for IHOPKC to start. We need to have revelation of how Jesus makes a great exchange from our “few things” to “many things.”

²¹Well done...you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many. (Mt. 25:21)

- F. **Eternal perspective:** Our greatest promotion is in the age to come. There are two time frames for our main assignments in God (with dynamic continuity between them):

1. Our first assignment is a **70-year assignment** on earth in this age (**our internship**).
2. Our second assignment is a **1,000-year assignment** on earth after the Lord returns.

- G. **Do tasks that need to be done:** Potiphar bought Joseph as a slave to serve in his house. Because of God’s favor and Joseph’s good leadership, he was promoted to the top position in Potiphar’s house (Gen. 39:1-6). Later, after being thrown in prison, Joseph began organizing the prison and was eventually promoted and put in charge of all who were in the prison (Gen. 39:21-23). Leaders make themselves indispensable by serving with diligence and a happy spirit.

¹⁶A man’s gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men. (Prov. 18:16)

²⁹Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings... (Prov 22:29)

- H. **Persevere in difficulty:** A leader is a person who does not quit. Many quit in the face of the pressure of smallness, of not being noticed, of the difficulty of the work, of being mistreated, or passed by when others are promoted first. This is what separates leaders from non-leaders. Leaders are dedicated. They will spend decades accomplishing their goal without losing focus. Leadership is not a hundred-yard dash. It is a marathon.

- I. We must persevere through all four seasons of life: **spring** (time to plant new things), **summer** (time of growth), **autumn** (time to harvest), and **winter** (time for things to die).

- J. **As unto God:** Many are willing to serve with diligence when their leaders are watching. It is common to see people diligent in leading in a ministry endeavor while they are seeking to be noticed, but becoming passive and lazy once they get the position. Be enthusiastic and go the extra mile in service when no one sees you, instead of just showing up when leaders show up.

- K. **Humility:** Many are willing to serve as a way of drawing attention to themselves. The mark of a good leader is humility and godly character more than skill.

- L. **Teachable spirit:** Be easy to correct rather than defensive. Love correction without regard for how it comes. We must not get offended when corrected even by a person with a wrong spirit.

¹Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge... he who hates correction is stupid. (Prov. 12:1)

¹⁸*Poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards a rebuke will be honored. (Prov. 13:18)*

M. **Team player**: A leader honors and receives from others on the team who are less gifted.

N. **For the good of others**: We serve for the success of the people we minister to instead of seeing them as a stepping stone to our future success. Good leaders are focused on helping others succeed in God's will for their lives, regardless of whether it means joining another ministry. We do not own the people. Jesus does. We must strengthen their loyalty and connection to Jesus.

²⁷*He who earnestly seeks good finds favor. (Prov. 11:27)*

O. **Take less privilege**: Those with greater authority must take less privilege. God appointed apostles to be first in authority (1 Cor. 12:28), but last in privilege (1 Cor. 4:9).

²⁸*God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets... (1 Cor. 12:28)*

⁹*God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. ¹⁰We are fools for Christ's sake... ¹¹To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless... ¹²Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure... (1 Cor. 4:9-12)*

III. DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEADERSHIP IN MINISTRY

A. Each of us can discern God's voice and serve the destiny that He has planned specifically for us. We pray to receive God's plan for how we are to serve in winning our campus or city to Him. God will give you the strategy. Ask God where your harvest field is—your campus, workplace, neighborhood, or a distant land. God calls us to obey in little things that add up. Ask Him to progressively reveal it and then obey it in small steps. All we need to know is the assignment before us. We start by serving God where He puts us, by loving Him and people in need.

B. Ask two questions: What **needs** to be done in the organization and what do I **want** to do? As we show ourselves diligent in what needs to be done, doors will open for what we want to do.

C. Help start and lead **prayer meetings**: on your campus, in the marketplace or your neighborhood.

D. Help start and lead in **outreaches**: those on the ministry organization chart and those not on it.

E. **Discipling** younger believers: one practical way to do this is to meet with a few on a weekly basis to discuss the same books or study notes that you are all studying in between your meetings. Also, talk about how each one is doing in their life management decisions. See my teaching series on *The Power of a Focused Life* for more on life-management decisions.

F. Serving in **practical ways**: ask what needs to be done. Much of our ministry is God's proving ground for our faithfulness for the next season in this age and in the age to come.

G. We encourage those in the universities to help lead prayer meetings or a Bible study (focused on training forerunners) and/or to participate in various outreaches.

IV. LEADERSHIP: GAINING A PERSPECTIVE

- A. What makes a leader? It is one who leads in a way that people follow. If people do not follow us, we are not a leader. It makes no difference what our title is. Some God-ordained leaders have only a few who follow and others have many. God rewards us on the size of our heart in love and faithfulness, not on the size of our impact and ministry following.
- B. Be a leader worth following. Are you worth following? Do you have a clear mission that you will greatly sacrifice for? People follow character more than credentials.
- C. Ministry is not the place to get what we deserve or to receive honor from men.

V. REFUSING TO HAVE A CONTROL SPIRIT IN LEADERSHIP

- A. On October 5, 1990, the Lord appeared to me in a trance. He looked straight into my eyes and said, ***“No one with a control spirit can fully experience My kingdom.”*** The Spirit showed me that a control spirit consists of having a spirit of possessiveness and being entrenched in religious opinions against other ministries. Jesus said, ***“All personal rights must be relinquished.”*** The Spirit then gave me Ps. 24:1 and Rev. 4:10 saying, “The Father’s will is central in His Kingdom. The earth belongs to the Lord. All must cast their crowns down before Him.”
- B. We naturally seek to protect our honor, money, and influence and make decisions that give us an advantage over others. However, when we operate in a spirit of self-interest, it creates anxiety in us and division among others. Unity occurs when we approach relationships with a free spirit that asks for God’s will regardless of what it costs. We must take an extra step in our decision-making by asking the Spirit what He wants instead of seeking to gain an advantage from others.
- C. Our highest goal is not to get more money and honor, etc. We win when we obey the will of God, not because we get more people or the best deal. David had prophetic words from Samuel about being the king of Israel. Yet, he inquired of the Lord about his promotion after enduring approximately 7-8 years in the wilderness being chased by Saul.
¹David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?” The Lord said to him, “Go up.” David said, “Where shall I go up?” He said, “To Hebron.” (2 Sam. 2:1)
- D. We love God by honoring all the people that He calls and who are dear to Him. The Spirit requires that we dwell together in a culture of honor. God’s blessing flows when we honor. Part of our inheritance and what we lack is in the hands of others.
- E. ***Blessing without criticism:*** We bless the budding virtues of other ministries that have not yet matured. We bless them regardless of the deficiencies in ministry (lacking prayer, teaching, outreach, youth ministry, etc.). We bless without needing to agree with differences in ministry focus and style. The Spirit forbids us to verbalize deficiencies and differences.
- F. ***Inclusion without elitism:*** We set our heart to include others by receiving from them and by using our resources to help others succeed without reference to how it affects us.