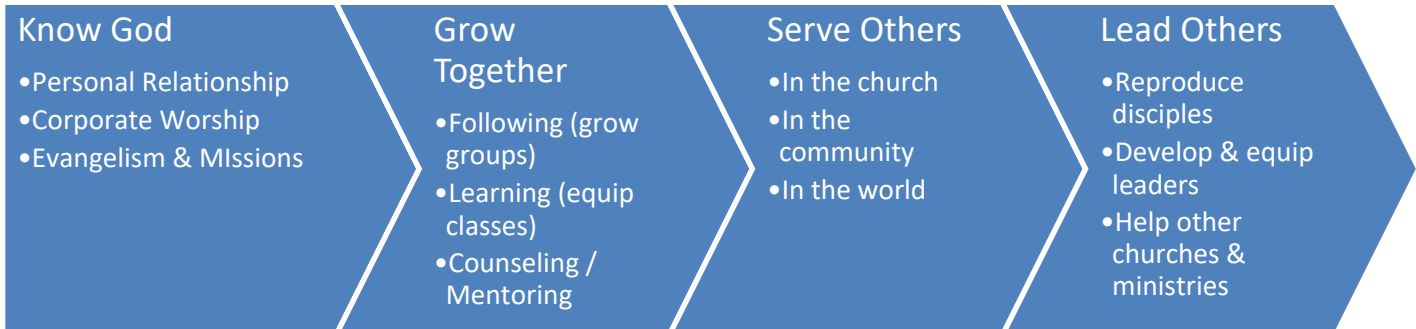


Leading Others

Good morning! Please open your Bibles to Ephesians 4:11-13

Review – our calling to make disciples

Make Disciples



As we think about leading others, I want to read from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In this passage, Paul is reminding the church there that Jesus Himself had given gifts to His church. Not only has the Spirit of God given spiritual gifts to everyone in the church, Jesus has also given particular offices or individuals who are called to build up the church by equipping the saints for the work of ministry.

Read **Ephesians 4:11-13**

Intro

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you just wanted someone to step up and take responsibility? Or maybe you've struggled yourself with doing something when you weren't directly asked or showing initiative.



There is this thing that occurs when people do not take the initiative or ownership. People have started to call this the 'not my job' problem. It's what happens when someone thinks to themselves – that's not my job. And the results may look like this... (show picture)

We experienced this here at Cornerstone over the last couple weeks. We have a clock in the back of the auditorium, and it's

been slowly losing time. But I only think about that clock on Sunday mornings – because “not my job.” Well, in some ways, it is or ought to be my job and my responsibility. And so we asked some folks to change the batteries. And they did, but it still doesn’t work, so pastor Mike ordered a new one.

We could have just done something like this, I suppose (show picture). It was going to be too hard to fix the wired in clock, so they just put one over the top.



If you’ve ever had to order signs or flyers or anything like that, you know that do not feel the responsibility to double check your work, they’ll make it exactly like you say it...

(show picture)



Or even if they may see notice the error, sometimes they pass on through because presumably, it’s not my job to correct it...

(show picture)



And then there’s this one...(show picture)



The president’s spokesman says he can’t speak for the president. That’s not my job, presumably.

What is wrong with these things? Well, several things, I’m sure. But one of them is

that they show a lack of responsibility and a lack of initiative. Someone should have taken on the burden of doing the task that needed to be done. You might say, what was needed was leadership.

That's because one of the marks of leadership is taking responsibility and showing initiative. A leader will bear the responsibility to do what needs to be done and help others get there as well.

Of course, there have been forests of trees that have been sacrificed to produce the books talking about leadership. Many people have tried and continue to try to understand what leadership is and how we can be more effective in our leadership.

One of the voices that has proven to be helpful through his books and seminars is that of John C. Maxwell. And this is how he defines a leader...

A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way. -John C. Maxwell

Leaders know where they should go, they follow that path themselves, and then they 'show the way' or they help others get there too.

And so the question becomes – what does that have to do with our mission as a church – to make disciples of all nations? What does it mean to lead others in our mission statement?

I mean someone who uses their influence to help others follow Jesus. That's the more broad sense. We are called to make disciples who obey all that Jesus commanded *including the command to make disciples*. So that means, in part, that we are to help others make disciples who help others make disciples who help others make disciples, and on and on. We are to lead others in that sense – that we help them follow Jesus.

But we are also called to lead others in a slightly more specific sense. That is, we are to use our power and influence and authority to help others follow Jesus as a church. And that that's why we have leaders in our church. The passage from Ephesians that we read earlier tells us that Jesus gave gifts to the church in the form of individuals who are to help the church to the work of the ministry. Let me read it again...

Ephesians 4:11-13

And he [Jesus] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12** to equip [who?] the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body

of Christ, **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

So we want to help others make disciples generally, and we also want to particularly develop leaders who take on this responsibility to equip the saints for the work of ministry. So this is just a more specific sense of leadership – one that has greater responsibility, but also greater accountability and greater visibility. The obvious example here is the ones that Paul mentions, including shepherd/teachers, but I think there are others who could be included in this sense of leadership like our deacons and small group leaders. There are leaders over men's and women's ministry, our children's ministry, our equip classes, and our missions team. So we want to help lead others generally, but also more specifically, we want to be developing leaders who can help us as a church be more effective at our mission of making disciples.

So who is a leader?

Everyone is a leader in the sense that we influence others and can either help them follow Jesus or hinder them from following Jesus. We all have the power to influence others for good or for ill. So I'm talking to all of us this morning in this sense.

But there are some who hold positions of authority that have a special responsibility and calling to lead others to make disciples. So while some of these things apply more directly to those who have positions of leadership and authority, we all ought to seek to grow in these areas.

Our culture views authority with suspicion. We tend to view those who have positions of power as though they are always going to be abusive or harmful to those who they lead. And certainly, having authority does bring temptation to misuse that authority.

Remember, some of Jesus' harshest words were directed against the religious leaders – the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, those who had authority.

But it doesn't have to be that way. There is such a thing as good authority and good leadership. So we must follow the commands of Jesus if we are to lead others well.

And what has God taught us about leading others? Well, the Bible has a lot to say about leadership. But I want to pull out just three principles for us to consider that apply to

each of us in our own spheres of influence, and especially to those who have particular responsibilities as leaders.

Leaders have higher responsibility, so be diligent

Leaders by definition have been given or have taken on greater responsibility. Some of the best leaders are not those who sought out positions of authority, but who have risen to the call when it was needed.

As I mentioned a moment ago, we all have the power to influence others, so we must take care that we use that power or authority well. As Stan Lee said, with great power comes great responsibility. Or we can hear it from Jesus who said,

Luke 12:48

Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

Jesus says in Matthew 25, if we are faithful in little, more will be given. Greater responsibility comes with greater authority or influence.

And so what is required of those who have responsibility?

We are to take that responsibility. We may say this to our kids or a coach may say to someone on their team – you need to take responsibility! What do we mean? We mean that they are to own their actions, bear the consequences, and fulfill whatever obligations they have.

Another way to say that is that we are to be diligent in our responsibilities. As a father, I bear the responsibility, for example, to raise my kids in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That is not your responsibility, at least not directly. It is something that I am obligated to do, that I have been charged with, and that I will be held accountable for.

And so I need to be diligent about fulfilling what I have been charged with. I need to be intentional and strategic about it. I need to have a plan and work the plan. As a father, I have that responsibility, so I need to be diligent.

What responsibilities do you have? What are the things that God has called you to do? If you're married, you are called to love your spouse. If you have kids, you are to love

them and raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Parents bear the ultimate responsibility to help their children know God, grow together, and serve others.

If you're a boss or manager, you have responsibilities. If you are an employee or you're self-employed, you have responsibilities.

As citizens of this country, we have responsibilities. Pastor Alex was called in for jury duty this week – that's part of our responsibility as fellow citizens. We owe that to one another in this country.

In this church, we have responsibilities. We make promises to one another when we join as members of this particular local body. There are five things that are a part of our church covenant. We commit to helping each other know God. We commit to helping each other grow in our walk with Christ. We commit to serving one another. We commit to supporting the ministry of this church financially. We commit to following our leaders.

So not only are we to follow Jesus as disciples, we are to help others follow Jesus. We are to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples. That's our responsibility.

So how are you doing? Is there somewhere that you need to take responsibility? Some place where perhaps you've been content to say, "not my job"?

- family life
- at your work place
- in the community
- in our church

Leaders have higher accountability, so watch your life

Not only do leaders bear higher responsibility, leaders also face higher accountability. That is, leaders will be answer for the responsibilities given to them.

This is true for all leaders, but especially those who teach or lead publicly.

James 3:1 says, for example,

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

The bar is higher for those who teach others. There is greater scrutiny for those who seek to instruct other people in the way they should go.

Or listen to **Hebrews 13:17**

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

You may read that and recognize that there is a command there that we don't often talk about. We should obey our leaders. That's not a popular thing to say nowadays, is it? There is such a thing as good authority, and we should follow our leaders and submit to them. We shouldn't always be causing problems or pushing back needlessly.

I was recently told, and I've seen it myself, that this church has a lot of trust in Mike's leadership here. This person said that Cornerstone has been willing to follow new initiatives and plans laid out by Mike, even if it they maybe didn't think they would work or they felt a little silly or whatever. But this person suggested, and I think they're right, that Cornerstone follows Mike's leadership because they knew he wasn't doing it for himself. It wasn't a new idea so that Mike would be seen as great. He's built that trust. And that's a service to us as pastors and to you as a church.

So yes, we should obey our leaders. But the scary part of this verse for leaders is that second phrase, "for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account."

Someday, God is going to ask me about the souls under my care as a pastor. There is a higher accounting for pastors and leaders in the church. There is greater scrutiny on the lives of teachers and leaders.

And sadly, that means that when leaders fail, the fallout can be widespread and devastating. Hardly a week goes by that we don't hear about one leader in the world or

someone in the church who made a choice or a series of choices that disqualified them from ministry.

When Mike and I talk about our ministry here and the transition process that we've been in for a while here, one of the things that we do is thank God for His grace that it's been so smooth. But Mike is also pretty consistent about reminding us that one any given day, either one of us could do something stupid and blow the whole thing up.

When a leader fails in their responsibility – whether it's through lust or greed or anger or manipulation or abuse or neglect – when a leader falls, great is that fall. The consequences are often widespread and devastating to those closest to that person and to their families, and to their church and ministry.

The president of Gateway Seminary in California, one of the Southern Baptist Seminaries, is a man named Dr. Jeff Iorge. We heard him say this at the Indiana State Convention Annual Summit last year – with one moral failure, a pastor can cut the throat of every sermon he has preached. That scares me.

There was a podcast series about the rise and fall of Mars Hill Church, which followed the growth and then the devastation that happened when Mark Driscoll led that church and then through abusing his power and bullying people, brought the downfall of that ministry and hurt countless people and brought reproach on the name of Christ.

One of the lessons that I took from that series was this – a leader's authority can outpace their character. A leader's authority can outpace their character. It is possible to put someone in a position of authority when they do not have the character to back it up. And that is a recipe for disaster. Maybe it won't happen right away, but authority and influence can have a corrupting effect on an individual or a ministry, especially if it's built around one man.

Leaders will face greater accountability because the stakes are higher. There is more potential to bring shame upon Jesus and His bride, the church.

So... what should we do?

Listen to what Paul says to the elders, the pastors, of the church in Ephesus...

Acts 20:28

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

He says, pay careful attention to yourselves and to the flock! Watch your life! Watch those under your care!

Paul says the same thing to Timothy, **1 Timothy 4:16**

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Watch yourself! Pay attention to what you're teaching.

So if you're a leader, this is the command for you – examine yourself regularly. Keep a close watch on your life, on the lives of those you are responsible for, and on what you're teaching them.

The opposite of this would be apathy. A sort of, “whatever will be will be” kind of attitude. A leader who is not watchful will find that he or she stumbles into temptation and falls. This person will be taken by surprise by things that ought not to be surprising.

There are things that happen to us that are unexpected. But there are other things that we should have seen coming if we were watching our lives. I may come down with some disease or receive a diagnosis that is totally beyond my control. That's one thing. But I shouldn't eat however I want, neglect to get the sleep I need, fail to exercise...and then be surprised when my body feels tired all the time and I can't function well.

If we are going to bear the responsibility of leading others, then we need to watch our lives. Be thoughtful and intentional.

You need to be aware of the battles that may be coming for you or for your family. How would the enemy attack you? Where are you vulnerable? What temptations would Satan want to use to disrupt your walk with Christ? To bring down your marriage? To threaten your family? What battles might we need to prepare for as a church family?

If we want to help others follow Jesus, and we take our responsibilities seriously, we need to recognize that we will face greater accountability, so we need to watch our lives.

Leaders have higher visibility, so set an example

Leaders have higher responsibility, higher accountability, and third leaders have higher visibility. There is a lot of overlap between these three points, I admit, but I liked that they sort of rhyme and that there are slightly different nuances to these words.

Leaders have higher visibility. If you're a leader, and again, I mean in both in the broader sense of influencing others and the more specific sense of having a leadership role, if you're a leader, then more people see how you live. You have higher visibility.

So what should you do with that higher visibility? Again, listen to the words of Paul to Timothy... **1 Timothy 4:12**

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

People see you, Timothy, so don't let them look down on your inexperience and youthfulness. Instead, you need to set an example for them. Let your words and your actions, your love for others, your faith, your purity – let them be a model for how you would want others to follow Jesus.

Don Carson counts six times that the apostle Paul tells his readers that they should imitate him as He imitates Christ. He doesn't just want to tell others what to do, he says, you should follow my example.

Carson points out that it's like the line from the musical *My Fair Lady*: "Words, words, words: I'm sick of words. Sing me no song, read me no rhyme, don't waste my time, **show me.**"

Leaders are called to be those who model what it means to follow Christ.

Carson goes on to say:

"You who are older should be looking out for younger people and saying in effect, 'Watch me.'

Come—I'll show you how to have family devotions.

Come—I'll show you how to do Bible study.
Come on—let me take you through some of the fundamentals of the faith.
Come—I'll show you how to pray.
Let me show you how to be a Christian husband and father, or wife and mother.
And at a certain point in life, that older mentor should be saying other things,
such as: Let me show you how to die. Watch me."

Leaders take on the responsibility of being more visible. They take on the added accountability. Leaders in our church are called to be those who show what it means to know God, grow together, and serve others.

Leaders have higher responsibility, so be diligent.
Leaders have higher accountability, so watch your life.
Leaders have higher visibility, so be an example.

How do we lead others at Cornerstone?

There's more we could say about leadership from the Bible, of course, but I want to use our remaining few minutes to talk a bit about how we seek to lead others at Cornerstone, specifically as a ministry. So I'm not talking about the general sense of making disciples who make disciples – though of course, we should be doing that.

How do we develop leaders here as a church?

One way we develop leaders is through delegating ministry to various people. This could be our grow group leaders, equip class teachers, mentors/counselors, missions committee leaders, and those who serve on our boards – our trustees and deacons.

There are multiple opportunities for people to take on the responsibility of ministry leadership and I am so thankful to serve alongside the leaders who have been placed here by the Spirit of Christ. And we recognize that there are opportunities for us to get better at helping to train and equip our leaders and volunteers to be better leaders and more effective at helping others follow Christ.

There's room for us to grow in this area. We need to get better at helping the women of our church lead others. I believe the NT teaches that the office of pastor is reserved for qualified men. But there are many other ways that we could do better at helping

women get involved and be strengthened and equipped to help us at our mission of making disciples.

We're thankful to God for the leaders He has given us, but we want to see more of you equipped and empowered to serve in leadership. That means helping some of you younger men and women step up and lead in ways that might feel uncomfortable. That means that some of you older folks need to be encouraged to mentor and help those who are younger – to model and show them what it means to follow Christ. Maybe just inviting a younger couple or a young man (if you're a man) or young woman (if you're a woman) out to a meal and talk about what you've learned in your time as a Christian. Let's help others know God, grow together, and serve others.

We also want to be effective at leading others as pastors. What should our pastors be doing? What do I believe a pastor's role is in the local church?

I think you can group the various responsibilities down to three key areas:

Feed the flock – pastors should give themselves to the study and teaching of the Word of God, both publicly and in smaller groups or individually. That's something that the pastor cannot outsource to someone else – I can fail in a lot of ways, but I ought not to fail in this one, preaching the Word.

Care for souls – pastors are called to shepherd and pray for and visit and help and, at times, confront those who need it. As we read from Hebrews, we're going to be held accountable for the souls under our care.

Lead the flock – pastors are overseers, they are responsible for way that a church does what it does. They provide direction and oversight, guarding the doctrine and the practice of a church to ensure faithfulness to the Word of God. Pastors lead in directing the church toward the mission of making disciples.

That's what I believe I ought to be doing as a pastor.

Now, let me also talk for a bit about our transition plan here as pastors. Lord willing, and if you as a church would call me to be the next lead pastor at our business meeting in March, then I would transition into the role that Pastor Mike currently has. He would remain as a full-time pastor, but in an associate role. Pastors Alex and Josh would continue on, and we would all work together as fellow pastors to help lead the church.

So you can think of it this way...(picture)

What are some of the differences in responsibilities going to be? Well, should the church vote to affirm this transition, then I've asked Mike to help us grow in what we're talking about this morning – leading others. He has the experience and wisdom to serve our church and other churches to develop new leaders, strengthen existing ones, and help us lead others more effectively. That could mean using the second parsonage for residential interns who go to seminary at Faith across town. It could mean working with our grow group leaders or board members to be more effective. It could mean continuing to help other pastors and churches – using our health and flexibility as a ministry not just to make ourselves more comfortable but to help out other churches.

1. Healthy leadership involves plurality

Did you know that every time the NT speaks about pastors in a place, it's always in the plural. It's never the pastor at Corinth or the pastor at Ephesus – it's always the pastors (elders) in this place or that place. I don't think that's an accident. I think the healthiest pattern for pastoral leadership involves a plurality, where there are more than one pastor serving a church.

A few years ago, we preached through the pastoral epistles and we had several discussions on the leadership level here about the possibility of adding a few 'lay pastors.' Lay means "unpaid" or guys that would fulfill the office of pastor but not vocationally – they would still work other jobs, in ministry or not. We were pretty far down that path, and had spoken about it publicly in early March of 2020, but then March of 2020 happened, and we tabled that plan. Well, we're ready to pick it up again. The first steps involve inviting some men in our church to study what it means to be a pastor and whether God would be calling them to serve as a pastor here at Cornerstone. And then we'd come to you with a recommendation to add these guys as 'lay pastors.'

It wouldn't involve expanding or changing the authority of our pastors, but simply adding more plurality, more perspective, more people to help teach and care for and lead the church. (Picture)

The functions of our pastoral team, currently made up of four pastors, would then be shared among more qualified men. I think that would help us shepherd and care for you

better and give us better protection against temptation. There would be better accountability. There's a lot of reasons that I believe this is a wise and healthy thing.

2. We need to invest in training up future leaders

For our church to be healthy in the long-run, we need to be training up healthy pastors who love God's Word, who love God's people, and who are willing to take responsibility to lead others. And not just for our church, but for the big "C" church in America and around the world, we need to be investing in training up healthy pastors and missionaries and ministry leaders – men and women who are called by God and gifted to serve in ministry but need training and opportunities and for people to give them the support they need.

Cornerstone has been involved in that in the past, and we want to continue that in the years to come – even if that means we invest in leaders, and they go off and serve in some other place. We're not in competition. We want to see God's kingdom advance.

3. We must remember Jesus is the only perfect leader

The church doesn't belong to me. It doesn't belong to Pastor Mike. It belongs to Christ. He bought us with His blood. We belong to Him. He is the only leader who will never fail you, never let you down, never leave you or forsake you. Don't put your trust in earthly leaders – remember that Christ alone is the Chief Shepherd. As we seek to lead others, we must always remember, it's not about us, it's all about Him.

Let me leave us with a few questions to consider:

1. Where do you need to take responsibility?
2. Would you pray for the leaders of our church – for our pastors and deacons and trustees and mission team and grow group leaders?
3. Is God calling you to step up and lead others?

Maybe inviting someone to follow your example, maybe exploring your spiritual gifts in teaching or leading, maybe the Spirit is prompting you to consider the work of missions or vocational ministry of some sort.

Let's pray...

Grow Group Questions

1. Where have you seen examples of people behaving as though things are “not my job”?
2. What are some times when you feel tempted to neglect taking responsibility?
3. Have you ever been under poor leadership? What made it poor? Have you been under good leadership? What made it good?
4. Pastor Nathan mentioned three principles of leadership from the Bible. Is there one in which you would want to grow?
 - Leaders have increased *responsibility*, so be *diligent*
 - Leaders have increased *accountability*, so *watch your life*
 - Leaders have increased *visibility*, so *set an example*
5. How are you doing at watching your life? Are you praying for spiritual understanding and reading God’s Word so that you would know where God may want you to change?
6. Are there people who you could invite to imitate you? Who could you mentor or help in their spiritual life?
7. How could the pastors or other leaders at Cornerstone be more effective at leading our church? Are there weaknesses or things that concern you about the leaders in our church?
8. How could Cornerstone become better at helping people lead others?