

Shepherds and Wolves Galatians 4:11-20

Matthew 20:25-28

²⁵ But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸ even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The paradigm of leadership that Jesus gave to his followers is one that turns every non-Christian view of leadership on its head. Whereas the world (Gentiles) typically view leadership as an exercise of power (lording authority), Jesus teaches that those who would lead in his kingdom must be servants first.

Leaders who lead the way that Jesus taught are blessings to the church and have a critical role in the spread of the Gospel. Leaders who lead by any way other than the way of Jesus detract from the Gospel.

Observers can point to many problematic patterns that exist in the North American church today. Almost every one of these patterns in some way touches a crisis of leadership within the church. There is certainly a culture within the church that places leaders on a pedestal and sometimes gives them a sense of invincibility and celebrity that should belong to Christ alone. Every time this happens a failure in leadership is sure to be in the making. These failures are obvious in hindsight and often obvious in foresight as well.

But one thing that is missing from many leadership conversations about the church is the notion that leadership is a relationship. There are leaders and there are followers. And both are accountable before God for how they contribute to the health of the church and make disciples of Jesus.

No person can live without accountability unless there are people who have been given a leadership role to hold someone accountable who simply ignore their job. No pastor can live on a superhuman celebrity pedestal unless there are people place him there.

Galatians 4:11-20 gives us a sense of the relational aspect of Paul’s apostolic leadership amongst the churches in Galatia. It’s not that Paul has preached truth to these churches and then left them to figure things out on their own. He has invested his life through relationships into helping people become grace-filled disciples of Jesus. And the believers of Galatia likewise showed Paul the love and acceptance that was due to someone who was bringing them a valuable treasure.

When Judaizers came behind Paul to preach a false Gospel, they had undercut Paul's relationships with the people who had been following his way of life. The followers are not without blame, because they have rejected Paul as a person so that they can receive a teaching that they like better than salvation by grace through faith. Listen to the hurt and exasperation that Paul feels about the rejection he is receiving at the hands of the Galatians.

Galatians 4:11-20

¹¹ I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

¹² Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong. ¹³ You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first, ¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? ¹⁷ They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them. ¹⁸ It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, ¹⁹ my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! ²⁰ I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Discussion Questions-

- How had Paul demonstrated genuine love for the believers in Galatia whom he was leading?
- How had the Galatians demonstrated genuine love for Paul?
- How does telling the truth sometimes pose an obstacle for relationships? (v. 16)
- Have you ever lost a relationship because you decided to tell the truth?
- Why do you think the message of the Judaizers had a stronger pull than the love the Galatians had for Paul?
- How does Paul love motivate him to write Galatians?
- Why does Paul persist in telling the truth to the Galatians instead of telling them what they want to hear?
- How do leaders in the church today prioritize the truth? How do leaders in the church today fail in telling the truth?
- Why do you think there are so many failures in leadership in the church today?
- How can a church determine a shepherd from a wolf when evaluating leaders?