

UPPING THE ANTE
Sermon Series on "Spiritual Leadership"
April 3, 2011 –Communion – Matthew 10: 24-25 and 38-39
The Church of the Covenant

We end where we began on the issue of Spiritual Leadership –at the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Henry Blackaby defines spiritual leadership as *"Being a person others want to follow"*. And whether one reads books entitled "Jesus as CEO" or read books by Stephen Covey entitled "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" they all eventually come back to the person of Jesus Christ as the archetypical leader and His cross as the ultimate symbol of leadership. Jesus is a person others have always wanted to follow. To make a commitment to follow Him is *"Upping the Ante"*; to move from one level of leadership to another; to follow Jesus in our life makes us a spiritual leader. **So what would it be like to be a person other people follow??????**

First, one would have to possess something that the world doesn't possess. One would have to possess unshakable integrity, be a person of unquestionable character. One would have to possess a joy that the world doesn't give and the world cannot take away. One would need to be a hopeful person, an extraordinarily positive person. Critical people are never leaders; naysayers exercise their power negatively; people don't follow these kinds of people. They stand at the sidelines; they never lead. One needs to have integrity, character, be joy-filled and positive, exemplifying a future hope with one's life. How can we do this? **Be filled with the living presence of the Lord Jesus Christ and choose to follow Him with our lives.** Up the ante; step it up a notch or two; go from one level of commitment to another. Have Jesus in your heart and follow Jesus with your life.

Second, one would have to place others and their agendas over our own agenda. We would have to want to serve and not be served with our life. Church isn't the place where we get your own way; it's the place we follow in Jesus' way, because it is He who is *"The way and the truth and the life."* Being a spiritual leader is precisely getting off our own agendas in order to get onto God's agenda. Its doing what God wants; its not doing what we want. The church is indeed a democracy but it is a democracy of one; we can take all the votes we want but God's one vote trumps everything. The world is where we pay money and we get some goods and services in return and if we don't like those goods and services we go elsewhere. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ isn't the world; it isn't following what we want to do; its following the Lord Jesus Christ. **People follow people who themselves hearken to a higher authority in their own lives.** Up the ante; step it up a notch or two; go from one level of commitment to another. Have Jesus in your heart...follow Jesus' agenda for your life...follow the Lord Jesus Christ...

When Jesus said, *"Come, follow me"* to the disciples of old please note they didn't say, "Let me take a poll and I'll get back to you." Rather, they immediately dropped their nets and followed Jesus.

Third, in order to be a person other people follow one would have to be absolutely, completely and totally committed to following this higher agenda for one's life. One would have to do whatever it takes, so long as it is honorable and moral and in accord with scripture. One would have to be about self-sacrifice. Its not about me; its about the mission; its about the people; its about God. Its about a lot of things, but its not about me. A lot of people make the church about them. This is *my* church; I want it to do what I what it to do. No, this is the Lord Jesus Christ's church or it is not a church at all. Its about working harder than anyone else. Its about setting an example. Self-sacrifice. Its about arriving early and staying late. **People follow people who are totally committed to their higher mission and calling.**

Up the ante; step it up a notch or two. Have Jesus in your heart...follow Jesus agenda for your life...be totally committed to that agenda...follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what happens when we decide to follow Jesus? What happens when we decide to be the kind of person other people follow? What happens when we make those commitments to move it up a notch or two and follow in the steps of our Master? Our scripture from Matthew says this: *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master."* (Matthew 10: 24) If by following God Jesus wound up at Calvary why would we expect that by following Jesus we won't wind up there as well? Follow in the steps of the Master, hear Jesus' voice saying *"Come, follow me"* and actually come and follow Him, and His steps lead Him to Jerusalem, and to Holy Week, and to Good Friday, and to the cross...and ultimately to the power of the resurrection.

We follow Jesus because He was a person that possessed something the world can never give. We follow Jesus because for JOY He went to the cross for us. We follow Jesus because He always offers us a hope, not only in this life, but one that is eternal in the heavens. We follow Jesus because He above all others was on to God's agenda and not His own *"Not My will but Thy will be done"* We follow Jesus because we are absolutely convinced that there is nothing good He will not do for us because proof positive He has gone to the cross and has died for us. JESUS is the spiritual leader we follow. So to follow in His steps means what? Where does it lead? **How do you lead like Jesus leads?** Come to this table. Follow Him. Pick up your cross at this table and follow Jesus.

For *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master."* And our **TEACHER** and our **MASTER** is Jesus. Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*