

“Be Led to Lead”
Part 2
Rev. Meagan Boozer

Last week we started a new series of messages entitled *Be Led to Lead*. The foundational truths for the series are these:

1. Jesus is the ultimate leader.
2. As his disciples, Jesus should be the one we are following.
3. We are all leaders.
4. By the example of our lives, we are either leading others towards or away from the leadership of Jesus in their own lives.

I left you with two challenging questions last week. Who are you following, and who is following you? Who are you letting into your mind and heart to influence (because influence = leading) your thinking, your behavior, your attitude, your time management, your parenting style, your business practices, your attention to your schoolwork, your service to the church, your care for your spouse, or your thoughts about the future? And who is being influenced by you? As disciples of Jesus, we want the witness of our lives to influence the people around us to want to know him, love him, and follow him by their own decision to seek him with all of their hearts because it doesn't just matter today, it matters for all eternity.

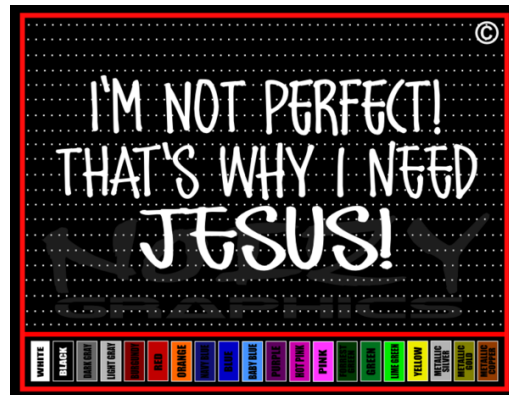
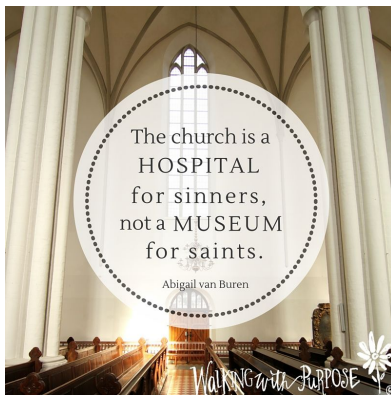
Let's pray: Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your son, Jesus, to be our leader. Thank you for the gracious, forgiving, and clear way that he led. Help us to hear what we need to hear today that will help us do the same for Your name's sake. This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

I want to be very clear about an important way of thinking as we jump a little deeper into the subject of Being Led to Lead. I don't see anything in the Bible that encourages us to make leadership a life-goal. But all over the Bible I see encouragement for us to make following God's Word and ways and following Jesus a life-goal. Our goal should not be: To become a leader. If that becomes our goal then we have become self-centered, which is the opposite of the objective. Our goal should be to follow Jesus, because then the reality of the influence we have on others will not be for them to follow us or rely on us, but to follow and rely on him. We are all leaders because that's just the way humans interact. But a disciple of Jesus Christ doesn't lead by claiming leadership but leads by claiming Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and living in a way that honors him.

Loving and leading like Jesus is a transformational journey – it is a slow and steady journey of growth and change. No one gets it overnight. Colossians 1:10 says this: *“Live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God.”* Here's our reality: No one is ever worthy of the Lord on their own merit, none of us can please him in every way, no matter how faithful we are we are not going to bear fruit in every good work, and sometimes it feels like we aren't getting to know God more, we are just putting in the time. But as we are ever more willing to do whatever Jesus calls us to do with a heart surrendered to his will, and with the ever-growing commitment to make sure our influence on the people around us is Jesus-led and inspired, slowly and steadily, we are changed. We are transformed from being immature believers to becoming mature followers, mature disciples of Jesus Christ. We are changed, we are freed from the dead end thinking that puts ME in the center of the universe (with a little Jesus on the side) and brought into a JESUS centered kingdom that forever reminds us that by God's grace, and only by God's grace has Jesus brought us into his kingdom.

Johanna Grove wanted desperately to submit to the transformational process. She wanted to influence others for Jesus. She really, really did. What got in her way many times were her past experiences both personally and professionally that created a toughness in her, a cynicism, and a bulldozing method to getting things done that some people just couldn't see through. She knew this about herself. She knew she came off sometimes like a desert cactus. And she was

working on it. She loved Jesus. She loved knowing how much he loved her. She loved children. She loved telling them about Jesus. She loved to serve. She loved to laugh. She loved, loved, loved being part of this church family. I feel so honored that God chose us to be the ones who surrounded her in these last years. She knew the reality of these sayings, not as excuses for ungodly behavior, but as the evidence that God's Word is true:



She would frequently say to me as both a statement and as a question, "I'm getting better, aren't I Meagan?" And she wasn't talking about her physical health, for it was getting worse with each passing month. She was talking about her spiritual health. She wanted to be more like Jesus. She wanted to hold her tongue when it was best to do so. She wanted to be a good example, a good influence on the people around her, not because she wanted to be a leader, but because she knew that true peace comes not in stature, but in submission to Christ. She knew this in her head, but was on that transformational journey to get it thoroughly into her heart.

A major question she was able to answer very, very clearly in these last several years was this one: Whose am I? Whose am I? To whom do I belong? Ultimately, do you belong to your parents, your spouse, your school, your place of employment? Do you belong just to yourself, or your fiancé, or significant other? Do you belong to your group of friends, your soccer team, your graduating class, or your hunting club? This is an important question, friends, as we think together about our influence on others as leaders who follow Jesus. From whom do we get our confidence and our focus to be who we are? If we are getting it from people, from a group of people, or from a particular person, we will find our confidence going up and down like a yoyo and our focus foggy at best. But if we choose to follow Jesus, if we choose to open our hearts to him, seek forgiveness from him, and welcome him into our lives to be the Lord of our lives and the Savior of our souls, our confidence finds solid ground and our focus becomes clear. Think about Jesus' example for us in this:

After Jesus was baptized but before he began his public ministry of leading people to know, love, & trust God, he was led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. There, Satan tempted Jesus to turn from God's will and instead give in to self-gratification. Each time, Jesus stood strong. He was confident. His focus was clear. John 13:3 declares, "*Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.*" He came from love and knew he would return to love, and so he was secure in whose he was.

When we know whose we are as children of God, when we really know this not just as a passing, "Oh yeah, I go to church" thing, but an "I am in Christ and Christ is in me," declaration, this confident awareness can help us stand strong in every situation, through every temptation, because there's no fear of being rejected. If we belong to God as his adopted child, we have no fear of being left out of some group. We don't answer to the group. We don't answer to those people who only like us if we have something they can use to make them greater. No! We answer to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit because our core identity is rooted in the forgiving, saving, and redeeming work Jesus did on our behalf as he hung and died on that cross for us. Listen to these biblical truths about who we are in Christ:

I am Accepted in Christ

- John 1:12* I am God's child
John 15:15 I am Christ's friend
Romans 5:1 I have been justified
1 Cor 6:17 I am united with the Lord and one with Him in spirit
1 Cor 6:20 I have been bought with a price, I belong to God
1 Cor 12:27 I am a member of Christ's body
Ephesians 1:1 I am a saint
Ephesians 1:5 I have been adopted as God's child
Ephesians 2:18 I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit
Colossians 1:14 I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins
Colossians 2:10 I am complete in Christ

I am Secure in Christ

- Romans 8:1-2* I am free forever from condemnation
Romans 8:28 I am assured that all things work together for good
Rom 8:33-34 I am free from any condemning charges against me
Romans 8:35 I cannot be separated from the love of God
2 Cor 1:21 I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God
Colossians 3:3 I am hidden with Christ in God
Philippians 1:6 I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected
Phil 3:20 I am a citizen of heaven
2 Timothy 1:7 I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind
Hebrews 4:16 I can find grace and mercy in time of need
1 John 5:18 I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me

I Am Significant in Christ

- Matt 5:13-14* I am the salt and light of the earth
John 15:1,5 I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life
John 15:16 I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit
Acts 1:8 I am a personal witness of Christ
1 Cor 3:16 I am God's temple
2 Cor 5:17-20 I am a minister of reconciliation for God
2 Cor 6:1 I am God's co-worker (1 Cor. 3:9)
Ephesians 2:6 I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm
Ephesians 2:10 I am God's workmanship
Ephesians 3:12 I may approach God with freedom and confidence

When we are trusting God, confidently holding on to all these truths, then our influence, our leadership in the lives of others will inspire trust too. Trying to be the leader, trying to be the big man or the tough girl, showing everyone how you can make others feel lower than a slug by how you treat them in word or in deed, that is not going to work out for you. That is not going to help you gain confidence and focus for your life. Whose are you? To whom do you belong?

If we truly belong to God through our faith in Jesus Christ, we know whose we are. It might sting when people we thought were our friends reject us, but over time, over time, over time, the people God brings around us will be those we can count on to encourage us and help us be all that God is calling us to be. Even when we mess up, they hang in there with us. Even when we say something we shouldn't have said, they forgive us. Even when we can't do what we used to do, they are grateful for what we can do. Because we know whose we are. We belong to the family of God!

The song, "Who Am I?" that we listened to as we prepared for the message this morning includes these words that I believe Johanna would nod her head to over and over again. I love the references to the ocean she loved so much. I love the confidence in Christ, which she had. I love the honesty of recognizing the ever-wandering heart within. Folks, God put this song firmly in my mind on Monday and Tuesday - before we knew that Johanna would be here on earth with us on Wednesday and gone to Heaven on Thursday. God knew. He always knows. As you listen once again to some of these words, make them your own. Plant your feet confidently on the solid ground of faith. Know whose you are because none of us know which day will be our last. Be ready church. Know whose you are and follow him all the way home - and *by God's grace* we pray there will be others who take our lead and follow him too.

Who am I, that the Lord of all the earth would care to know my name,
would care to feel my hurt?
Who am I, that the Bright and Morning Star would choose to light the way
For my ever wandering heart?
Not because of who I am, But because of what You've done.
Not because of what I've done, But because of who You are.

I am a flower quickly fading: Here today and gone tomorrow.
A wave tossed in the ocean, A vapor in the wind.
Still You hear me when I'm calling. Lord, You catch me when I'm falling.
And You've told me who I am. I am Yours, I am Yours.

Who am I, that the eyes that see my sin
Would look on me with love and watch me rise again?
Who am I, that the voice that calmed the sea would call out through the rain
And calm the storm in me?

I am a flower quickly fading: Here today and gone tomorrow.
A wave tossed in the ocean, A vapor in the wind.
Still You hear me when I'm calling.
Lord, You catch me when I'm falling.
And told me who I am.
I am Yours, I am Yours, I am Yours.

Whom shall I fear? Whom shall I fear?
'Cause I am Yours, I am Yours.

Amen.