**Leadership by Discipleship** by Kris Swiatocho, Director of The Singles Network Ministries

It's Saturday morning, and I am about to teach at a singles ministry leadership breakfast. I love teaching on the topic of leadership because if we don't have strong leaders, we won't have vital ministries. Often, this is the one area that most ministries struggle with—gathering and growing their leaders.

Well, it's a beautiful 70-degree morning, and I knew the leaders who were coming would probably prefer to stay home and enjoy this day outside, enjoying the sunshine versus coming to learn more about how to be a leader. Why would folks who are not paid to lead singles want to know more about leadership? Why would God use me in such a way to show them? Because even after many years of teaching leadership, writing articles, podcasting, retreats, conferences, and workshops, not to mention all the other zillion resources that are out there on leadership by others, leaders are still asking the same questions. Leaders are still needing the same help and guidance. And leaders are still experiencing the attacks of the enemy on their ministries. The devil has sidetracked their goals to be more about numbers than relationships. It's more about going to dinner than studying the Bible. It's more about romance than about getting healthy. He continues to thwart their energy toward things that don't build, leaving them in the same place year to year. He has had them question their calling as leaders and whether they are making any difference. He wants them to get frustrated and quit. They are coming to this training because they need help. So, what do I teach them? Let's start with the perfect example of leadership by discipleship…Jesus.

Jesus gives us an example of the importance of leading by discipling others. What is so inspiring to me is that he was single doing it. His singleness allowed him more time to pour into others. More time to pray and more time to build relationships. Jesus had such a short time on this earth. He had to work quickly to show us how to do it so that we

could continue the work he started.

*John 1:35-42*

*The next day, John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).*

Jesus teaches us:

1. To look for those who are faithful to be leaders. These men were already serving under John the Baptist. They had been learning about the coming Messiah through John.

When building God's ministry, we need to look for those who have been serving, leading, and/or are consistent in their church/ministry attendance. It's not that every person has to be a leader, but instead has the possibility of becoming one. If you are faithful in one area of your life, you are more than likely faithful in other areas. When I meet a potential

leader who I see is coming to church, a ministry, and serving, thereby producing fruit, that sends up a green flag to get to know them better. Just like Jesus, we should be watching for those God brings to us.

2. To look for those who are available. These men were available to follow Jesus. So many times in God's ministry, we seek those already very involved in other areas. We choose them first because we know they are faithful and committed. However, are they available? They may need to lay something down to take up the area of ministry you are seeking them for. I know it's tempting to seek these people first but remember, other people aren't serving anywhere, so I would make a better choice. If someone is already serving the Lord, leave them alone and focus on who God is bringing you, who is new. It may take some extra training, but the outcome could be a leader who stays with you longer.

The next day, John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus (John 1:35-37).

3. To look for those who are teachable. These two men (Andrew and, more than likely, John, the writer of this book) followed Jesus because their leader (John the Baptist) told them he was the Lamb of God, the Messiah who had come to save the world. They were intrigued and wanted to know more. When building God's ministry, we need to be especially sensitive to teachable people. Do they know God well enough to hear his voice and follow? What is their attitude like? How do they take direction? How do they handle change? Are they following Jesus for the right reasons? Jesus shows us through these men what to look for and how their motives should be to follow him. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" (John 1:38a).

4. To look for those who care for others. You can pray for a ministry to find great leaders, but only through relationship-building and caring can it maintain and ultimately build new leaders. These men were concerned for Jesus and where he would be staying. They also wanted to know so they could spend some time with him. When building our ministries, getting to know your leaders is important. Spend time with them via phone, e-mail, texting, coffee, and dinner. Get to know them so 1) you are affirmed with where you believe God is placing them to serve/lead; 2) you can know ahead of time what obstacles could come up, such as being a single parent, struggling with an ex-spouse, out of work, taking care of a parent, sickness, etc. that could affect their work; 3) so that you can pray with them about their struggles (because you have gotten to know them); 4) to help them find their team that will serve under them or eventually take their place; 5) to keep the team unified in the vision God has given you to pass on to them; 6) to keep the focus on God and not them.

They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour (John 1:38b-39).

5. Jesus teaches us to find others to help us in our work.

This even includes family. When building our leaders, we need to remind them constantly to look for others who would make great leaders/servants (because life happens, we need to develop new leaders continually). Be ready to share the gospel no matter what situation you are in. Andrew went and told his brother Simon (who would become Peter, one of the most powerful Christian disciples) about Jesus and eventually brought him to the Lord. When was the last time you shared your faith with someone else? When did you last spend time with others with the potential to be a leader/servant in your singles ministry?

Leadership building takes time, but it's worth it in the end, as it will lengthen the ministry's life. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus (John 1:40-42a).

6. Jesus poured his time into his disciples.

He could see their future. Can you see the future of those you are leading? Are you encouraging your singles to know what and who they can become in Christ? Jesus would change some of his followers' names. These new names were prophetic in who these men would become. As pastors and leaders, we can also rename those who we lead by helping them see who Christ will be through them. As you lead and empower those God gives you, you are building the next leaders of the church of the world. Don't be afraid to come alongside and help them become who Christ wants them to be. Give away the ministry!

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter) (John 1:42b).

Jesus, through this small but powerful scripture, shows us the simple way to find our leaders. We know Jesus prayed, spent time with these men, sought to understand their hearts (and gives us the same power to know them through the Holy Spirit), and encouraged and empowered them to take the next step. Jesus had to because his time was limited on this earth. Because you don't know how long you have been on this earth or in your current position, you must use all those opportunities to pray for your leaders now and to come. Drop a quick text or e-mail to encourage them in their day. Take time to train and teach them what is expected; charge them with the responsibility God has given them, allowing their gifts to be used and directed by the Spirit. Then, sit back and see what God will do, as we are all faithful in our journeys to become like Christ.

Was coming to the leadership training over spending the day in the sun worth it? What was supposed to be a two-hour breakfast lasted through lunch.

Applications:

1. What are some ways you find your leaders?

2. How are you caring for your leaders?

3. How are you building or training your leaders?

4. What are some of your struggles as a leader/pastor?

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