

How to be an Excellent Disciple, Authority

Luke 6:39-40

October 29, 2017

We're looking at Luke 6 verses 39 and running to the end of the chapter. This is the final section of Luke's rec, record of the Sermon on the Mount. I wanted to, while you're turning there just wanted to thank Lee Barton for opening the Word for us last week. Such an insightful, thought-provoking exposition of Psalm 2. In case you missed it, it is available on our website. You can download that, listen to it during the week, maybe on a commute or something like. We just want to thank you, Lee, again for that message. Just really appreciate that.

We have come the concluding section of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, verses 39-49. This is the conclusion. This is the wrap-up. As we saw last time, Luke signaled the transition into the conclusion here with a very short, but vital narrative comment there at the beginning of verse 39, "He also told them a parable." "He also told them a parable." And the point of the parable is about following the right authority, which is verses

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39-40. Look at the text there, "He also told them a parable. 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Would they not both fall into a pit? A disciple's not above his teacher but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.'"

This weekend as many of you know, it marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, or at least its symbolic beginning as Martin Luther nailed Ninety-five Theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. Our church celebrated the Reformation earlier this month with our Always Reforming Conference. You may have seen the posters, artwork around the church. And this door here. Just a visible reminder of the, it's not the actual door. The Reformation tourists would be very, very disappointed to get to Germany and find the doors missing.

But this is a replica we just a, wanted to put this up as a visible reminder of what happened 500 years ago when Luther nailed those 95 statements, those 95 propositions to the door there. That happened on All Hollow's Eve, October 31st, 1517, 500 years ago. There had already been, for a, probably a good couple

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hundred years, a reforming spirit at work among some in the Roman Catholic communion, the Roman Catholic Church.

There was a high degree of scandalous sins being practiced, entertained, harbored, among the clergy. Terrible abuses of authority in the church, as well as a number of socio-economic, political external factors leading to a spirit, a tone of reformation. But it was really access to ancient texts, really, because of the crusades, sending the Europeans over into the Holy Land. They went and discovered texts that had not been discovered before, brought them back and scholars took a look at those texts.

They looked beyond the Latin Vulgate, the common translation, which was not the language of many people. They looked beyond the Latin Vulgate, studied the Bible in its original languages, its Greek and Hebrew. Reading the Bible, that's what broke the chokehold of abusive authority over the ignorant masses. There were a number of theological issues at, at work in the heart of the reformation.

But it was really the recovery of the Word of God making it accessible to the common people in their own languages. That's what really was the game changer for the reformation. Access to Scripture, it allowed people to, to see for themselves, thumb the Word of God, what Scripture actually taught about these theological issues.

Getting clarity on divine judgment and its nature. Understanding how divine grace actually does come to us by the means of faith and faith alone, and not by our works. Finding a truly biblical answer to this most important question: How can a guilty sinner be reconciled to a, an absolute Holy God? All of those issues, absolutely vital, of eternal significance. Really, the questions between heaven and hell.

But underlying every reforming concern, foundational to every question, was this issue of authority. Boiling down to its bare essence, they were asking the question: Who speaks for God? Who will you trust? What voice will you listen to? And who will you follow? And that question comes to us today, as well.

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In our day, a day with, when every single one of us has in our pocket usually, the access to the Internet. And there's a clamoring, a clutter of disparate voices out there often subtly contradictory, even in conservative circles of Christianity, very contradictory voices. Which voice will you listen to? Who will you follow? Because this is a foundational, vital element of your Christian discipleship and there are very serious consequences. Follow the wrong authority, you fall into a pit, you suffer spiritual ruin. Follow the right authority and you build your house upon a rock leading to spiritual fruitfulness, spiritual strength, protection in times of the severest trial and testing in your life.

The Reformers made the case that authority resided not in men, but in God and in God alone and so they argued for *Sola Scriptura*, the Scripture alone. It's where we find the voice of God. And in the church, administrated her on earth, authority resides in Christ and in Christ alone, *Solus Christus*. So *Sola Scriptura*, and *Solus Christus*, those two reformations pillars of the five tell us that any authority exercised in and through the church, it's Christ's authority. And it must be in full accord with the teaching of all Scripture and not of mere men.

It's to the authority of Christ that all must bow the knee. All popes and councils must bow the knee. All pastors and teachers must bow the knee. All elders and deacons must bow the knee and every single individual member of the body of Christ must bow the knee to Jesus Christ and him alone. The authority exercised in the church in each local church is a delegated authority.

It's not an inherent authority in some individual.

It's an authority that's delegated by Christ. It's an authority that's identified by comparing with Scripture. Again, it's not an inherent authority located in men, a pope, a church council, in our case in an elder board. All believers are to submit to Christ's authority and by God's great abundant grace, especially through the Protestant Reformation, all of us believers have access to the Bible in English. We can read this. We can understand this. We can listen to it.

We have access to God's Word. And we can verify whether or not the use of authority we are seeing is in accord with the whole of Scripture or not. That means that each of us has a

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responsibility, don't we? A responsibility before Christ to examine human authority. To judge the right and wrong use of authority, we must depart from the ungodly use of authority and encourage and submit to the godly use of delegated authority for Christ.

So for this morning, we're going to look at this fundamental issue in discipleship, the issue of authority. It's a huge topic, but we're going to try to confine our comments this morning to the text before us. There are three points for this morning. You can write down just three words that will kind of be a little hook to hang your thoughts on. But then I'm going to give you a point, one word, and then it's going to be followed by a full sentence. Okay, so get ready to, get ready to write.

First, I'll give you three words first: consequence, influence, and confidence. Consequence, influence, and confidence. So here's the first point, again, followed by a full sentence. Consequence: If you follow ungodly authority, you will fail spiritually. If you follow ungodly authority, you will fail spiritually. That's what we mean by consequence.

If you look at verse 39 again, the parable, "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?" That's consequence. I mentioned last time that the picture Jesus paints in this brief parable is one that everybody listening to Jesus could have easily imagined in their own mind's eye. But even though they could imagine that picture, everyone would quickly recognize this would never happen. Never. Blind men don't lead blind men around. That is ridiculous, especially in Israel, which is a land filled with holes and pits, water wells and cisterns and rock quarries.

And that's actually what the word *bothynos* refers to, a pit, a cistern, a well. It comes from the word *bothros*, which is just basically refers to a hole in the ground for whatever purpose. And Israel was pockmarked with those kinds of holes. So for the sighted person, for one who is able to see over land travel in lowlight conditions could be dangerous, even quite treacherous. It was possible for a seeing person to, to fail to notice a hidden pit and fall into it.

And especially at night. It was absolutely foolish for anybody to go walking around the land of Israel, just going out for a night walk without a lamp, without something to see. No seeing person would do that. But for a blind person, for someone whose every situation is a lowlight situation, he has to have a seeing person to guide him around. Something simple for him, like something we all take for granted like walking, presents such a serious challenge for someone who's blind. So the inevitability of the, the blind leading a, the blind resulting in physical injury or death was, was so obvious and so certain that the point is immediately obvious.

Jesus is describing here an unthinkable situation, not to illustrate physical blindness, but to illustrate something deeper, a deeper spiritual principle. And even though we all understand in a, in the physical world blind men don't lead blind men around, but in the spiritual matters, the blind lead the blind all the time. The blind leading the blind is such a common practice that it's practiced by the majority. I got to tell you, folks, it's even more devastating than just falling into a hole.

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Jesus' point, the point of his parable, emerges with crystal clarity when we take a look at the most consequential word in this short parable, which is the verb, lead. Lead. Many New Testament words translated, to lead, and many of them are related to the verb, the root verb *ago*, to lead. There's *apago*, which is to lead away, or *exago*, to lead out. *Periago* is to lead around, like leading a blind person by the hand, that's actually the word that was used when Paul struck the sorcerer Elymas with blindness in Acts 13:11. It says that the stricken Elymas "went about seeking people to lead him around." That's the word *periago*.

Other verbs, too, *eisphero*, to lead into. *Proerchomai*, to go ahead, go before, to lead. Or even *proistemi*, to lead, direct, and rule, to show leadership. And I suppose Jesus could've used any of those words, very common words, for leading, but he didn't. He chose a very specific word, which meant more than simply leading a person around by the hand.

The word here is *hodēgeō*. *Hodēgeō*, which is related to the root word, *hodos*, *hodos*. Literally the word *hodos* refers to a way, a

street. A *hodos*, it can be a pathway, like a small little footpath or it can be even a broad, broad road. It's an all-purpose word. One lexicon says it can describe a, a narrow path that's trodden by those who've gone before like a footpath. Or a broad road made for traffic on which chariots travel, on which troops can march or processions can be held.

So this verb related to the word *hodos*, way, *hodēgeō*, to lead, can refer to literally leading someone down a path or a street, to escort them, to guide them. Those are literal uses of the word *hodēgeō*. But the literal usage provides a picture and an immediate analogy for the spiritual principle that Jesus wants to convey here. Because contained in the word meaning is the concept of guidance along the way, taking someone down a path.

Figuratively the word *hodos*, the word, way, refers to particular spiritual or philosophical path. You may remember that the early followers of Jesus Christ were followers of The Way. We speak of that as the way of Islam, the way of Hinduism, the way of Christianity. We speak of the same thing today.

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The verb *hodēgeō*, similarly, refers to spiritual guidance, moral leadership that guides someone along that path, along that way. One lexicon says it means to instruct or teach or guide in learning. It's the idea of assisting someone and acquiring information or knowledge, leadership, guidance, conduct. So Jesus has provided here a mental picture evoking physical images, images of physical things, and all this is a metaphor to illustrate a moral or spiritual walk down a path. It's a way of life.

As we've been saying, these terms are picturing discipleship. Walking down a path together and then the consequences of following that discipleship. And in this case, bad leadership; blind leading the blind. And what are the consequences. Look at the second rhetorical question Jesus asked in verse 39, "Can a blind man lead a blind man?" And then in answer; No, not without significant physical harm. Jesus points to that and he says, "Will they not both fall into a pit?"

The word fall is the word *empipto*. It's an intensive form of the verb *pipto*, to fall. It's got a prefix *em* on the front of, which

refers to falling into something like into a pit. But again, that physical imagery isn't just about falling into holes, falling into a depressed area, it's a, looking beyond the physical harm and pointing metaphorically to a graver spiritual harm.

The verb form with that prefix on the front of it is intensified. This isn't about falling into just physical danger like a hole. It's about falling under the power of something, falling down and not being able to reverse course and get back up. Once you have fallen, you've given up all hope of control. Synonymous expression here is to fall into the hands of some greater power, which means to be, maybe in synonymous terms, dominated by something. To be subdued. To be subjected. To be ensnared.

It's used of Samson, who feared falling into the hands of the Philistines. Or the man whom the Samaritan found along the side of the road in Jesus' parable after he'd fallen into the hands of robbers. Same word, he'd been beaten left for dead. He was completely powerless. These are pictures of the danger.

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Paul used the word *empipto* when cautioning Timothy about appointing elders. 1 Timothy 3:6-7, Paul tells Timothy that anybody considered to be an elder "must not be a recent convert," or what's, what's the consequence, Paul? "He may become puffed up with conceit and fall." There's our word *pipto* again. *Empipto*, fall, "Puffed up with conceit, fall into the condemnation of the devil." There's the blind, the devil, leading the blind, the man puffed up with conceit.

"Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so again, that he may not fall," *empipto* again, to fall, "into disgrace and into a snare of the devil." According to 1 Timothy 6:9, Timothy was also sup, supposed to warn the rich about falling, *empipto*, into the temptations of pursuing wealth. "Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation." Again, *empipto*, fall, "into a snare, into senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction."

Unqualified leadership, falling into snares of pride and wealth, that is exactly what happened to the leadership of the church in

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Rome in the Middle Ages. Those very dangers that Paul warned Timothy about they committed over and over and over again 'til they became entrenched, 'til they became institutionalized, 'til everybody looked around and though, This is the way Christianity's supposed to be. Sadly, it was the only Christianity most people had known because it had been the dominant, most visible representation of Christ and his church for a thousand years.

As William Manchester once described it, in Martin Luther's day quote, "The life of every European from baptism through matrimonial, to burial was governed by popes, cardinals, prelates, monsignors, archbishops, bishops, and village priests. The clergy, it was believed, would also cast decisive votes in determining where each soul would spend the afterlife." End quote. That's a frightening way to live especially when at all levels of ecclesiastical authority spiritual decay and corruption was rampant.

The abuse of authority went straight to the top, all the way up to the pope, as Martin Luther came to discover to his dismay.

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Popes during that time wielded an incredible amount of power, just incredible. They rose above emperors, above kings, above governors, all of whom had been raised in the system believing that man, the pope, had the power of Peter's keys to either grant or withhold forgiveness, to open or close heaven to people.

That's not what that text means, by the way, but that's what they believed. That's what they'd been taught. Excommunication from the church, it was the ultimate weapon because that meant damnation. That meant no salvation outside the church. And being cut off from the only means to eternal life, the only means of practicing the sacraments. Again, a very powerful terrifying threat.

Death was such a common sight in Medieval Europe. A couple centuries before Martin Luther's time, the Black Plague had swept through Europe. Bodies everywhere. Many children didn't make it out of childhood, died in infancy, died in childhood. It was very common for people to die. Death was a common sight. If

you believed that the Catholic Church held the power over your soul, it's terrifying.

So this papacy had become accustomed to a tremendous amount of power, authority, and influence. They had no fear about using that power, using Peter's keys with an incredible degree of autonomy and very little accountability. A hundred years before Luther was born, the abuse of papal authority had really risen to climactic proportions. Ambitious men clawed their way up the ecclesiastical ladder. Mostly by leveraging each other's greed against one another.

Those in authority got there by a practice called simony, which is pay to play, basically, using money to buy ecclesiastical positions. And that, they wanted ecclesiastical positions, roles of authority because then they could extract more offerings from the faithful. Simony, it comes from Simon Magus, who tried to buy the gift of God with money, Acts chapter 8, and Peter condemned him.

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Certain rich and powerful church authorities, they were able to buy more than one ecclesiastical post. They paid to play and then they'd get more and more opportunities to get more money like Albrecht of Brandenburg, who had two archbishoprics in Mainz and in Magdeburg. Why did he want those two posts? Simple, to increase his revenues. Extracting offerings from the faithful, fleecing the flock.

What's the problem with that? With multiple posts? Being pastor in more than one location? It's a problem called absenteeism, which was again rampant in you, Luther's time. The lack of oversight from an absentee priest, bishop, archbishop, that meant no control, no oversight whatsoever over abuses at the ground level. So sins and abuses of power, they were rife from the top to the bottom and especially in those lower ecclesiastical ranks: parish priests, bishops. It was common hardworking people of the land who suffered.

Once entrenched in positions of power and authority, ecclesiastical avarice transgressed beyond the desire for money. Their greed went further, pursued forbidden relationships.

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Illicit affairs resulted in mistresses who had to be kept quiet with hush money. Those mistresses produced illegitimate children to whom these so-called pastors. They awarded those children ecclesiastical posts so they could make an ostensibly respectable living. And that's called nepotism, giving official positions to family members, which in Medieval times meant giving pastoral positions to illegitimate sons.

I mean, talk about appointing recent converts. These are not converts at all. These are appointing the blind to lead the blind. You may have heard of the Borgias family. They're the Borgias popes. Their corruption is legendary in church history. Their family tree is an absolute mess. It illustrates the clear, obvious abuses of all these practices, simony, absenteeism, nepotism. And the people under them suffered terribly, miserably, falling into the same pit of condemnation as their leadership.

In fact, the man on the papal throne when Luther was growing up was Alexander the VI and he was born Rodrigo Borgia, one of the worst of the family. He spawned five children through

mistresses, and they were so vile that the Borgia name has become synonymous in history with religious hypocrisy, wickedness, utter corruption. Alexander the VI, the Borgia pope, he died in 1503. Martin Luther had been born in 1483, so he was 20 years old when Alexander the VI died.

Alexander VI, the VI had raised money to fund his family, family's opulent and immoral lifestyle, love of art and all the rest. Alexander was replaced by Julius the II, who was known as the warrior pope. He was down making war on the Venetians during most of his reign. Julius the II died in 1513. He raised all his money extracting it again from the people to fight his wars.

And it was Pope Leo the X who replaced Julius. And he was in power when Luther nailed his theses to the door at Wittenberg. Leo, he also wanted to make the Roman church great. He wanted to beautify it. He wanted to build St. Peter's Basilica. And he was raising funds for a building program, a massive building program. Most symbolically in the building, as I said, of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

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Main tool that the pope and his agents used at that time to raise funds for glorifying the Roman Catholic church was the practice of selling indulgences. The word indulgence, you've probably heard that before, it's from the Latin legal word *indulgentia*, referring to amnesty or remission of punishment. So an indulgence is the idea of paying money to compensate for the punishment of an offense.

Practically, whenever a person came to do penance for his sins, the person could have his sins remitted through contrition of the heart, making confession to a priest, and then by doing an act of satisfaction to the church. Acts of satisfaction, that was interpreted by the priest to the parishioner. And it would include like paying restitution, certain amounts of money. Praying certain prayers a certain number of times. Fasting, doing acts of mercy. Again, paying money.

By papal authority, penitent sinner could purchase, instead of all that, just purchase an indulgence, one indulgence and forgo all that other satisfaction stuff. No need to perform all those acts of piety and get yourself buried in busyness and all that.

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Just buy an indulgence, you're good to go. Sometimes popes would grant a plenary indulgence, which was a fast track to avoiding the purifying fires of purgatory. Plenary indulgence could cover a whole lot of sins.

After all, the pope had the authority of Peter's keys, right? He could unlock what no one could unlock. He could open what no one could open, what, what seemed to be shut. He acted, then, like the treasurer of Christendom, dipping into the treasury of merit. The treasury of merit refers to all the good works of Jesus Christ and all the saints, especially, most notably the Virgin Mary, but all the other saints, as well. All their good works went into a treasure box. The pope could apply that merit to whomever bought an indulgence.

An indulgence is just a printed piece of paper, but the papal stamp made that thing official, guaranteeing forgiveness, erasing years of suffering in purgatory. So faced with mounting depth, debts of the papacy, he was surrounded by people who needed favors and so the pope declared a plenary indulgence. And

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this piece of paper in Martin Luther's day canceled sins, even for dead relatives.

That's a big deal. Very attractive piece of paper this was. So Leo the X, he authorized the Albrecht of Brandenburg, archbishop in two places, to raise money by selling indulgences in his ecclesiastical territories. So Albrecht sent half the revenue that he made from those territories directly to the pope for the building of St. Peter's and the other part he used to pay off his personal debts and increase his own wealth.

To raise the funds, Albrecht enlisted the services of the most famous indulgence salesmen of the Medieval church. He hired none other than John Tetzel to provide this plenary indulgence and make it offered to the people. Leaving all subtly behind, Tetzel was not a subtle man. He preyed upon the basest passions and fears of the common people. What he lacked in delicacy, he made up for effectiveness. Guaranteeing revenue for his employers like Albrecht of Brandenburg.

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So to sell the assurance of salvation on these little pieces of paper, ted, Tetzl came up with little ditties, little sayings that made it attractive like this one, "When the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs." Who can resist? He made use of melodrama, street theater, dramatic timing to make the appeal at just the right moment, like when the flames are rising up and here's your grandmother, or here's your young child who died in infancy burning there for you to see, visibly displayed there on the street. And then he says, "Wouldn't you like to save them?" Step right up.

He was even willing to throw off all decency to persuade people saying things like, "The pope's indulgences are so effective. Even one may be absolved of all sins, even heinous sins like the guilt of violating the Virgin Mary herself." He was shameless. But he was persuasive. And this is when Luther got involved.

Luther's people, hardworking peasants of Wittenberg, they were crossing the border to go into these territories and buy these indulgences and bring them back. Mere pieces of paper. But they were promised the guarantee of forgiveness, not only for their

own sins, but for grandma and Uncle Joe, now dead loved ones. They thought they held the key to get, help them escape from purgatory. They thought they were doing good deeds, good things.

Without a true saving Gospel, the people had no assurance of salvation. They longed for assurance; church authorities were there ready to provide it for a price. Church authorities seized upon the need that people had for spiritual assurance in order to raise money off the people. They were fleecing the flock. This absolutely enraged Martin Luther.

The issue of indulgences featured strongly in these Ninety-five Theses. In fact, Ninety-five Theses is our title for them. They're actually not called the Ninety-five Theses. His title was much more attractive, *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*, wouldn't you want to buy a copy? We'd probably shorten that, but in Luther's day, boy, that got attention.

The Theses that addressed indulgences actually make for some of the most interesting reading in the Ninety-five Theses. He put a couple of the, his complaints, he put them in the voice of the

common people as if they're making a complaint to the pope himself and saying these words. Here's theses 82, the common people saying this, "Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of the souls that are there? If he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church?"

Theses 86, "Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today greater than the riches of the richest, build this one church of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers?" I have this same feeling and thought whenever I see these faith healers bilking the ignorant out of their money. If you've got the gift of healing, walk down to the local hospital, and empty it just out of the sake of love and care!

Even the bleating of the German sheep didn't soften the heart of the pope. He and his cardinals, his army of ecclesiastical offer, officers, they were all to comfortable. They were way insulated from the people, very far removed and after all, they were enslaved to their own sins and lusts. The systematized

greed had become institutionalized. The corrupt practice of selling indulgences was just the rotten fruit of this dead tree.

They fell into the snares of pride and wealth. Exactly as Paul instructed Timothy and warned him about. That happened to the Medieval hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church and that is something, beloved, that has confounded the visible church from Paul's day to our own day. If we think we're any better off than the Roman Catholic church in the Medieval times, we're not. At least for the Reformers, they had one monolithic church to deal with. We have a thousand popes, who act in the same corrupt ways in our land.

Exercising over people this kind of abuse of authority, this power that isn't Christ's. This authority that's not Christ's. Christ exercises all his eternal prerogative and authority for our good. He died on a cross for us. This is why Paul wrote to instruct and to warn Timothy about the kind of leaders to choose. Because they act with authority delegated from Christ. And if they abuse their position, they misrepresent Christ. They

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lead many people astray and they are going to face God at the judgment.

Hebrews 10 warns and reminds us when it says this, "We know him who said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.' And again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." That's why the harshest words Jesus spoke were against the false spiritual authorities of his day, the scribes and the Pharisees, the teachers of the law.

In fact, turn over to Matthew's Gospel. Matthew chapter 23. Jesus used this same imagery, the blind leading the blind, he used the same imagery to talk about the Pharisees. These are the representative authorities of true religion at that time.

Earlier, you're turning to Matthew 23, but earlier in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew 15:14, Jesus said this about the Pharisees, "Let them alone. They are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both of them will fall into a pit." He said the same thing there.

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But in Matthew 23, he's turned up that language quite a few notches. It gets very, very strong. He is indicting Israel's false spiritual leadership. In fact, write these, I don't have time to into them today, but sometime, I'll find a way to shoehorn them into a message. But write down Ezekiel 34, Jeremiah 23. Ezekiel 34, Jeremiah 23. Because these indictments of false shepherds in Israel, they go way back.

Here Jesus in Matthew 23 pronounces a series of woes upon sinful abusive leadership and it's in the same voice of the prophets in Ezekiel 24, Jeremiah 23, Micah chapter 3 and other places as well. Repeatedly here, starting in verse 16, Matthew 23, he starts calling them blind guides. "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone, anybody swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.' You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?

"And if you say, 'Anyone swear, who swears by the altar, it's nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.' You blind men! Which is greater, the

gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred?" Look down at verse 23, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You tithe the mint, the dill, the cumin, you've neglected the weightier matters of the law [...]. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!"

"Woe to you, blind scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they're full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean." Five times in what I've read there, he condemns them as blind leaders. "Blind guides," verse 16. "Blind fools," verse 17. "Blind men," verse 19. "Blind guides," again in verse 24. And then finally verse 26, "You blind Pharisee."

The word he uses in verse 16, verse 24, "blind guides," you know that word for guides, you know what that is? You got it. It's the word *hodegos*, related to *hodos*, way, related to our verb *hodēgeō*, to lead or to guide. They're blind *hodegos*. They're blind guides. What made Jesus so pointed in condemning the false

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shepherds of his day, as I said, goes all the way back to the Old Testament. The condemnation of Israel's shepherds by the prophets. These scribes and Pharisees, they're in positions of authority. They sit in the very seat of Moses.

But they have used that delegated authority for their own advantage. Not only was that harmful, they were misrepresenting the God who delegated that authority and shame on them.

Incidentally, when you go back to Ezekiel 34, you can see the condemnation of Israel's false shepherds and then God says, "But I'm going to come and I'm personally going to shepherd that flock. And I'm going to set over that flock one shepherd, son of David." Here's the son of David, the true shepherd, the one and only true shepherd, shepherding his people. And he starts by condemning and denouncing the false shepherds.

Remember that word from Luke 6:39, *hodēgeō* to teach, give spiritual guidance, lead along a spiritual path. In the Septuagint, that word. Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament done in about 250 BC, so it was the common Old Testament text used in Palestine in Jesus' day. But that, the

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Septuagint used that word *hodēgeō*, to teach, and every time it uses that word, according to one lexicographer, the word *hodēgeō* is found 42 times universally used with reference to God.

God is the guide. It's predominantly used in psalms, in confessions of God's leading in the individual life and in request for his care and his leading. Also, in a figurative sense of teaching and guiding, all with God as the subject. God is the leader. God is the guide. That historical picture of God's leadership and guidance over his people Israel, it started in the Exodus, which is the Greek, *ex*, out of, plus the word we've been talking about *hodos*, way. *Exhodos*, the way out, the exodus. And God is the one who led them out.

It's in Exodus 15:13, Song of Miriam. She captures there the very heart of God, the one who guided his people out of Egypt. "You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode." Leaders of Israel, to whom people should have been able to look, who should have led God's people according to God's steadfast love, who should have guided God's people according to

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God's strength in pathways of holiness, according to true knowledge from the Word.

They were instead rotten and corrupt. They were blind guides. They were defective, deceptive leaders and that is why Jesus condemns them roundly and harshly, indicting them as false shepherds, as blind guides. He says in Matthew 23:32. Look at it there, if you're still in Matthew 23. He says, "Fill up then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, some you will flog in your synagogues, persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation."

Hard stuff. Like the Roman Catholic system in Martin Luther's day, like all the false forms of Christianity in our own day, the false prophets of the Old Testament, the false spiritual

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authorities of Jesus' day, they're all of a kind. And get this, they're popular. They are sought after. They're the ones selling books. They're the ones on so many radio stations. They're the ones influencing people and making money and getting prosperity. They are the ones who are in vogue.

And it's the true shepherds, as Jesus says here, "I'm going to send you prophets, wise men, scribes. Some you're going to kill and crucify and others you're going to chase from town to town." They're not going to be popular. Anybody standing with Christ and promoting and promulgating his gospel, anybody lifting up Jesus Christ as the true shepherd to whom everyone must look, they're going to be chased by wolves. And the wolves are not going to spare the flock.

So Jesus' parable in Luke 6:39, you can turn back there now. His warning there, his parable there is a warning. It's about spiritual danger. Spiritual demise. It's about a shipwrecked faith. You know something about a shipwreck? No one signs up for it. No one books passage on a, on an ocean liner or takes a sea cruise knowing it's going to end up in a devastating shipwreck

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at the bottom of the ocean. They only find out after they're already committed on that path. After the voyage is well underway, when it's too late to turn back.

That's what Jesus is saying here. Be careful where you book passage. Be careful what boat you get onto. These harsh condemnations against the Pharisees, you know that those who follow them are going to share in their demise. That's what Jesus says. "Will they not both fall into a pit?" You can't claim, Hey, maybe my leaders are corrupt. Maybe we don't have the best whatever, church, whatever, but look, I'm just, I'm just one of the sheep. I don't, I don't know any better.

No. Jesus holds you responsible. He holds everyone responsible. That's the consequence of following ungodly authority. You're going to join them in their spiritual failure. You don't get a pass because they're the leader and you're just the follower. That's the imagery Jesus uses here. That's the parable. So you have a responsibility. Every single one of us has a responsibility to choose, to consider carefully who we follow.

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And just like you, I'm following as well. I, I have to use commentaries. I have to use sources. I have to listen to different voices of authority in the realm of study and preparation that I engage in. I gotta be careful what I study. I gotta be careful what I put forth to you. And you also need to be careful who you listen to, who you study, who you read, who you watch. And then what you're feeding out the other side.

If you choose to follow bad spiritual authorities, you're going to join them in their condemnation. You're going to fall with them into the pit of their own judgment. You're going to share it. Why should teacher and disciples share in the same fate? Why should they? Why is that fair? What is the principle here? Because of verse 40. There is a spiritual principle and it's a second point in our outline. Very brief one. Don't worry, very brief.

It's, the second point is influence, influence. That's the principle. And here, write this sentence down if you can. If you're mindful of the principle of influence, you will turn away from ungodly authority to follow godly authority. If you're

mindful of that principle of influence, you're going to turn away from ungodly authority and follow godly authority.

Verse 40, look at it there. It says, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher." That is to say, Jesus says, you will be influenced by somebody. You will become like the one you follow. In Jesus' day, the sight of teachers and their disciples following after them was a very common sight. Rabbis would be followed around by eager disciples who were asking them all kinds of questions, studying their ways, their teaching, mimicking their lives.

They basically lived life together with a, with a rabbi and his disciples, teaching them principles, guiding them, modeling the principles, as together they walked through the many and variegated issues of life together. The Disciple/teacher, it's a teacher/disciple pattern. It's one that's been common in cultures all over the world throughout all human history.

We, we refer to it as like master and apprentice, or mentor and protégé. In India, it's the guru and his shishya. In Japan, it's

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the sensei, Mr. Miyagi, wax on/wax off and Danielson. Right? Young impetuous Danielson. But here in our country and in modern times, we tend to think we've advanced far beyond that. That, that disciple/teacher relationship is only like in karate school or whatever.

And we tend to forget that we send out children off every day to school for a third of the day, or more. To be influenced by teachers who are trained to instruct and influence students. They're actually very skilled instructors. And if anything, we have become just as systematic and formal about education influence and influence, as any ancient culture. Many of which took the teacher/student relationship just as seriously as we do.

After all, if you can influence the children, you can steer the future. No disciple will excel his teacher, which is why we take education experience so seriously for good reason. You can lead people no further than you yourself have traveled, right? That's one thing to know here. That's the first half of this proverbial

saying; it's axiomatic that a disciple will not rise above his teacher.

But the principle here that provides a warning is also providing us with an encouragement, which comes in the second half of verse 40. This has to do with the verb that's translated there in the ESV. Look at it there, "When he is fully trained." That's the one verb, fully trained, disciple is going to be just like his teacher. This is why the blind follower and the blind leader wind up in the same hole.

This principle of influence means the blind student is going to become just like his blind teacher, sharing in his bad character, sharing in his bad doctrine, sharing in all the resulting sins that flow out of that life. Jesus said in Matthew 23:15, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte. When he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as you yourselves." As goes the teacher, so goes the student.

Both teacher and student are culpable in the outcome. Evil teachers produce evil students. Superficial teachers produce superficial students. Prosperity gospel begets prosperity gospel. Sub-Christian behavior produces sub-Christian behavior. Religiosity produces more religiosity. Conversely, though, good and godly teachers produce good and godly students. And a teacher, a disciple, when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.

The verb we're looking at there in verse 40 is *katartizo*, translated here, fully trained. Elsewhere, though, it has to do with equipping. When he is fully equipped, when he is trained up, when he's prepared and sent out for a specific purpose. This is the idea. One commentator said the verb involves the notion of equipping or pairing in the sense of making someone adequate or sufficient for something.

This is an oft used verb, word throughout Scripture, it gives us an idea of what Jesus has in mind for discipleship, influence. Here's some images in Scripture: A fully trained disciple is like a well-prepared room. When the master of the house, he

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prepares it for his guests and it's well suited, fully equipped for everything needful for that, that guest' comfort and well-being.

A fully trained disciple, when he's fully equipped, he's like a, a garment that a woman fashions and assembles and then brings into completion and she readies it for the wearer's use. A fully trained disciple is like the vessel of clay, formed by the potter. The potter has set out to fashion, form, finish this vase, fire it in the kiln and ready it for delivery suitable for a particular use.

A fully trained disciple is like an ocean-going vessel, outfitted for heavy seas. He's like an armed armada, armed by the admiral, readied for the war. All these images and many, many more in Scripture, the idea conveyed in the verb, *katartizo*, it's this readying, it's this preparation, it's this training, equipping, edification, building up, strengthening, readying that disciple for a specific purpose.

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If the influence in your life is a blind guide, you're going down. But if the influence in your life is a good and godly teacher, it's going to lead from one level of growth to another. On the one hand, becoming fully trained involves correcting, even rebuking things that hinder growth. But in the other hand, it involves much building, building up, teaching, instructing, training, reinforcing new habits of thinking, new behaviors, new speech patterns, new habits of living.

This is why it's so important that we, beloved, must be together, live life together. Lone wolf Christians living on the fringes of the church, take an analogy from pack animals. Take an analogy from the herd. The wolves get the ones, the stragglers, don't they? Don't stay on the outside. Get into the middle. We got to see each other's lives. We got to see each other's habits. See each other's thinking. And the older must influence the younger. And the younger must serve and learn from the older.

We already considered how the principle of influence is something to be wary of, something to treat with care and

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caution, but as we said before, we need to be careful who's influencing us because you will be influenced by somebody. You will become like the one you follow. And that is how God created us. That's according to his design, to be influenced most immediately by his own glory. "God created mankind," Genesis 1:27, "in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

God is immutable, he's unchangeable, he's eternally perfect. Mankind, as his creatures, we are mutable, we are changeable, we're moldable, malleable, we're perfectible. God has intended for us to grow in grace and in knowledge to mature, to become complete. This is by his design. This is a principle of our essential humanity, to become like the one we worship. To become like the one we follow.

So who's influencing you? How are you being influenced? And how are you influencing others? Remember how we said last time, we applied Jesus' teaching in verses 39-49, this conclusion here. We apply it by looking forward and we apply it by looking backward. So who is your Paul? And don't tell me, well, I'm,

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I've been a Christian for many, many years. I'm pretty good.
Don't really need a Paul.

Don't say that. You're just revealing all your pride. Okay? And you're showing that you're not as mature as you say you are. Everybody needs someone they look ahead to. Who's your Timothy? Who are you influencing? Are you intentional about it? We are both influencing and being influenced by others. It is a principle of what we are as Christians. You are salt. You are light. Others are looking at our lives, others are listening to our doctrine and listening to our speech. They're following our patterns of living.

So if you're mindful of this principle of influence, you'll turn away from ungodly authority to follow godly authority. If you follow ungodly authority, you're going to fail spiritually. But here's a third point. If you follow godly authority, you'll thrive spiritually. You'll thrive. The word confidence, that's our confidence. If you follow godly authority, you will thrive spiritually.

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What does thriving spiritually look like? Can I have you look at the text? Thriving spiritually means, verses 41-42, that you'll see clearly. Verses 43-45, you'll bear good fruit. Verse 46, you'll listen to and obey Christ's teaching. And the final verses, verses 47-49, thriving spiritually means you are going to build your life on a solid foundation. Does that sound good? It sounds good to me.

Because of the fall and its effects, we're born into sin. We're subject to influences. We're even attracted to influences of ungodliness, voices of ungodly authority. Ephesians 2:2 tells us that we're under the, "influence of the prince of the power of the air, the spirits who, the spirit who's now at work in the sons of disobedience." It's the principle of influence there again.

But we can also be influenced for the good. And if we're intentional about it, we'll pursue being influenced by the good. The fall of Adam revealed something else. The plan of God to consummate all things in Jesus Christ, who is both Son of Man and Son of God. As immutable God, Jesus Christ is the unchanging

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one, the same yesterday, today and forever. As mutable man, Jesus Christ was perfected. He was made complete in fulfilling all the will of God. Luke points to that twice in the early chapters.

All of us who are found in Christ are no longer in Adam; we are now in Christ. And if we are in Christ, we're complete. That is to say, anybody found in Christ, positionally perfect, counted righteous in Christ. Full assurance. No need for an indulgence paper. We won't have those for sale during the AWANA chili cookoff. You have full assurance in Christ. You look to him, a righteousness that's not your own found in him.

But those who are positionally perfect, they're changed inside. They have a new nature. They are being perfected practically. They are being matured, growing, becoming more like him. And that is the essence of discipleship, to be increasingly conformed to the image of God, which has been perfected and revealed among men in the person of Jesus Christ.

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That's why Paul said, Colossians 1:28, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom that we may present everyone mature in Christ." All godly leadership has that goal in mind. All godly leadership. Godly leadership is not about pursuing wealth and power, personal ambition.

In fact, Peter confronted all those false motives of shepherding in 1 Peter 5:1-3. He said this, "Shepherd the flock of God that's among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain, but eagerly." Shameful gain is not just money. It's pride of place. It's fame. It's influence. It's favors. Peter says, "No, you shepherd the flock of God not for shameful gain, but eagerly. You don't do it domineering," those who are over, "over those who are in your charge, but you're being examples to the flock."

No true shepherd, no true shepherd following the pattern of Christ is in spiritual ministry for what he can get out of it. He's not in it for ease. He's not in it for pleasure. It's not about prominence and status. It's not about protecting, defending yourself, gaining for yourself. No other motive drives

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a true under shepherd of Jesus Christ except to see people know Christ. And to grow and mature in the love and the knowledge and the holiness of Christ.

That, in fact, is the true reward of all spiritually legitimate ministry. As the apostle John put it, 3 John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." The apostle John had been living a long, long time and he says, "I have no greater joy than this." As Paul told the Thessalonians, such a beloved church, he said, "For what is our hope, our joy, our crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy."

True shepherds, beloved, they love others, not themselves. That's why you hear John, the apostle, using such affectionate language to refer to fellow Christians under his care. He calls them beloved. He calls them little children. Paul called Timothy, "my son, my son in the faith." Like John, he also repeatedly and affectionately called Christians beloved.

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Listen, true shepherds, shepherds after God's own heart, they're striving to know and grow in Christlikeness. Just as they lead others to grow in Christlikeness. That's because true shepherds, under shepherds under Jesus Christ, they realize they're Christians first, shepherds second. Actually, the more accurate term as I keep using is under shepherd. They're operating under his authority. They point everyone to follow and obey him, the only Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Paul told the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 4:16, "I urge you, then, be imitators of me." Why, is he self-centered? Does he think he hit the high mark? No. He's saying, "Be imitators of me," 1 Corinthians 11:1, "as I am of Christ." Told the Philippians, "Brothers, join in imitating me. Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." Why? Because in him, they can find a pattern of how to grow in Christlikeness.

True shepherds are not afraid to open their lives to other people. In fact, turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. We'll close with this. True shepherds are not afraid to open their lives to

other people. True Christians are not afraid to open their lives to other people, to let people in, to bring them close. They're eager to do that. Why? To let people see how they walk. Either to be confronted and encouraged to stimulate their own growth in Christlikeness or to influence others to grow in Christlikeness.

Not a lot of that going on today, is there? A lot of people isolated. All of people into their own thing. A lot of people into their own entertainment, their phones, their internet profiles or whatever. A lot of teachers and preachers out there are into a mega churching, proliferating their images on screens, in as many sites as they can get them in. Getting onto every conference platform where no one really knows them at all.

That is not the New Testament pattern. The New Testament pattern is closeness, access, intimacy, relationship. Remaining aloof from people is totally counterproductive. When it comes to being influenced by the right people and you influencing people. This is the model of discipleship: Teachers and disciples, older disciples, younger disciples, we all need to come close together, to live life together, to learn sound doctrine

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together that teaches us to walk in patterns that promote holiness and love and joy.

Here in 1 Thessalonians 1:5, look at the middle of the verse. Paul continued. Notice how, how continually he appeals to their knowledge of himself. "You know what kind of men we've provide to be among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone for the everywhere, so that we need not say anything."

Turn the page to chapter 2. Verse, let's go to verse 3. "Our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any," attain, "attempt to deceive, but just as we've been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed," something only God can see, so, "God is witness. Nor did we seek

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glory from people, whether from you or for others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you've become dear to us."

Such tender language used there. This is how every true shepherd, every elder, every deacon, every older Christian aspires to minister to others. It's a pattern set by Christ, modeled, and followed by his apostles, pursued by all people in spiritual influence. Keep reading.

"For you remember, brothers," verse 9, "our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy, and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you, encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory."

I could point to example after example, but that's enough to show you how this principle of influence and discipleship is worked out between Paul and these disciples, the Thessalonian church. The same principle is at work here at our church, too, if we'll follow these patterns of leadership, follow these patterns of discipleship. Older mature Christians teaching and influencing less mature Christians. As older saints open their lives for inspection, as younger saints open their lives for inspection, saying, Come on in. I want to learn; I want to grow. Older saints saying, I want to, I want to influence you so, look at my life.

If we're mindful of these points, beloved, first consequence: Who we follow as leaders is a matter of great consequence. Second: the principle of influence, both a warning and encouragement. If we're mindful of those points, then, thirdly: We can have confidence. Confidence knowing that following and imitating godly authority is going to help us thrive spiritually. The joyful blessings of clear vision according to the text, abundant fruitfulness, obedience to our Lord and Savior, which is a solid foundation. All that will be ours.

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Well that's enough for now. We're well out of time. But we have more to see and to learn about this issue of turning away from ungodly authority and turning and following and submitting to the authority of Christ and following those who are pointing us to him. But for now let's close in a word of prayer.

We thank you, Father, for sending the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the great shepherd of the sheep. We thank you that because of your decree and power, not one of your sheep will be lost. Christ promises it, that among all that you've given him, not one is lost. He will hold us fast. He will keep us close. The Lord knows those who are his and let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity. We pray that would be true of us, Father, as we follow godly authority, as we turn away from ungodly authority, as we look for those who model for us habits that lead to godliness, who promote sound teaching, who display sound and godly examples in their lives.