

How to be an Excellent Disciple, Authority, Part 1

Luke 6:39-40

We're looking at Luke 6 verses 39 and running to the end of the chapter. This is the final section of Luke's record of the Sermon on the Mount. 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 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.'"

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, administered here 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 responsibility, don't we? A responsibility before Christ to examine human authority.

We're going to look at this fundamental issue in discipleship, the issue of authority. 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.

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. 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.

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,

*empto*, fall, “into a snare, into senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.”

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.

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. 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 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 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 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 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 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.

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

PILLAR OF  
—TRUTH— 

join them in their condemnation. You're going to fall with them into the pit of their own judgment.