

Minding Your Own Business

We desperately need leadership. In our country, in our city, in the world, in the Church—we need leadership. In every moment in human history when God was doing something significant for His people, He raised up leadership. He used Abraham to establish a community in the Promised Land. He raised up Joseph to feed his people in Egypt during a famine. He raised up Moses to lead His captive people into freedom and through the wilderness for 40 years. He raised up Joshua to take them into the Promised Land. He raised up David to be their king. He preeminently raised up His own son, Jesus Christ, to accomplish our own salvation, and after His ascension, He raised up the apostles to take the Gospel to the world. The same is true today: He is raising up men and women, boys and girls, to accomplish His Kingdom priorities. Our text today demonstrates the leadership essentials for those who would be used by God to expand His Kingdom on the earth.

John 21:20-25

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?”

21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” **22** Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” **23** So the saying spread abroad among the brothers that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?”

24 This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

25 Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

We learn first of all:

I. **We must follow Jesus Christ (vv. 20-22)**

Peter was distracted from following Jesus, because he wanted to know whether John would be suffering the same sort of martyr’s death that Peter would be suffering. Jesus explains to him that this is none of his business. It is true that Jesus’ will determines our lives (v. 22a), just as it is true that He will return soon to bless His people. It is also true that some things among us are each others’ business: we are told to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep; we are told to share our personal possessions and to intervene in each others’ moral and spiritual lives, etc. But there are some things that are not our business, namely the details in how God is going to order our lives in the future. John’s way of suffering and death were not Peter’s business.

Jesus tells Peter what his business is: “you follow me!” To follow Jesus is to imitate His character and to engage in His mission; but, imminently, to follow Him is to take up our cross, the cross of self-denial. The apostle Paul boasted in his cross (see Galatians 6:14), and he intentionally took up the cross that he might know Jesus Christ (see Philippians 3:7-11).

We see that Peter ultimately was a very effective evangelist. On the day of Pentecost he led 3,000 people to Jesus Christ and later 5,000. He boldly stood before the Sanhedrin to defend the Gospel. He followed Jesus.

II. **We must know, teach, and defend God’s word (v. 23)**

In this verse we see that those inside and outside the Church will regularly misinterpret, if not pervert, Scripture teaching. John explains that what was being bandied about was not exactly correct. There was a nuance. The nuance is that Jesus was speaking hypothetically. Often we, also, must engage those around us to correct their misunderstandings and perversions of biblical truth. If we follow Jesus we will inevitably engage this sort of teaching and apologetic

ministry.

III. We must extol Jesus' greatness (vv. 24-25)

It is in verse 24 that we discover who the author of this great gospel account is. John humbly lets us know that he is the beloved disciple who has written these things. It is in his humility that he is therefore able to extol the greatness of Jesus Christ. If we exalt ourselves, we cannot exalt Him. There are many great historical figures about whom much has been written. There are 600 books written about Winston Churchill, and 15,000 about Abraham Lincoln, but we have no idea how many have been written about Jesus Christ, because there are so many—tens of thousands, literally. Furthermore, even those books only tell a very small fraction of what Jesus said and did. As one commentator says, “There is no limit to the greatness of Jesus Christ.” And so John ends where he begins: “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and there Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory...” (John 1:1, 14).

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Peter wanted to know what would happen to John (vv. 20, 21)?
2. What most often distracts us from staying focused on Jesus?
3. What did Jesus mean when He said to Peter, “you follow me!”? (v. 22)
4. Just as people in John’s day distorted the words of Jesus (v. 23), in what ways do people today distort His teaching?
5. Why does John assure us that his testimony is true? (v. 24) What would your life be like if it weren’t true?
6. Describe the greatness of Jesus Christ (v. 25).

Going Deeper

1. What is holding you back from following Jesus closely?
2. What teachings in the Bible do you need to learn, communicate, and defend more effectively?