

“Discipleship on the Coast: Finding Your Place in the Water”

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Marysville United Methodist Church

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I really love this discipleship language we are using centered about the water. The water has always been a big part of my life. I've had the opportunity to be in a lot of boats. Everything from a row boat to an aircraft carrier. As Jenny talked last week, getting in a boat is a commitment worth taking. A boat allows you to go so much further than you'd ever imagined. Today, I'm here to talk about taking another step. Once you're in the boat, you can choose to enjoy the ride and get comfortable, or you can help decide where the boat is going. This is called Navigation.

Navigation is about knowing where you are in relationship to where you want to be. It's the study of monitoring and controlling a journey by determining your position and direction. In non-nautical terms, it's called leadership.

To help understand the difference, I'll share with you some of my family's recent boating adventures.

This summer, I've been able to take advantage of getting out on the water. In July, our family went to visit my in-laws, and we rented two small sailboats and cruised around Hilton Head, South Carolina. Paul, Papaw, and Bret were in one boat, and Mark, Mamaw, and I were in the other. We had great day sailing back and forth across the water. It was fun to be out on the water. We never left sight of the light house. We always knew which direction to head back to when we were done. There's no real need for navigation skills if you aren't going to wander very far from the shore.

In August, we took another opportunity to sail. But this time, we went big. We rented a sailboat out of Anacortes. We planned to get out of the sight line of the harbor, so this time, we required navigation. On the water, maps are called charts. They have lots of good information like depths of the water and buoys. And, when you pick a destination, there are many ways you can choose to go. You just have to pick one and check your progress along the way. Paul really liked the computer map that was on the helm that showed you where you were going and projected your course. However, we had to remind him that he needed to look up and see the real world and check that it made sense with what he was seeing on the screen. Navigation is a learned skill.

So is leadership. Leadership is helping the boat move in the right direction to reach the desired destination (while enjoying the journey along the way). Jesus was the ultimate navigator. We call him savior, teacher, and friend, but we don't often call him a leader. But leading people is exactly what he did.

I want everyone to answer this question silently. Do you think you are a leader? I guess that depends on your definition of leadership. In Ken Blanchart's book, *Lead Like Jesus*, he defines a leadership as "a process of influence. Anytime you seek to influence the thinking, behavior, or development of people in their personal or professional lives, you are taking on the role of a leader." Again, anyone who influences another person is a leader.

There is a specific reason we are talking about being a Navigator and not a Captain. Think of the Captains you know from the movies. Captain Kirk. Captain Hook. Captain Jack Sparrow. Captain America. They are all leaders, but there are many leaders in their midsts. You don't need the title of Captain to lead. I really love a book call "The Art of Possibility" by Rosemund and Benjamin Zander. In one of the chapters, they call attention to the leadership of the 7th chair cello player. He isn't a traditional leader by any titles or position. He doesn't sit in the front row. Instead, he comes to rehearsal on time. He is incredibly engaged in the learning. His attitude is contagious. It is through his leadership from the 7th chair that he influences others around him. Benjamin Zander states it best. "It doesn't matter who you are and where you sit; you can inspire and lead others from anywhere – even without a title or position."

And this type of influence can be provided in many ways...on a sailboat, by Jesus, and in our church. Today, I'd like to talk about 4 ways that a person can provide leadership. It's based on another book by Ken Blanchart, *Situational Leadership*. The 4 ways are Directing, Coaching, Supporting, and Delegating.

Directing:

Directing is the most traditional way people think about leading others. I tell you what to do. It's helpful when people don't have a lot of knowledge in an area. When we went on our sailing trip, we used directing a lot when we changed directions. Tacking can be a dangerous time. We had a lot of guests on our boats that didn't know much about sailing. So, when it came time to turn, we did a lot of telling people exactly what to do.

Jesus used direction when he taught the disciples how to pray by using the Lord's prayer.

Coaching:

Another way leaders influence others is through Coaching. By providing both what to do and how to do it, people can learn a new skill.

Boat: Mark at the helm steering.

Jesus: Parable of the sower. Mark 4:10-20. Jesus takes the time to explain what just happened and the why behind the what.

Supporting:

The third way to influence others is by supporting them. By providing information and a listening ear, but in the end, you let the person decide for themselves, you are using a supporting leadership style.

Boat: Paul learning how to row a boat. The extra line tied to the dinghy to ensure he didn't get too far away without help.

Jesus: Explaining to the Rich man how he could get into heaven. He provided information to the man and let him decide.

Delegating:

A final way we are going to talk about influencing others today is called delegating. This style is about giving others a mission to do and letting them go forth and do!

Boat: On the boat, we taught Paul how to use the propane stove (which he loved the fact that it was on gimbals and shifted as the boat heeled over). After we were confident that he had the right idea, Paul was charged with making me tea.

Jesus: In the Bible, Jesus sends the 12 out to heal and do his work. (Matthew Chapter 10) He has prepared them through his teachings. He has coached them and supported them as they have grown in their faith. And finally, he has the confidence in them to send them out into the world to do good things on their own.

While we can use their four leadership styles on a personal level, these four styles of leadership are already at work in on church. We use directing when we lead Bible Studies or working parties. (Read this chapter. Do this work. Show up at this time.) We use coaching in small groups like the choir or Youth ministry. The supporting style is most used in pastoral care. (That doesn't mean the pastor is the only one that does pastoral care!) Anytime you offer a listening ear and a sounding board to another person and then let them decide, you are using supporting leadership! And finally, the church often delegates by sending teams out to do mission work into our community, country, and world!

Back on our sailboat, we were headed home to turn the boat back in and we saw some fog in the distance. We thought we might have to come up with a different navigation strategy than what we'd been using. Instead of using visual markers (like buoys and land), we thought we might have to break out the radar that would allow us to see through the fog. Sometimes, you may have to use a different style of navigation to get where you need to go. Whether it is GPS,

radar when we are in fog, visual markers (like lighthouses), or even celestial navigation when everything else fails, sailors have to be prepared to use different navigation techniques depending on the weather conditions. As we work with different people and groups, we as a church have to be prepared to use different leadership styles.

Each one of these leadership styles can be used depending on who you are leading and what they need in their life at that moment. Sometimes, we need to be told what to do. Other times, we need the confidence that comes from knowing someone has our back. At the end of the day, navigation is about helping influence others. In Matthew 20, we are reminded that in order to be followers of Christ, we must be willing to serve others. “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”

We asked Paul and Mark if they'd like to go sailing again. And they said, “No. Not today. But maybe next week.” I can't wait to take them again and continue our lessons in learning more about how to navigate into new waters.