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**Series:** Leadership

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## THE BIG PICTURE

Hello there. We are still discussing the topic of leadership. Today, we will talk about “The Big Picture.” Often, as we go through life today, we tend to live within our own small corner of the world, interacting with those close to us, such as family, friends and co-workers, and focusing on what happens in our own lives. The same is true of others, who live their lives focusing on what happens to them. Everybody has their own circle, their own corner of the world. Yet, everything is happening all over the world at the same time.

If you begin to think of yourself as a leader, then you begin to think of “the big picture” and how you fit in as an individual, then within a group and then as a community leader. As a leader, you become aware of other leaders in other communities, and soon realize that leaders must work together with other leaders.

As I mentioned in a previous discussion, there are different styles of leadership. Some leaders lead first, while others follow them. Other leaders use a teamwork approach. Another style of leadership delegates responsibility and allows others to take the lead, while the leader is encouraging and supportive. It doesn’t matter what your leadership style is. What’s important is to find out where you belong and where you fit into the big picture.

Jesus knew God sent Him to earth and His purpose was to spread the truth. If people believed in Him, they would have eternal life with Him and the Father in heaven.

Jesus preached to the people in His part of the world, but knew He needed to reach more people—the Greeks, the Romans and different people from different countries. But not everyone was able to come and see Jesus preach. Only the people from the small area He visited were able to come. Jesus preached to them and taught them, and then He left. Those who heard Jesus were then responsible to teach others and spread His Word. Jesus knew what was to come for the world, and He knew God’s plan for His part in the “big picture.”

One thing that is very important is to have a goal. For communities to work together with one goal, they must start with an individual goal, then a group goal, and then a community goal. Communities can then work together with each other toward one common goal.

For example, as Christians, we have just one goal. Jesus came to earth to spread the truth. It’s the same goal for all of us, even though there are different churches with different leaders in different communities.

As I look around, I wonder where I fit into the “big picture.” In my corner of the world, I am an individual, a friend, a member of a family, a co-worker, a community member, an ASL Bible translator (which connects me to many around the world), and part of my Deaf community. As I look at my path as a deaf person and where I fit in, I also see Deaf churches among Deaf communities surrounded by hearing communities, each set in different parts of the world. Yet we are all part of one big quilt, with each of our pieces stitched together. It’s important to know where you fit into that “big picture.”

As you work with other community leaders, one thing that is important is that you have the same goal. If there is a disagreement, then each person needs to be able to share his opinion in order for successful teamwork to happen. Again, that is really important in order to move forward and be successful and accomplish good things.

Now, as a leader, you equip and teach others, and then allow them to start taking the lead, instead of continuing on as the leader for a long time. This is similar to the example of Jesus, who knew His time on earth was short. He knew He needed to prepare and equip the disciples, and when the time was right, they would be able to take over and carry on. When the time came and Jesus was crucified, buried, raised again, and ascended to heaven with the Father, the disciples were not only amazed, but were also well-equipped to continue on.

The same is true for community leaders. They need to work together, and then when the time is right, to encourage others to take the lead and move forward, while they pull back. Maybe you have different projects that you set up, such as a Bible study. Once it gets going and is well established, it’s time for you to pull back. The same is true whether you move to a new town or start a new job. Once you get involved and establish something, there will be a time to withdraw from the forefront, after you have taught others and equipped them with what they need in order to take the lead. When they are ready, and you have been the leader for a year or two, encourage them to move forward, while you move backward.

Letting go is hard for many people. Often you will see this happen with a person at the Deaf club, or someone on a board, or the president or CEO of a company or university, or a manager. It doesn’t matter whether the person is hearing or deaf, the situation is the same. Often they will stay for a long time, and what happens is that the group starts to fall apart.

This means you need to learn to withdraw and to let go. After you teach others how to do the job right and equip them, they’ll be okay. When you feel they are ready, encourage them to take the lead. That doesn’t mean there won’t be any problems or that it’s easy. But encourage others to take the lead as you let go, and growth will happen.

In John 14:12, Jesus said, *“Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”*

Equipping others and letting go means you trust that you can shift the responsibility to another person. If you have done a lousy job teaching others, then you will feel that you need to be involved and continue to lead. In that case, you need to do some self-analysis and learn how to teach and equip others, so they can take over and you can let go. An effective method of letting go is to gradually move from leader to encourager and supporter as others lead. When you have equipped others, and they are successful at taking over, you will feel good about what you’ve done.

Now look at the "big picture." God designed the entire world and each of us in it. We each have a purpose here in the world and in the big picture. Every deaf or hard-of-hearing person is unique. God says in Genesis that He made me Deaf. He made you Deaf. He made us Deaf. We don't need to be ashamed. We should thank God.

But it is sad that every day you and I who are deaf experience many different things, including frustration and discrimination. We struggle with our rights being taken away. You understand what I'm talking about. You've experienced it, too. We can do something about it. It is really important that we work cooperatively, and that we have the same goal for our lives, our rights, and our increased happiness. The American dream is "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." That is very important.

God has blessed us many times. God will continue to shower us with many more blessings. If the goal is that we deaf people want success, then we must invite God to be involved in our lives.

Look at an example from 2 Chronicles 7:14. God said, *"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

I strongly believe that will happen. If we will turn away from the wrong we are doing and turn to God through Jesus, we can say, "God, please come and help the Deaf and support us. We want to advance our lives and to save our freedoms." If we pray to God, God will pay attention to our prayers and come and help us. I believe that.

Another thing you must have as a leader is passion. Inside you must believe, "Yes, we can!" Your attitude must strongly show the belief that, with God's support, you will be successful in many things.

The goal is that, in the big picture, our rights and our equal access in areas including work and education will be successful. As Christians here on earth, it is also our duty to be honest and unified, and to tell others the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, that they must believe in Jesus, and that they can have eternal life with God in heaven.

In closing, let's pray. Father in heaven, today we deaf people in America and all over the world experience continual abuse. We feel we've had enough. Help us to repent of our wrongdoing and evil ways and to turn back to You. Come and strengthen us and unite us. Help us to teach hearing people to understand and respect us. We offer to You our request for fairness in our life on earth, for equality, and for comfort as we move forward. We turn our focus to You. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Today, we call You to come and help us. Give us strength. Thank You. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



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