

Leadership in the kingdom of God

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Throughout the centuries leaders have emerged among society. These are individuals who have the ability to inspire, empower, direct, train, sometimes coerce, manipulate, and force other human beings into a particular course of action. Let's face it; we have had leaders, both good and bad, in every generation. Some leaders have made positive changes impacting many people for good. Others have been ineffective and inconsequential at best. And there have been some who have risen to promote tragic causes and lead people into blatant evil.

The subject of leadership has been studied extensively in this past century. How and why certain leaders emerge in social, familial, political, and business situations is a matter of intense research. Remember when you were young and you were playing with your friends, wasn't there almost always one kid who wanted to be in charge? Wasn't there at least one child who wanted to make up the rules to the game, sometimes change them right in the middle of the fun, and even try to disqualify you if you didn't go along? We called them "bossy kids." Even on the playground, there seemed to be a struggle for leaders trying to ascend.

In school, hierarchies arose and subgroups sometimes called "cliques" were formed. Arguably, each assembly somehow developed its own informal power center. Some found themselves the leaders and others the followers. As adults, various forms of leadership continues to exist in our daily lives. At work, executives and supervisors exercise influence and authority to keep a smooth flow. In sports, coaches, managers, and trainers lead athletes. Our community services are run through paid and volunteer leadership. We vote to elect political leaders to represent our interests at different levels of government. At home, parents and grandparents exercise leadership and guidance in raising up children. I could go on and on. In fact, I believe we are all leaders on some level. Even if you don't consider yourself an "authority figure" in the traditional sense, yet, if you have impact on another, if your actions whether positive or negative would affect someone else, then you have leadership influence.

Jesus taught a lot about relationships and how we are to treat each other. He gave a number of clear instructions concerning how we are to use the influence we have with one another. He imparted the lessons and example of humble service. Speaking on leadership principles in the kingdom of God, he said, "Whoever desires to be great should become the least — the servant of all." This is a powerful lesson that he illustrated with his own life. Jesus gave and gave, and ultimately laid it all down for others. This teaching that greatness in leadership is directly proportioned with considering the needs of others and meeting them seems to run contrary with many of the

messages we are receiving today, even in Christian circles. Secular pop-psychology often seems to run right along the lines of sheer humanism and carnality; they are self-centered. Ultimately, the advice of so many "experts" teaches us to look out for ourselves first, to meet our own needs, to know oneself, to serve oneself, to be all that we can be in this one life we have to live, and to use what devices and influences we have available to accomplish that goal. And yet Jesus said, if I want to find my life, I must lose it. He was speaking of trading my goals for his purpose, exchanging my plans for God's leading, selling my sorrows and pain for divine joy and peace, replacing selfishness and self-centeredness with love for God and his people.

In speaking on influence and relationships, Jesus taught about those who help build up others and those who tear other people down. He spoke on the best ways to bless others and the consequences of using my power base to stumble the faith of "little ones." The Bible speaks of "honoring weaker vessels," the world says exploit them. Of course, rarely would you find someone today, in our politically correct society, overtly state such an opinion in plain speech. But we all know that actions, rather than speech, and, dare I say, articles, are the better indicator of our driving core values. They say it is our core values that help direct the decisions we make. I have grown up in a generation that places high value on relativism; a belief system where nothing is absolute. In other words, a generation of people that largely believes in "absolutely nothing." That is their core value. More and more people are beginning to question that — as they view the lives of previous "role models" crash and burn, many people are looking for something real. Jesus said what he came to bring people is more "real" than anything else when he stated, "... heaven and earth may pass away but my words will never pass away." Let's live his way and use our influence to lead others along the better path.

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9:00 & 10:30am
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Mid-Week Study:

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