



LESSON #6 THE EXAMPLE OF A LEADER

Leadership is not a game to be played where we can let down our guard and act irresponsibly—it is a continual, day by day lifestyle of acute awareness that our actions, attitudes and answers will have a profound effect on our followers, either for good or for bad. Your example as a leader is on display for the world to see—what are they seeing?

When my sons, Michael and Matthew were growing up, I was far from being a perfect dad—but I tried hard to be an example of a man of God for them to want to follow. One of the greatest blessings I have ever experienced was to hear my sons tell me in their adult years, married and raising their own children, how as young boys, they would hear me praying in the basement—or they would open a door to find me on my knees with the Lord. Those are spiritual imprints upon their soul that will never leave them. In their formative years, both Julie and I drilled it into Michael and Matthew that they were leaders. We repeated this prophetic declaration countless times and God honoured it and it stuck! Today, both our sons are in the ministry. They are now raising our grandchildren to be leaders by their example.

That is the quest of being an example to the point where your life has made a deep impact for Christ upon those around you—family, friends, work associates, teachers, neighbours, the server behind the coffee counter and even strangers. One of my favourite A. W. Tozer quotes is this—

"A sacred obligation lies upon each of us to be Christ-like. This generation of Christians must have models it can safely admire. Many beginners are taking us for their examples. Later they will become detached from us and will learn to fix their eyes directly upon the Lord Himself; in the meantime, for better or for worse we are their idea of what Christ is like. This is a wonderful and frightening fact that we must face and deal with. And we had better take this whole thing seriously"

In what way has your example as a Christian impacted someone who knows you?

MODELLING LEADERSHIP IN GOD'S HOUSE

Paul stressed to his young protégé, Timothy, the importance of example as a Christian minister. He would face opposition, discrimination, accusation and persecution from all sources. Younger leaders are more vulnerable to the criticisms and rejection of older men in authority due to their inexperience and perceived lack of wisdom. And yet Paul encouraged Timothy to model his position as a leader called by God and approved by his mentor.

“Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for the believers.” 1Timothy 4:12

The Greek word for “example” is—*‘toopos’* which literally means “*a model*”. That is where the term, “role model” comes from, which pertains to being the kind of person that others desire to imitate in the right way and shape their life after. “*He’s a model student*”, “*She’s a model wife*”, “*He’s a model pastor*”. That is how we refer to the people who exemplify a moral, upright life. These are the valid observances of those who become familiar with a person’s lifestyle and credibility. Leaders become a living pattern of excellence, hard work, honesty, patience, humility, generosity and sacrifice—a pattern for others to follow. The Apostle Paul made that case of being a model leader to the believers in Thessalonica.

“You are our witnesses, and so is God, that our conduct toward you who believe was pure, right, and without fault” 1Thessalonians 2:10

Our eternal objective is not to just be leaders—we strive to become great leaders—how? By example! Let’s consider these two particular essentials that identify a great leader in the house of God.

ESSENTIAL #1. BEING A SERVANT LEADER

Leadership is like getting married and going on your honeymoon. In the beginning, there is such excitement but then after the honeymoon is over, reality kicks in and life can become mundane and empty and monotonous. Are we still as eager to serve our husband or our wife 10 or 20 years later as we were in the beginning stage of marital bliss and romance?

Julie has been married to me for 40 years and she still has a servant’s heart that seeks to please and bless me in her ongoing role as a wife. She is an excellent example of a leader who models the ministry of serving to the women around her. Are we still an example for Christ, when we’re not experiencing the thrills and the excitement and the fireworks of former joys high up on the mountain? Perpetual life on the mountaintop is not reality—even for a leader. Oswald Chambers agrees—*“When you have no vision from God, no enthusiasm left in your life, and no one encouraging you, it requires the grace of God to take the next step in your devotion to Him, in the studying of His word, in your family life, or in your duty to Him. The thing that really testifies for God and for the people of God in the long run is steady perseverance, even when the work cannot be seen by others. Never allow yourself to think that some tasks are beneath your dignity or too insignificant for you to do.”*

How are you learning the duty of servant leadership when the former glories have now faded and no one is really serving or supporting you?

The modern church has it backwards today—we think leadership is a place of honour and prestige that we arrive at after we’ve paid the price to get there! And now it’s about being served by our followers—not serving them! Wrong! Never forget this—whether you are aware or not, people are watching your example as a leader—what are they seeing? Are some things too insignificant for you to do now that you’ve arrived? Too beneath your higher calling? Too outside of your respectable reputation? Too demeaning to your prophetic anointing? Christ is our supreme example of a Servant Leader—He is the one that we pattern our leadership after to be a living example for others to emulate and follow. In John 13:15, Jesus visibly demonstrated to His disciples the precedence of cultivating a servant’s heart. ***“For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”*** What was the example that Jesus, the Son of God illustrated? At the last supper, before He was arrested, Jesus took a towel and basin and began washing His disciples’ feet—a Jewish custom reserved for low-class servants. This was the Lord’s example of true greatness, as He ideally modelled to His soon-to-be Church leaders, summed up with this Kingdom centred lesson:

“Whoever would be great among you, let him serve you, 27 and whoever would be first among you, let him be your servant, 28 even as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Matthew 20:26-28

I'll never forget this object lesson as a young believer when I was attending a church breakfast and my senior pastor grabbed the coffee pot and began serving the people at their seats. I thought to myself, "*he should be the one being served, not the one serving!*" His example in such a small thing as pouring a coffee for someone left an indelible impression that has remained with me unto this day. That is the supernatural power of modelling a servant's heart in the house of God. Relate how you have been a role model as a servant leader to someone lately.

ESSENTIAL #2 BEING A PRAYING LEADER

Can you answer "yes" to these 7 basic questions concerning your prayer time?

- 1. Do you have a daily time with the Lord in prayer?*
- 2. Do you have a secret place where you meet with God every day?*
- 3. Are you satisfied with the length of time you spend in prayer?*
- 4. Do you receive answers to your prayers?*
- 5. Are you confident enough and filled with the Spirit to pray in public?*
- 6. Is prayer a priority in your life as a leader in God's house?*
- 7. Would you consider yourself to be a model of prayer as a leader to others?*

In his classic book, "Spiritual Leadership", Henry Blackaby expressed, "*More than any other single thing leaders do, it is their prayer life that will determine their effectiveness.*"

Dr. David Earley wrote this powerful truth in "High Impact Spiritual Leaders"
"Prayer is certainly not the only act of leadership, but it is the indisputable common denominator of spiritual difference-makers in every generation."

Chuck Swindoll concludes, "*Prayer is absolutely essential in the life of a leader.*"

Once again, Jesus is our great example in the arena of prayer. Even as the Son of God, He modelled prayer for us to imitate. Here are 3 accounts of Christ in prayer:

"Jesus went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone" Matthew 14:23 Leaders need a quiet place to be alone.

“It came to pass that Jesus went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” Luke 6:12 Leaders must give much time to prayer.

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, Jesus went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there He prayed.” Mark 1:35

Leaders must make prayer a priority above all other responsibilities of the day.

Christ’s disciples often found Him praying and His example lit a fire in their hearts to desire to pray as He did. That is what our example in prayer will do for others— not just to be seen, but to be a model leader in the Kingdom of God!

How would you rate your overall prayer life? Not only in quantity, but in quality.

Charles Spurgeon stated that it is not the length of your prayer that matters as much as the strength of your prayer. That is such a good reminder. Ten minutes of passionate prayer in the Father’s presence is more effective than one hour of religious ritual and routine.

The bottom line of this lesson is that leaders above all others, are identified with the same common denominator--they exemplify a servant’s heart and a praying spirit. These two components are essential to model for others around us to imitate.