

LEADERSHIP 101

THE FACTS OF LEADERSHIP
WHAT LEADERSHIP IS ALL ABOUT!

By Roger Martin

Leadership 101

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Written by Roger Martin for International Students, Inc.

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LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT STANDING ALONE

It is often said that leadership at the top is a lonely place! It is never more lonely than when the leader has to stand all alone. Standing alone takes courage and strength! It was Joshua who declared to all of the nation of Israel, "Choose you this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord!" (Joshua 24:15). It was Moses who stood all alone on the shore of the Red Sea. With Egypt behind him and Pharaoh and his army fast approaching, with the Red Sea in front of him; with the mountains of Pi-hahiroth on one side and the vast desert on the other side—Moses found it a lonely place when all of Israel began to blame him for the situation. When David went down into the valley of Elah to face Goliath, he went all alone! Years later when Nathan the prophet had to confront King David because of David's sin, the prophet stood tall to face the king—but he stood all alone.

If leaders are going to lead, they will often find themselves standing all alone. Here are some circumstances that demand leaders to stand alone.

First, *leaders must stand alone when a particular issue or decision is not popular*. Each had just been converted to Christ from being a hater of Christianity and the followers of Jesus. But it was Barnabus who, in the midst of Paul's great popularity, sought Paul out and befriended him and introduced him to the early believers! Barnabus stood alone! But he won the day and the face of that first-century church would never be the same because of Paul's influence. But it was Barnabus, taking a stand all by himself that made it all possible.

Second, *a leader will often find himself standing all alone over a matter of principles*. The Apostle Paul stood alone when he confronted the early church over their desire and attempt to include books of the law along with saving faith! It took great courage to stand up against the leaders of the church in this matter.

Third, *a leader will often find himself standing all alone when he confronts a culture in the area of morals and values*. The Corinthian Church had allowed immorality to creep into the church. The Apostle Paul had to take a stand and he stood alone. But the church saw the error of its way because somebody was willing to take a stand.

Fourth, *a leader will find himself standing all alone when it comes to implementing a change*. Change is difficult. It is often hard! But it is also often necessary. Moses implemented change for Israel in the area of worship. He instituted change when Israel left Egypt. The Apostle Paul introduced change when he went to Europe. Any time someone determines to interject a change, there will be opposition and the leader will often find himself alone.

Fifth, *a leader will find himself standing all alone when faith is required*. Trusting God for something by faith requires a deep trust and understanding of who God is. But once you get a glimpse of the Almighty, there are times when you say all alone—"God will make a way."

And last, *leaders often have to stand alone when it's dangerous and difficult*. Daniel stood alone when he continued to pray to the God of heaven! David stood alone when facing the great Goliath! Elijah stood alone against the four hundred prophets of Baal!

When leaders stand alone, there are things they are convinced that are totally true. First, they know God is with them and therefore, that's enough! Second, they know the importance of the moment. Failure to stand could change the course of the church for a generation or more. And last, a leader is convinced God has spoken and led and therefore, he has no real choice in the matter if he is going to continue to follow God.

Don't pursue leadership if you are not able to stand alone! It's one of the things leadership is all about!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to "stand alone"?
2. Have you ever had to stand alone? What was it like?
3. When a leader makes a decision based on the results of a poll, what is he trying to do? How can this be dangerous to a leader?
4. Why was the Apostle Paul feared? Why was he unpopular with the early church right after his conversion? Why was Barnabus so important at that time?
5. Why is it hard to be a confronter? Why does this take strength and courage? Why does one have to confront alone?
6. Can you cite an example today of an issue that requires a leader to stand alone by speaking either for or against it? Why would this be difficult? Has God challenged you about taking a stand? What was it like?
7. Why is change so difficult for many people? If a leader wants to implement change, how is the best way to do so? Why must one be willing to stand alone?

8. If leaders are not willing to take a stand and to stand all alone, what can happen to the culture?
To the church?

9. What do you think is the most graphic picture in the Bible of someone standing all alone?

10. Are you willing to take a stand all by yourself? Why or why not? What would keep you from taking such a stand?

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT PERSUASION

How do you get anybody to do anything? People need to be commanded, urged, advised, or pleaded to a point of action! That's how Webster's dictionary defines the art of persuasion. Leaders need this art and ability. They need to be able to move and motivate people to action. There are several aspects of persuasion that lead to a person actually becoming persuaded.

First, *a person may be persuaded by a leader's making a compelling case.* The leader must present the situation with convincing facts. The facts may be compelling because of need, timing, results or other factors that enter into the art of persuasion.

Second, *a person may be persuaded to action by convincing evidence.* All the facts and information are laid out. A person can ask questions, evaluate, and make judgments.

Third, *a person may be persuaded by the sole worthiness of the matter.* Action is taken just because the issue at hand deserves the action to be taken.

Fourth, *a person may be persuaded to action by the urgency and the imperative nature of the situation.* This factor carries with it a "must." A person is moved or motivated to act now.

The fifth persuasion factor may be the issue of reward. *A person may be persuaded to an action because of what may be gained.* It is more an issue of "what's in it for me" that persuades a person to act.

Sixth, *a person may be persuaded to act by the sheer power of personality.* Some personalities are hard to resist. Many leaders may rely on the personality factor to persuade people, but it is probably one of the weakest aspects of persuasion.

Seventh, and last, is *the aspect of the moving of the Holy Spirit in a person's life.* If God is leading a person to do something, the act of persuasion then depends on the leader's recognition that the Holy Spirit is at work in the person's life. This involvement has to be the strongest of all the persuasion factors.

But even with all the tools of persuasion at a leader's disposal, sometimes people don't quite get to the point of being persuaded. There is a great illustration of this found in Acts 26:28. King of Agrippa had been listening to the Apostle Paul. Paul is trying to persuade him to become a Christian. Agrippa replied, "Almost you persuade me!" With all of his gifts, personality, experience, facts and ability, Paul's persuasion attempt still failed.

Why is the ability to persuade others important for a leader?

People need to be persuaded to believe! The very heart of the Gospel as well as doctrine and theology depends on a person being persuaded of the truth.

People need to be persuaded to follow! Leaders only lead if there is someone following behind them. Sometimes people need to be persuaded that the direction a leader is going is indeed the right direction.

People need to be persuaded to support. They need to get behind the leader. They can do this with their money, their participation, their speech, and with all that they are.

People need to be persuaded to accept change. The Apostle Paul was dramatically changed by his conversion to Christ—but the early church didn't support him. It was Barnabus who helped Paul find acceptance.

The leader who has mastered the art of persuasion will be an effective leader of people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by “the act of persuasion”?
2. Why does a leader need to be persuasive?
3. Why do people need to be persuaded?
4. What role does a compelling case or convincing evidence play in persuading a person to action?
5. If a person is trying to be persuaded, what role does the “worthiness of the issue” play?
6. Why is a leader's personality not the best reason to be persuaded to or about something?
7. Have you ever been persuaded by someone to the point of action on a matter? Without giving specifics of the issue itself, what factors persuaded you?
8. If you are trying to persuade a person to believe the Good News about Jesus, what elements would you find helpful?
9. If a house was on fire and you needed to persuade people to get out of the house, what persuasion factor would be necessary?

10. How do you account for King Agrippa's failure to be persuaded to believe in Christ by the Apostle Paul?

11. How persuasive are you?

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY

Somebody has to carry the weight—the weight called responsibility! Webster’s dictionary tells us that this matter of responsibility involves trustworthiness, reliability, accountability, and strength! A leader has innately within him these characteristics that allow him to be responsible.

First, *trustworthiness*. A leader who is trustworthy has been proven. The doubts have been eliminated. He can carry in his hands the most awesome responsibility and do so without question of character.

Second, *reliability*. The issue of reliability is also a proven factor. The leader has been tested. He has passed the test. He is recognized as being wholly reliable in every way.

Third, *accountability*. The leader does not stand alone in an autonomous way. He has to answer for his life, his performance, and his task. He must give an accounting for himself.

Fourth, *strength*. A leader must be strong enough to carry the responsibility that is assigned to him. This strength is mental, emotional, and physical in nature. He must have strength because the issue of responsibility requires shouldering the load, carrying the burden, and standing under the pressure of what is calling responsibility.

An interesting question regarding responsibility is *Who, of all the characters in the Bible, carried the greatest responsibility?* A couple of names come immediately to mind: Joseph was responsible for feeding the world’s population in a time of famine; Paul was responsible for the spread of the Gospel in Asia and Europe; but the name that stands out most is that of Moses! He was responsible for the emancipation of Israel, for the establishment of a new nation, for establishing God’s Laws, and for the survival of a nation in the midst of a desert. As a leader, Moses was put to the test on every front. He had an enormous responsibility. He was responsible for communication, decision making, guiding a nation of 2,000,000 people, and meeting their needs for water and food. Can you imagine Moses doing these tasks without being trustworthy, reliable, accountable and strong? No way! Moses had the basic make up of a leader who would carry heavy responsibility!

Responsibility requires one to be focused. It requires the leader to take personal ownership of the task at hand. It requires one to be dutiful and detailed. It requires one to be faithful until the job is done. Moses had what it takes to be responsible. And Moses did what it took to be responsible.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the word “responsibility” mean to you?
2. Who do you think is the most responsible person you know? What specifically have you observed about them?

3. Would you consider yourself to be a responsible person? Why or why not?
4. Why does a leader have to be responsible? What if he fails in this area?
5. What does trustworthiness have to do with being responsible?
6. What does reliability have to do with being responsible?
7. What does accountability have to do with being responsible?
8. What does strength have to do with being responsible?
9. To whom was Moses accountable? In what way was he reliable? How was he trustworthy? How did he show strength?
10. What can you do to improve in the area of responsibility in your life?

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT PREPARATION

Someone once said that behind the preparation is more preparation! It seems like there is no end to preparation. When I was a boy in school, homework was a big part of the next day's preparation. Every day I had to prepare for the next day. But before I even had to worry about my preparation, there were previous preparations being made. The teacher had to prepare the lesson plans. Prior to that, the teacher had to prepare to teach. And preparation goes in the opposite and forward looking direction as well. We make preparations all throughout our lifetimes.

"To prepare" simply means to make ready beforehand. It has to do with planning, readiness, foresight, and anticipation. It has to do with knowing what is and what will be expected.

A leader is always making preparations. The moment a leader stops preparing is the moment his leadership begins to decline and become less effective.

Moses serves as a great example of a prepared leader. His first forty years were spent in the courts of Pharaoh. He was educated in all the ways of the Egyptians. Adopted by the king himself, he might have one day taken the throne and ruled Egypt. But he made a choice that changed his life forever. He chose to identify with his Hebrew brethren. Such a choice eventually sent him into the wilderness, where for the next forty years, Moses learned the way of the desert. Little did he know at the time, that God was preparing him to lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt. Little did he know at the time, that he would spend another forty years in the Sinai Peninsula as the leader of approximately two million people.

By the time God was ready to emancipate his people from Egypt, Moses was thoroughly prepared. He was schooled for the courts of royalty and he was schooled for life in the desert. God had fully prepared him.

But once a person is prepared to lead, the preparation of the daily responsibilities just begin. The following factors are involved in the preparation process.

First, *good preparation takes time*. For Moses, God prepared him over a period of eighty years.

Second, *good preparation involves using one's creativity*. In whatever aspect of leadership you are involved, creativity will grab the attention of others.

Third, *good preparation can be lonely*. It's hard to prepare in the midst of noise, activity, and a crowd. God isolated Moses out in the wilderness where He had his undivided attention.

Fourth, *good preparation involves an open mind* to see the possibilities and to learn new skills. The wise leader never closes his mind to learning new ideas.

Fifth, *good preparation requires taking the time to test the preparations that have been made*. This is the "certainty" factor. Good leaders ensure things are tested ahead of time.

Last, *good preparation pays high dividends*. You will always be glad you have taken the time to prepare. One of the dividends that preparation pays is the increased level of respect and trust. The leader gains more respect and trust when others recognize that he has taken the time to be well-prepared.

Preparation sets a leader up for success.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you define “preparation”?
2. How have you experienced the benefits of preparation? How have you experienced the cost of not being prepared?
3. Evaluate the preparation process in your own life? What steps can you identify in yourself as you prepare?
4. Explain the on-going preparation process that you utilize each day. In other words, what preparations do you make for each day?
5. How is it true that behind preparation is always more preparation?
6. How is Moses a good example of a prepared leader?
7. How did Pharaoh’s court education and preparation become useful and helpful to Moses?
8. How were Moses’ years in the wilderness helpful and useful for him?
9. Why does good preparation often demand solitude?
10. What part does creativity play in leadership?
11. What are you preparing for today?

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT DECISION MAKING

Leaders are decision makers. Everyone is! Everyone makes many kinds of decisions every day. But leaders make weighty decisions. They carry the weight for the success or failure of a company, a business, a country, a state, or city. It is imperative that a leader learn how to be decisive. His “yes” must be yes and his “no” must be no—and his directives must be clearly communicated to all they affect.

Abraham was a leader. He is called the Father of Faith or the Father of a Nation by Israelites, Arabs, and Christians. Abraham made five major decisions that greatly affected the history of the world.

First, God spoke to Abraham and made Abraham some promises. He promised Abraham a land, a great nation, an heir, and said to Abraham that through him all the families of the world would be blessed. Abraham had a decision to make. Would he believe such words or would he dismiss them as some dream or fantasy? He decided to believe. He embraced God and took His words to heart. For the rest of his life, he would be governed by this promise from God.

Second, Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees. This was an essential and a strategic move. By leaving behind his homeland, he was leaving behind the false gods of his homeland and family. From that point on it would be just Abraham and God. Abraham’s faith, confidence, and friendship with God would grow deeper and deeper. Leaving his homeland in Ur would be a decision that would change his life forever.

Third, Abraham made a decision, based on the advice of his wife, to have a son through Sarah’s handmaid, Hagar. Ishmael was born. Ishmael became the son who fathered the Arab nations. But Abraham hadn’t listened to God. Ishmael was a son according to the flesh—Abraham’s own effort to fulfill the plan of God. It was a decision he would live to regret.

Fourth, Abraham had a son who was the son of God’s promise. Israel was born supernaturally. Abraham and Sarah were both old. Sarah was beyond the years of producing a child. But God gave them life, and she gave birth to Isaac.

Fifth, Abraham decided to believe God in an almost impossible situation. God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham knew Isaac was a miracle from God. He believed that since God had spoken and had promised Abraham that his ancestors through Isaac would be as the sands of the seashore, somehow God would resurrect Isaac. He believed God for what God had said. This was the decision of a lifetime that solidified Abraham as the father of those who believe on the basis of faith.

Abraham had to make many other decisions as well that had great consequences. When he and Lot separated, he gave Lot first choice of the land that was before them. When Lot needed rescuing, it was Abraham who decided to come to his rescue. When Ishmael treated Isaac with contempt, it was Abraham who had to draw a line in the sand and send Ishmael and Hagar away.

Every leader has to make such decisions. Decisions are characterized in three different categories.

First, there are **absolute** decisions. These are yeses and nos based on values, morals, and the Word of God. There is no wavering. It is clear. These decisions are governed by a divine **must**.

Second, there are **apparent** decisions. These decisions are based on the known facts at the time. They are called apparent, because there may be more facts and knowledge that one may not know at the time.

Third, there are **abstract or analytical** decisions. These decisions are based on the situation at the time. But these decisions do not violate the absolute or the apparent. Situations do not trump the absolute or the known facts.

For all leaders who are faced with a decision it is imperative that they evaluate the circumstance and the parameters of the decisions. By doing so, they will be able to determine the appropriate approach to the decision making process.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been faced with a decision that was baffling to you? What did you do?
2. In decision making, is there a right and wrong answer? Explain.
3. Do you have a process of decision making that works for you? Is it a biblical process? Explain.
4. What do you think is the biggest error people make in the decision making process? Explain.
5. In what ways would you say Abraham was a pioneer in decision making?
6. What do you think was the most important decision Abraham made in his life? Explain.
7. How important is the issue of the absolute when it comes to making a decision?
8. What is meant by the “considerations of the apparent”?
9. How important are the factors of circumstance and situation in the decision making process?

How is this different from the apparent and the absolute?

10. Do the circumstances and the situations ever trump the absolute and the apparent in making a decision? Why or why not?

11. What decision are you facing today for which others can help you pray?

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT PROBLEM SOLVING

A leader must be one who has the ability to solve problems. Every leader will face the dilemma of problem solving. The leader who learns how to master the technique will be considered a successful leader.

There are two main kinds of problems and both kinds need to be solved. First, there are potential problems that are yet to come. A wise leader will anticipate these problems. He will take steps to prevent a potential problem from becoming an actual problem.

Gideon and Nehemiah were two leaders who dealt with a potential problem—a problem that if not dealt with would be much worse. Gideon faced the dilemma of having too many men. Thirty-two thousand men showed up to fight against Midian. Why was this a problem? It would seem that more is always better. But it is not always the case with God. God had other plans. He only wanted Gideon to have 300 men! Why? He knew that's all that were necessary because He was going to cause the enemy to turn inward upon their army and to kill one another. What if Gideon had taken to battle the entire army of thirty-two thousand who had shown up?

It is probable that they would have lost the battle, because their confidence would have been in themselves and not in God.

When Nehemiah and his followers were rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, they faced a similar potential problem. Nehemiah thwarted the problem by having each worker work with a weapon in one hand while building the wall with the other hand. He prevented his opposition from striking because they knew Nehemiah and his men were ready for them.

But what do you do with the problem that has already occurred? How do you deal with the problem that is staring you right in the eye? A leader who ignores a problem, failing to deal with it, does so at his own peril.

There are two kinds of problem solving available to a leader. There is wisdom problem solving and authority problem solving.

Wisdom problem solving depends on the wisdom the person is given or has accumulated to deal with problem issues. God is the giver of wisdom. The wise leader will have, over the years, listened to and accumulated wisdom. Solomon used wisdom to solve the problem of two women who both claimed to be the mother of a child (1 Kings 3:16-27). Every leader has wisdom available to him. All he has to do is to ask God for it (James 1:5).

Authority problem solving is based on the authority that the leader may have because of his leadership position. While this problem-solving technique can be effective and is sometimes necessary, it is the very technique that causes leaders the most trouble. Saying "because I said so," may be valid but it is also offensive. Many a leader has won the battle with his authority only to end up losing the war. This technique must be used with the greatest compassion and humility and communicated with the grace of God. The Apostle Paul had to rely on his apostolic authority but his authority was always used with compassion and grace.

Here are some guidelines to help leaders solve problems.

First, *understand the problem*. Take the time to thoroughly look into it and consider all sides as objectively as you can.

Second, *consider all of the ramifications* of the problem at hand.

Third, *consider the biblical principles and imperatives* that may be involved. Follow steadfastly all biblical guidelines.

Fourth, always *ask key questions*. Who does this concern? Is it pleasing to God? What is the real issue?

Fifth, *take appropriate action with both humility and boldness*.

Sixth, *take full responsibility* for your decisions, without apology or pride, but with confidence that you did things biblically and in a way that is pleasing to God.

Seventh, *expect "push back"* by some who may not understand because they did not know all the factors or they do not need to know them.

Eight, *don't keep revisiting the issue*. The more a wound gets opened, the longer the healing process will take.

By following these guidelines the leader can lead with confidence, understanding that humility before God and wisdom from God are key to solving problems.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever endeavored to solve a problem, only to see it worsen? What do you think made it worse?
2. What is meant by preventive problem solving?
3. How can a leader anticipate a problem coming?
4. What is meant by wisdom problem solving?
5. What should a person do if he lacks the wisdom to solve a problem?

6. What is meant by authority problem solving?
7. Why is authority problem solving offensive to some people?
8. What is necessary for authority problem solving to be effective?
9. How did the Apostle Paul use his authority?
10. How important is it to consider the biblical principles and imperatives involved in an issue?
11. How is the Bible an example of both wisdom and authority problem solving?
12. Of the steps listed in problem solving, with which ones do you struggle the most? Why?

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT CREATIVITY

A skilled leader learns how to be creative. Creativity is a great asset for leaders. It allows the leader to be unpredictable. It helps the leader win respect. It often sets the leader apart from others.

Joseph was such a leader. God gifted Joseph with leadership ability but Joseph was also a learner. He learned how to lead with skill, wisdom, and creativity. It seems that Joseph had a golden touch. Everything he did seemed to go well and caused him to prosper. Even when he was in prison, he was put into a position of leadership over the other prisoners.

But the real test of Joseph's creative leadership came when he was elevated to second in command of all of Egypt. Joseph was given the ability to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh. The dreams stated that there would be seven years of famine coming to the land. This would be preceded by ten years of prosperity. How would the world survive? Joseph offered a very creative plan to Pharaoh. It made sense. It was a workable solution; however, it would take the leadership of a creative person like Joseph to make such a plan work. Joseph was given the authority of Pharaoh himself to do whatever was necessary to make the plan work.

(Credit must also be given to Pharaoh's leadership. He did two things that are extremely hard for most leaders. First, he recognized and applauded Joseph's skills and wisdom as being superior to his own. He was enthusiastically unthreatened! Second, Pharaoh took a "hands off" approach, delegated the needed authority to Joseph, and publically proclaimed Joseph as the man who would solve the problem.)

So what does it mean to lead with creativity? First, it means thinking *within the box*! This simply means you must understand your present parameters. You must know the box you are in, and you must understand what normal means, what status quo means. Why is this important? Because it is your starting point. Going beyond the starting point and surrounding environment is the essence of creativity.

Second, think *outside the box* you are in. Now you are on new ground and territory. This calls for wisdom as well as creativity.

Just because something is new and different doesn't mean it is appropriate or workable. So it calls for honest appraisal and evaluation. Thinking outside the box of the norm may include thinking *inside* other boxes. Part of creativity is exposure. What are others doing? How are others approaching the same thing you are facing? A wise leader will be open to learning from others. Also, thinking outside the box may mean thinking *without a box* altogether. Without limitations, what can be done?

Joseph's plan was ingenious. He told Pharaoh what the coming problem would be and gave Pharaoh the detailed solution to the problem. Twenty percent of the grain and produce of Egypt was to be stored up for seven years. But this percentage became so massive an amount that it could no longer even be measured (Genesis 41:49). Every city had its own storehouses filled with grain from the surrounding fields. Under Joseph's leadership, the people survived. Under his leadership, all of the money in the land of Egypt and Canaan came into Pharaoh's coffers. Under Joseph's leadership, all of the livestock were sold to Joseph for Pharaoh. Under Joseph's leadership, all of the land eventually became Pharaoh's possession. Under Joseph's leadership, a plan was designed to help

the people regain their lives and to start over. Joseph's creative planning saved the world from destruction.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you define creativity?
2. How important is creativity to leadership?
3. Can a person lead effectively without being creative? Why or why not?
4. Why is it important for a creative leader to first think "inside the box"?
5. What can happen if a leader fails to take into account what is inside the box?
6. What does it mean to think "outside the box"?
7. In what ways did Pharaoh show that he was a wise and capable leader?
8. Why are Pharaoh's actions difficult for many leaders today?
9. Review Joseph's plan for saving Egypt. How did he think outside the box?
10. In what ways have you demonstrated creativity in leadership?
11. Has your creativity been a help or hindrance to you? Explain.

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT WISDOM

Wisdom is a gift from God that is available to every person. God has so designed life that wisdom is a strategic part of the home and the parenting process. God intends that wisdom to be transmitted from parents to children. In order for this to happen, children and parents must have conversations together about life. The proverbs of Solomon are wisdom statements about life from the wisest man who has ever lived. Solomon, who was the third king to reign in Israel, tells us how imperative it is for a child to learn wisdom from parents. The child who refuses to learn wisdom and understand the issues and ways of life is said to be a fool.

A good leader is a person who has listened and learned through his “growing up” process. A good leader is one who has benefitted from wise parents. A good leader is one who eagerly listened and applied to his life the lessons they have taught him.

But what about the leader who did not have the privilege of a home where life truths were taught? Is there any leadership hope for such a person? Absolutely, yes! Fortunately, God makes it possible for all of us to get wisdom directly from Him. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him,” (James 1:5). All a person has to do is recognize that he lacks the wisdom needed and humble himself to ask for such wisdom—and God will delight in giving the wisdom generously to him! What a great promise for all of us!

But what does wisdom look like in action? In second Samuel, chapter eleven, we have the sorrowful account of David’s sin with Bathsheba. Because of David’s temptation and indiscretion (lack of wisdom) Bathsheba became pregnant. David brings Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, home from battle, but he refuses to be with Bathsheba because of his integrity and commitment to duty. David then sends Uriah back to battle with orders that he is to fight at the front lines of the battle. Uriah then is slain. What does this have to do with wisdom? David does not use wisdom in what he did, but Nathan the prophet does in confronting David! How do you confront a monarch who has the power of life and death at his disposal? The answer is—very carefully!

And that is what Nathan the prophet did. He carefully, but courageously, confronted King David with a story! That’s using creativity and wisdom together. Kind David listened intently to Nathan’s story. It was a story about a very rich man who took the lone lamb of a poor man and offered it to his own guests who had unexpectedly arrived.

Of course, David saw the injustice of the story! He said to Nathan, “Let the man die.” And Nathan, as it is with the prophets, spoke the plain truth to David with these words, “You are the man!”

It was after this confrontation that David ‘wised up’ and exercised wisdom himself. His wise response was simply, “I have sinned against the Lord.” No excuses! No effort to cover things up! No denial! He took responsibility for his actions and he said plainly, “I have sinned.” That’s wisdom.

Nathan the prophet used wisdom in the confrontation. David used wisdom in his response. His leaders, we often don’t get the response we want because our approach lacks the wisdom that is needed. Also as leaders, sometimes we don’t respond well when others confront us because we lack wisdom and try to defend ourselves—especially when we have been wrong. Wisdom is admitting our mistakes and taking responsibility for our actions.

So, let's go back to the proverbs which Solomon recorded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and ask some basic questions about wisdom.

What is wisdom? The beginning of wisdom is to fear God! The beginning of wisdom is to have a heart that seeks after wisdom (Proverbs 4:7).

How do I get wisdom? Wisdom comes into our lives by way of the heart and the soul through listening, understanding, seeking, discretion, and acceptance (Proverbs 2:8-11).

What if a person doesn't get wisdom? Such a person will walk through life in the ways of darkness, delighting in doing evil or things that are crooked, and will perish in death (Proverbs 2:12-18).

What will wisdom do for a person? The person who finds wisdom will live a blessed life, a long life, and a pleasant life. Such a person will walk through life with security and confidence (Proverbs 3:13-23).

How valuable is wisdom? Wisdom is more precious than jewels. Nothing else even compared to wisdom. Wisdom is more profitable than the abundance of silver and gold (Proverbs 3:14, 15).

A wise leader will make sure he has an abundance of wisdom in his toolbox!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you define wisdom?
2. Would you say that you are a person of wisdom? Why or why not?
3. What happened in your life when you did not apply wisdom?
4. Where does wisdom come from and how does a person get it?
5. What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? Can a person have a lot of knowledge but not be very wise? Explain.
6. Read 1 Kings 3:6-13. How did Solomon get his wisdom? Read James 1:5. How may we get wisdom today?

7. How did Nathan the Prophet exercise wisdom when he confronted King David?

8. How did David exercise wisdom after he had been confronted by Nathan the Prophet?

9. What will wisdom do for a person? Why is wisdom a necessity for leadership?

10. Do you need wisdom for your life today? How do you plan to get the wisdom you need?

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT CHARACTER

Leadership is founded upon character! A leader is not a person who is a character! A leader is a person who has character! Character is that fiber of which a person is made. It has to do with integrity, values, beliefs, and behavior. It has to do with the integral being of a person. It has to do with who a person is on the inside and how what is on the inside is portrayed on the outside. A leader who lacks character will not be a leader for long. Leaders who lack character do not last.

So what is character? Character consists of those inner qualities that make up the integral essence of a person's life. Character determines what you do and how and why you do it. Character defines the real you from the inside out.

Paul wrote a letter to the Galatian believers because he was very concerned for who they were and what was happening to them. Many of them had started in their walk of faith and following Christ as their Lord and Savior, but then all of a sudden they stopped running their race of faith. They started practicing and adding good works to their faith. Paul confronted them about the contrast between what was of their own flesh and what was of the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit of God that builds godly character. It is the Spirit of God who remakes a person into a brand new creation of God. It is the Spirit of God who enables a person to be changed on the inside. It is the Spirit of God who instills character within.

This character is described with words that ought to define the inside of every believer: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These nine characteristics mold the character. If you were to eliminate any one of these characteristics and replace it with its counterpart opposite, you would immediately see the difference. And yet apart from God, we are all controlled by the counterpart opposites.

The Apostle Paul, himself is one of the best examples of this in Scripture. Prior to Paul's becoming a believer in Jesus Christ, his name was Saul. He was very intense, very religious, very loyal to his Jewish faith, and very zealous. He was controlled by hatred and violence. His mission was to stamp out Christianity. But God stepped into his life in a new way, and Paul was transformed into a brand-new person. This brand-new person now had a different internal DNA (i.e. definite new attitude). He became, perhaps, the most influential leader of the church. He became a man of integrity—a man of character.

Why is character essential for leaders? It is essential for trust. It is essential for consistency. It is essential for attitude. It is essential for decision making. It is essential for understanding and wisdom. It is essential for serving others. It is essential for a right relationship and response to others.

Leaders who lack character will be ineffective in every aspect of their leadership.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever known someone who lacked character? What was this person like?
2. Have you ever had a character misstep in your own life? What did you learn from it about yourself?
3. When we disappoint ourselves in the area of our character, how do we feel about ourselves? Why?
4. How important is character if you are a banker? A judge? A clerk? A Christian?
5. What is character?
6. Why is the Apostle Paul a good example of a person with character?
7. From where does character originate?
8. Can a person be a leader and not have character? Explain.
9. What makes the “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23) good character traits? Which of these do you think is most important? If you could, which one would you eliminate?
10. How are these character traits lived out in your own life?

LEADERSHIP IS ABOUT ATTITUDE

Someone has said, “When it comes to ministry or serving, attitude is everything!” Just think about that for a moment—attitude is everything! That is a very weighty and serious statement.

When our Lord partook of the incarnation, becoming a man and taking upon Himself our flesh, it was all possible because of His attitude.

Our Lord was and is the King of Kings! That simply means that of all the kings past, present, and future, He stands out as the preeminent King. Therefore, He is the Leader of all leaders! Of all the leaders who have ever led, His leadership is far and away the best, the most effective, the most compassionate, the most influential, and the most consequential. He has raised the bar of leadership to a level unattainable to others.

But the amazing thing is, at the same time, he reigns as King of Kings. He also sets the standard bar for being the Servant of Servants. For He Himself said that He did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28).

It is imperative that we take a look at the incarnation and the life of Jesus in order to really understand the importance of this matter called attitude.

Philippians 2:5-8 states:

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

These verses are all about leadership and attitude. The attitude of the King of Kings and the Servant of Servants is on grand display. He is our example to follow.

First, His attitude was that though He was God and had equality as God, that was not a matter to hang on to. He did not have to look like God in order to be God! He could become a man and still be God. He could become a bondservant and still be God. He could lay down his life in death and still be God! He could be humiliated and die the death of a criminal and still be God. The point is appearance was not important to Him. Position was not important to Him. It was all about His attitude.

The prophet Isaiah put it more bluntly. “He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him,” (Isaiah 53:2).

For Jesus, it was not about His looks and having to be like God Himself. (Although he still was God.) He would gladly lay aside the outward appearance (the Shekinah Glory) of God in order to come and be the servant of all. He would gladly lay aside his crown and pick up a servant’s towel to wash the feet of His followers. It all started and ended with the matter of attitude.

Our Lord is the supreme example to every leader. If looks, and an outward appearance of position, authority, and prestige, dominate the attitude and thinking of a leader, he will be a poor leader indeed. Why? As a leader, doing so is to value the very things that will undermine his leadership.

So, let us all strive to have the attitude which was in Christ Jesus!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you define “attitude”?
2. Why is attitude important to leadership?
3. Have you ever tried to follow someone who had a bad attitude? What was it like?
4. In what way is our Lord both a leader and a servant of servants?
5. What was the attitude of Jesus regarding His appearance?
6. What was the attitude of Jesus regarding His position?
7. Read Philippians 2:5-11. How was Jesus’ attitude of humility demonstrated in His life?
8. If a person has a wrong attitude about him/herself, how can that attitude be changed?
9. How did the attitude of Jesus allow Him to accomplish His mission?
10. What is your attitude toward yourself? Does it need to be changed? How can you do this?

11. What do you think is the most important attitude for a leader to have? Explain.