

Living in the Light: Looking Up and Lighting the Way for Others to Follow: Part 2

This Bible study deals with Christians taking seriously Jesus' command to be the light of the world. Part one gave some general physical and spiritual principles of light. This last part completes the description of some leadership qualities that was endowed to believers by the Light Himself.

Leaders are First Followers: They Must See Before They Can Guide

Every one of us was spiritually blind until our eyes were opened and we invited the Light of the world to take control. No one can be led to light by someone who does not see. Jesus cautioned against the blind leading the blind.

The essential prerequisite for a Christian leader is that he follows the Light. He has a foundational relationship with Jesus, the origin of light. Since he follows the Light himself, he can lead others to follow the light.

Just as Jesus empowers His followers with His light, He does so not only for our benefit, but for others. Light is meant to be shared. We are not the light with a capital "L," but a reflection of the Light. The light of life living within Christians should be evident to others. Just like John the Baptist, we should bear witness of the light.

Someone once told me she believed that a good man she is acquainted with who attends church regularly but denies the existence of Christ was a secret Christian. I heartily disagree. If, as Jesus says, those who believe in Him are the light of the world, there is no such thing as a secret Christian. A Christian is light only because he has looked to the source of light, the Light of the World. Light does not belong under a bushel. It is meant to be on a lampstand. As such, it can penetrate the darkness and help others see their way.

See Psalm 27:1, Psalm 36:9, Matthew 15:14-16, John 1:8, John 8:12.

Leaders Lead Others Where They Have Been

Spiritual birth is the beginning of an eternal journey. Good leaders do not stagnate. They keep moving. *Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan, is a narrative about that journey. The best leaders lead because they have already gone down the road they are encouraging others to travel. They are constantly learning, looking to the Light for guidance. As our example, even Jesus learned obedience.

As Jesus did, leaders lead by example. That is understood in the secular

world as well. Albert Schweitzer said, "Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing." Military leaders who generate the most respect and loyalty are those who go with their troops into battle. Many politicians have campaigned on the basis of their identity with the common people. Most successful business leaders achieved their success through hard work in their field. Having "been there, done that," leaders can give guidance.

Leaders of light do not lead by intimidation but by example. They take time to develop their own relationship with Christ. They know their limitations. They ask Christ to expose any darkness in their life that can adversely affect their influence. They are willing to be conformed to the character of Christ. They agree with Paul that to shine as light in the world, they must become blameless and harmless. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf said, "Leadership is a combination of strategy and character. If you must be without one, be without the strategy."

See Romans 8:29, Philippians 2:14-15, Hebrews 5:8

Leaders Share Only the Truth

Just as Jesus brings revelation of things as they really are and dispels the fear of the dark, Christian disciples always point those they are trying to lead to the light of Truth. They recognize the natural tendency to fear what one does not understand. Leaders will spend time getting their facts straight.

Unlike many politicians who will only want to say what is popular, Christian leaders must tell the truth. What they teach will be truth even if it is hard for others to hear. That means that a Christian leader is a student of the Word. They don't fake their knowledge because they have asked God for wisdom in their leadership.

See Psalm 43:3, Psalm 119:105, James 1:5

Leaders are Diligent Workers

The role of leadership naturally means that you will not do all the tasks yourself. No one thinks a micromanager is a good leader. Although the leader may be able to do everything required to get the job done, he does not do it all. His strength lies in being able to recognize the capabilities of those he is leading. However, that does not mean the leader stands idly by and watches others do all the work. The difference is the assignment load. A good Christian leader will take full responsibility for providing the guidance that his team needs to do the work. He will make good use of his time and just like a traffic light, know when to signal others to go, wait, or stop awhile.

The remarkable example that Jesus gave of leadership was in his instruction for his followers to *take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls* (Matthew 11:29). Life is hard work in itself, but those who look to the Light for leadership will find that Jesus shares their burden. Gentle is sometimes translated meek. Meekness is often associated with being feeble or weak, but that is not the case at all. The best definition for meekness is strength under control. The great Lion of Judah is also the sacrificial Lamb of God. Jesus inspires confidence because he embodies strength and decisiveness as well as a gentle caring for those he leads. See 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6,8

Leaders will Care About Their Team

This can be an unusual leadership quality in the secular world. Business leaders can be so results oriented that many times people's lives are trampled in the process. These are not good leaders, to be sure, but how many people have been injured by someone else's climb to the top?

Concern for others is a trait of Christian leadership. Just as it is easier to travel a road that is well lit rather than one that is dark, Christian leaders care about providing the light that is needed to get the job done. Whatever is needed for others to be able to fulfill their calling in life, a good Christian leader will find time to provide. Goodness and compassion are hallmark traits of a leader worth following.

See Ephesians 5:8-10

Christian Leaders Work Within the Context of the Body of Christ, the Church

Jesus appeals to our logic by stating that no one lights a lamp, hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. A lamp is meant to be placed on a stand to provide illumination. Jesus refers to churches as lampstands. The church is being observed. When Jesus is not the leader, the head of the church, the light of the church is being hidden. The church, the Body of Christ, is designed to give off light so that others may see Christ and glorify God.

See Isaiah 2:5, Luke 8:16, Revelation 1:20

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. . . (1 John 1:7).

Leaders Give Credit Where Credit is Due

Good leaders recognize that nothing would be accomplished without the team that works under them. They will recognize and honor those who do the work. They are quick to praise when a job is well done. The Apostle

Paul had a prayer of thanksgiving for the recipients of his letters (in every case but one). Committed believers would love to finish the assignment God gives them, whatever that is, and hear him say, "Well done."

Christians must recognize where the source of all ability comes from. Whatever is accomplished in the life of a believer is the work of the Holy Spirit. The light of the believer is not equal to the Light of the World. It is reflected light. Our light is bestowed upon us so that God's light can shine through us and give him glory. We are not the sun, but we can walk in the sunlight. The Christian leader walks in the light of Christ and lights the way for others to follow.

See Matthew 5:14-16, 2 Corinthians 4:4

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

For further study and discussion

Examine the scriptures given after each section and discuss the influence of light.

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