

Public Figures, Leadership and the Best Example

For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you (John 13:15).

Public figures are normally evaluated on whether what they do matches what they say. This is especially true in politics. Candidates promise a lot when they are trying to get elected. They can pull the wool over the eyes of their constituents for a period of time, but if they get elected, everything they said beforehand is quoted back to them on a regular basis. Did they tell the truth when they promised to deliver on a certain issue? Are they telling the truth while in office?

Observing interviews with politicians, it seems that a politician never answers a direct question. They have an agenda they want to present. They have a reputation they want to protect. They don't want to be quoted later on a controversial issue. Since I also believe that reporters often also have an agenda of their own, interviews are definitely a tricky situation for the politician.

Leaders who serve in every public field - politics, business, academics, sports, religion - have a similar challenge. Their actions define how their words are received. The ultimate criteria for judgment is being able to trust the leader.

Leadership Styles

School years and working in the business world exposed me to different leadership styles. Some were good. Some were terrible. I remember the challenges of working with some leaders and the joy of learning from others.

Some leaders take their position seriously and care about those in their charge. They are available. They have come through the ranks and know how the business works. They understand the assignments given to their subordinates first hand. They have been there, done that.

Some leaders are not involved. Some presidents and CEOs choose to separate themselves from the common worker in their company. They only see those in upper management.

These leaders don't trust others. They micromanage. Their decisions are sometimes made without understanding the intricate workings of the business. They are known for stepping on or over those underneath them in order to get ahead. Often these leaders do whatever it takes to make their position look good.

The Perfect Example

Jesus is just the opposite of these ivory tower managers. He did not separate Himself from those He was trying to lead. On the contrary, He lived among them. He used various teaching methods, but one teaching style. He led by example.

Jesus led by the example of His life. He demonstrated how to follow God's commandments by obeying every one of them perfectly. He never avoided anyone. He showed how to relate to everyone – no matter how different they may be. He showed His disciples how to be a servant leader by washing their feet. He showed them how to endure hardship through His sacrificial suffering.

Jesus led by the example of His words. He told stories to illustrate spiritual truth. He is Truth and He told the truth. He exposed hypocrites. He offered compassion to those who trusted Him. He offered truth and allowed His hearers to make the choice of trusting Him or not. He called many to follow Him. Some did. Some turned away.

Jesus led by the example of His pure heart. He is God, but His life was an example of humility. He never sinned and never needed forgiveness, but as He bore our sin on the cross, He demonstrated the ultimate example of forgiveness.

Jesus led by demonstrating how we should live. He asked for love, loyalty and service, but He did not demand it. He demonstrated it.

Jesus was perfect in every way. He was the ultimate example of a good leader and teacher. He was not a manager. Everything He said and did was related to leading others to understand the truth He offered and showing them the Truth.

If someone is a good example, he is sometimes referred to as a shining example. Jesus led by shining. He is Light. He shares His light with His brothers and sisters. When He calls you, He equips you to bear fruit to bring glory to the Father.

You Are a Leader

Jesus, our brother, loves us so much that He gave His life for ours. His is the example we should follow as the model for leadership. Paul understood this when he told others to imitate him just as he imitated Christ.

Even if you don't have a leadership role in the church, you are a leader. Someone is watching you. You are an example to your spouse, your children, grandchildren, other relatives and friends who know you. You do have an influence on others.

Not all leaders are good leaders. Some have a negative influence. However, lessons can be learned from both good and bad leaders. Bad leaders evidence the consequences of selfishness and influencing others for evil.

Jesus' words and actions matched. His is the best example to follow.

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