

Jesus as a Leader

INTRODUCTION

- A. Illustration about the African telling the missionary, “I am the path,” Illustrations Unlimited, p. 313, #5.
 - 1. The essence of leadership is saying: “I am the path. Come, follow me, and I will guide you.”
 - 2. We need to start thinking about leadership here at Alum Creek.
- B. Over the course of the next few weeks, we will be appointing new deacons here at Alum Creek.
 - 1. There is a real sense in which deacons are not leaders.
 - a. Deacons are servants; that’s what the word “deacon” really means.
 - b. Before long, we’ll be discussing the work of deacons, and we’ll discuss their servanthood in more detail then.
 - 2. But, in the modern world, we view everyone whose name is on the bulletin as a “leader.” And, there are ways deacons lead; a deacon may, for example, be over the education program and have all the teachers in a congregation under him.
- C. Since we’re going to be discussing the work and qualifications of deacons over the next few weeks, I thought we should really just start and talk about church leadership in general.
 - 1. I know of no better place to start than to talk about Jesus as a leader.
 - 2. “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21).
 - a. I know Peter was discussing Jesus as a sufferer in 1 Peter 2, and it would be a mistake to take that passage out of context and make it apply to Jesus’ life in general.
 - b. But, at the same time, Jesus’ life was exemplary; he left us many examples, and we want to think about his example of leadership this morning.
 - c. We’re going to apply Jesus’ example to the modern church, as well.

JESUS LEADS THROUGH HIS POSITION

- A. Leadership scholars have identified several “bases of power.”
 - 1. A very common base of power is called “position power.” A superior has position power when the position he holds has power in and of itself; the power a superior has is based on his position.
 - 2. We see this everyday:
 - a. A teacher can tell her students when their term papers are due because of her position.
 - b. An employer can hire, fire, give raises, demotions, etc. because of his position.
- B. Jesus has power just because of who he is.
 - 1. God has given him, because Jesus is the Christ, great authority.
 - a. Jesus told the apostles, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Mt. 28:18).
 - b. The Father “has given [Jesus] authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man” (Jn. 5:27).
 - 2. Because Jesus has position power, authority because of who he is, we need to obey him and to his will.
- C. Like Jesus, the elders here in this congregation have position power.
 - 1. God has given elders a position of authority in the church, and God expects them to be obeyed because of their position. Notice these passages:
 - a. “We urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you” (1 Thess. 5:12).
 - b. “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account” (Heb. 13:17).
 - 2. In all honesty, we need to do a better job of obeying the elders of this congregation:

- a. The elders have established Sunday morning as a time of Bible study, but how many of us attend that Bible study? How many of us attend Wednesday night Bible study?
 - b. The elders have asked men of the congregation to help lock the building. How many of us have stepped up to the plate and volunteered to do that?
3. God has established elders as leaders in his church. To disobey the elders is to disobey God. Will you obey the elders?

HE LEADS THROUGH HIS TEACHING

- A. In studying leadership, the first thing a person learns is that knowledge equals power.
1. People need to information, and the person who has it has great power.
 2. Think back to September 11, 2001.
 - a. Those in Manhattan and Washington needed to know what to do to get out of harm's way.
 - b. The police, firemen, Mayor Giuliani, Governor Pataki, and others became very powerful that day because they had information people needed to know.
- B. Jesus leads because of the information he has.
1. Jesus has great authority in his teaching.
 - a. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, "the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mt. 7:28-29).
 - b. "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (Jn. 12:48).
 2. We need to see to it that we hear the words of Jesus and that we obey the words of Jesus,
- C. The elders of this congregation also, like Jesus, lead by their words.
1. God always intended elders to be teaching-elders — "He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11).
 - a. Although the English hints that the terms "pastors" and "teachers" refer to the same office, the Greek makes it abundantly clear.
 - b. What Paul is really saying is that God gave some to be "teaching pastors." The elders are to teach the congregations.
 - c. Elders must be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2).
 2. This is the first congregation in which I have worked that the elders have fulfilled that requirement.
 - a. Two of our elders preach for me on occasion, and all three of our elders teach quite regularly in classes.
 - b. The reason elders seem to be required to be capable teachers is so that they can refute error.
 - 1) Titus was to appoint elders, "for there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially the circumcision party; they must be silenced" (Tit. 1:10-11).
 - 2) To the Ephesian elders Paul said: "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert" (Acts 20:29-31).
 - a) These elders needed to be alert because some propagating error would soon arrive.
 - b) Our elders need to be alert because they never know when someone propagating error will arrive.

HE LEADS THROUGH HIS SERVICE

- A. One of the new trends in leadership studies is the idea of "servant leadership."
1. Robert Greenleaf first coined the term "servant-leader" in 1970 to describe a leader who puts the needs of the followers above his own needs.
 2. According to this idea of leadership is that "servant-leaders" continually ask themselves what is best

for those they lead.

- B. Jesus was a servant leader.
 - 1. “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28).
 - 2. At the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples (Jn. 13).
 - a. The washing of feet was left for the lowest of slaves — no one else wanted to have to get down and wash the feet of people who had been wearing sandals on dusty roads.
 - b. But, Jesus, in his humility, served his disciples, and he taught them about his example (Jn. 13:13-17).
- C. Jesus taught us that leaders serve others.
 - 1. Mt. 20:25-27.
 - 2. At the end of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus asked the lawyer which of the three — the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan — had shown mercy to the injured man (Lk. 10:36),
 - a. The lawyer replied, “He who showed mercy on him” (Lk. 10:37).
 - b. Jesus replied, “Go and do likewise” (Lk. 10:37)- the idea is that we are to serve our fellow human beings.
 - 3. If a leader — and a Christian leader, at that — refuses to lead out of service, what good is he?
 - a. The purpose of leading in a congregation is not to accumulate power or prestige — the purpose is to serve others and help them become more like Jesus.
 - b. Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf said, “The Army, with its emphasis on rank and medals and efficiency reports, is the easiest institution in the world in which to get consumed with ambition. Some officers spend all their time carrying a favor and worrying about the next promotion — a miserable way to live. But West Point saved me from that by instilling the ideal of service above self — to do my duty for my country even if it brought no gain at all. It gave me far more than a military career — it gave me a calling.”
 - c. What about you, all of you, do you serve others to help them become more like Jesus?

HE LEADS THROUGH HIS EXAMPLE

- A. Leaders in organizations often lead through their example.
 - 1. If an employee doesn’t know how to perform a certain task, does the employer always just tell him how to do it, or does he often walk the subordinate through it and help him see how to do it?
 - a. Tammy’s supervisor at the library will often show her how to do something she doesn’t know how to do.
 - b. I’m sure many of you have supervisors who have had to show you how to do something you didn’t know to do.
 - 2. Jesus leads through his example.
 - a. When Jesus saw Peter and Andrew fishing, he said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt. 4:19).
 - 1) Notice carefully what Jesus here says, “Follow me. Do what I do, and you will be fishers of men.”
 - 2) Over the next three years, Peter and Andrew saw Jesus working up close, and he modeled for them what they should do; they became great church leaders because of their contact with Jesus.
 - b. After Jesus had washed the disciples’ feet, he told them, “If I then, your Lord and Teachers, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (Jn. 13:14). Jesus says, “Do what I do.”
- B. The church today needs men who will lead by example.
 - 1. To whom do people turn for role models? Kobe Bryant? Madonna? Jennifer Lopez? There are

not that many public figures we really want our children imitating.

2. We need elders, deacons, and preachers who will lead by their example.
 - a. I wonder if that's not part of the reason that the qualifications of elders and deacons aren't so high?
 - b. We need elders and deacons who live up to those qualifications so that they can be role models of Christian behavior.
 - c. Illustration about Ike and the piece of string, Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #6836.
- C. Really, though, we need every Christian man and woman to step up to the plate and live an exemplary life.
 1. Each one of us needs to live a life that can be modeled, that can be held up as an example to the younger generation of what Christianity really is.
 2. Are you living that life or do you need to come forward and begin doing that this morning?