

SEVEN WAYS FOR CHRISTIANS TO BECOME BETTER LEADERS

Editors comments: For those who do not consider themselves leaders this article is still relevant. It is good advice for all Christians to follow in everyday life and if you do you may well become qualified to be a leader.

Never before in history has it been such an exciting time to be alive! As believers in Christ, we have the tremendous privilege and wonderful responsibility of changing the course of history and impacting our world for the better. I have been thinking a lot about what the year ahead will hold. I don't know what it holds but I find great peace and comfort in the fact that whatever happens, good or bad, God will use it to glorify Himself. He will use willing servants like you and me to accomplish His purposes and bring the wounded, the needed and the broken-hearted to Himself.

In order to really make an impact, we need to understand the key to truly accomplishing that is strong leadership. What this culture needs more than anything else is leaders willing to rally the troops and stand together to be the change that we're all looking for. We have enough followers on this planet. People are so willing to follow, but not necessarily happy to lead. Strong leadership will determine how well we can make that impact and how far that impact will go. I like leading. I'm a leadership type in the media world. That's just me. I mean there's nothing wrong with not being cut out for leadership roles, but I think we need to look for people who have the potential and then mentor them into the roles.

That's another thing that's lacking in this culture today. It's called mentorship. Sadly, not much of that happens today. Jesus Christ was the greatest leader to ever walk the face of this planet. He was born in humble circumstances, he lived and worked in humble circumstances, yet he teamed up with 12 men from a diverse range of backgrounds to spread a movement that would forever change the world. Here are seven lessons from His life that teaches us how to effectively make an impact:

Love people genuinely

There's just not enough love in this world. And by love, I mean real, genuine, agape love. Not the fickle love of the romantic relationships that come and go. In order to truly make an impact in this world, you've got to have a perspective of love. That's exactly what Christ did when He was on this earth healing, teaching and preaching. He loved everybody, even those who were so opposed to Him. In fact, He loved us all so much that He was willing to die on the Cross for us.

1 Corinthians 16:14 says, "Let all that you do be done with love." That verse should be our motto for everything we do.

Keep a servant heart

In Luke 22:27, Christ says: "I am among you as the One who serves." Our Lord understood that his position of leadership was not one of superiority but one of servanthood. His focus was always on serving and meeting the needs of others. One of my favourite sayings is "the best way to lead is by example." You don't send the troops into the thick of combat by leading from behind. It doesn't work like that. A true leader will be up at the front leading the charge, he will be getting his hands dirty and the troops will follow his example. Too often today, we have leaders who want to be in the public spotlight for their own selfish desire for fame and glory but they're not willing to get their hands dirty and put in the hard yards to make things happen.

As leaders, we must always understand that we are servants. We start off as servants and we will always remain servants. Having an attitude of humility and a willingness to serve is so important. In fact, I would say that it's not optional. Pride is probably the biggest barrier to leading effectively. It blinds us to the needs of those under us and it makes us have lofty delusions that we are somehow greater than everybody around us. John Maxwell said that "In order to go up, we must give up." Leaders must realize the higher in leadership or accountability we are, the more sacrifices we must make.

Build a solid team

Leaders realise there's great value in building a solid team around us to challenge us to, to partner with us and to keep us accountable. Jesus understood that in order to spread His message of hope to the world he needed a team. It wasn't a big team, it was just 12 men who answered Christ's call to drop everything and follow Him. If we ever want to accomplish anything significant for the glory of God, it's going to take a combination of talents and ideas to bring vision to life. Without a solid team of people, we can rely and depend on, our best attempts at instigating something meaningful will be fruitless.

When we build a team, we must make it clear that it's about "we" and "us" not "me" or "I." It is everybody collectively and actively working toward a common goal not passively sitting around watching, being entertained and inspired but not spurred on to action. Empower others to use their gifts for the glory of God. I like to say that everybody has some sort of gifting. Nobody should ever feel put down because they're "not smart" and so forth. Everybody deep down has a gift that God has given them. When I was younger, I often put myself down because I felt I wasn't a brilliant person and I was constantly encompassed about with failure. Everywhere I looked I saw failure and I felt I had no hope of going anywhere in life.

But then I prayed earnestly to God to show me my talents so that I could use them for His glory, and He did! He enabled to see me the hidden giftings that I had, that I never knew I had. As leaders, it is our job to get to know each of our team members on a personal level, find out their individual giftings and then allow them to unleash their full potential through mentorship. Empowering others starts by giving them opportunities. Opportunities are everything. Too often today, raw talent is bottled up and it's not allowed to be released in a positive way and that's just terrible. Mentorship is a very important part of helping others flourish in their gifts, confidence, talents, personal growth and ultimately their service in the kingdom of God.

Actively look for and meet the needs of others

As I mentioned before, leaders are servants. We must always be on the lookout for ways in which we can meet the needs of others and bless them by doing so. When we serve others, we actually feel blessed too. A simple question like "are you ok?" or "how can I pray for you today?" means a lot. Remember, this is about putting the needs of others before your own. The saying is true: "People don't care how much we know until they know how much we care." We must understand that as leaders we will never connect with people or gain influence until we meet their needs. Our Lord understood that and that's why He continuously and consistently met the physical and spiritual needs of His disciples, his followers and everyone else around Him. Even in His darkest hour while hanging on the Cross, He arranged for His mother to be taken care of by the faithful disciple John.

Be intentional

The last thing you want is to burnout because when you do so, you become ineffective as a leader. You cannot function to your maximum. There is definitely a place for some R&R because let's face it: leaders are not super humans. We just like everybody else, humans. As leaders, we must learn to be intentional with our time. It is vital that we recognize the importance of our time and be intentional to balance it between others and ourselves. Christ was very intentional about how His time was spent. He knew the power of balancing time alone and with others. In those times alone, he would recharge and spend time with His Father in Heaven. He was acutely aware of the how important it was to schedule time to rest and unwind. He also knew when it was time to be around others to teach, fellowship and serve.

Forgive!

Because we are humans and we have different personalities, there will inevitably conflict at times. The most important part of resolving conflict is to forgive and forget. The Apostle Peter asked the Lord how many times He should forgive those who offended Him. The answer? Every time and as many times as required. We should extend the same grace, mercy and forgiveness that He has extended to us. Everybody makes mistakes and we're no different. Forgiveness is a very powerful and amazing thing. To forgive those who have wronged us enables us to be happy and closer to those around us. Forgiveness enables us to transcend bitterness, resentment and hatred and move on with the things that matter. It is our job as leaders to have an attitude of forgiveness and be always ready to offer grace toward others.

Source: *Caleb Stephen, Christian Freelance Journalist*