

Leadership Principles from the life of Jesus

We are all leaders in one way or another. Any area that we can exhibit influence in is an area we can lead in. Leadership does not always look like an office with a title on the door. All of us have people we influence, lead, shape, and are role models for. We can all lead in one area or another, on relationship or another. We can lead amongst our siblings, friends, colleagues, teams, families, social groups, and so forth. Therefore, this is a message for all of us.

The Apostle Paul instructed the Corinthian church to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Cor 11:1). In the book of Ephesians (5:1) we are instructed to imitate God as children. Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). As such, Jesus is the Person we are to emulate in life, including our leadership roles.

1Co 11:1 (NKJV) Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

Eph 5:1 (NKJV) Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

1Co 3:11 (AMP) For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is [already] laid, which is Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One).

Today we will be drawing 3 leadership principles from the life of Jesus. As we study the life of Jesus, we see that He was a compassionate leader. He was led by compassion, and yet He confronted those that needed to be confronted. We also see how prayer was a part of His lifestyle and informed and shaped many of his decisions. He was a leader who lived a prayerful life. We also see that Jesus was all about purpose and seasons. He understood his time of preparation. He understood when it was His time to start ministry. He knew when His ministry was to the crowds, and He knew when to begin to focus His ministry on training and preparing His disciples for His departure. He was mission minded. Purpose oriented. These are the principles we are going to explore today.

We begin today looking at an interesting time in Jesus' life. We pick up the account of Jesus around about the end of his second year of ministry, entering his third year of ministry. It's that time where he feeds the 5000 and then crosses the sea and confronts and challenges the crowds and people in Capernaum. The interesting

thing about this point in Jesus' ministry is that after this miracle the crowds wanted to force him to be king against his will. They wanted a political deliverer to emancipate them from Roman rule. For many of us, this would possibly have been seen as a ripe opportunity. Jesus rejected their plan for him and explained his spiritual mission claiming, "I am the bread of life". At the end of this controversy, only his most faithful disciples remained. He went from extremely popular and sought after, to leading much fewer faithful disciples.

We will be looking at this account in various of the gospels to gain a more complete picture of all the events at this time. We will also draw on other events in Jesus' time on earth to consolidate these principles. We will be primarily using the account in John chapter 6 today.

1. Jesus was compassionate

*Mat 14:10-20 (NKJV) So he (King Herod) sent and had John beheaded in prison. [11] And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. [12] Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus. [13] **When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. [14] And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. [15] When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." [16] But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."** [17] And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." [18] He said, "Bring them here to Me." [19] Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. [20] So **they all ate and were filled**, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.*

- John the Baptist had just been beheaded (Matt 14:10-13)
- The disciples had buried him and gone to inform Jesus

- Jesus withdrew to a solitary place
- The crowds followed Him because of the signs and healings he performed on the sick
- Jesus saw them and had compassion on them because they did not have anything to eat. There were 5000 men.... Not counting women and children.
- With 5 loaves and 2 fish, Jesus gave thanks to his Father and fed the whole crowd and there were 12 baskets of food left over.

Jesus was compassionate. He allowed the compassion to compel Him and move Him in doing many of His miracles and healings.

Some examples:

*Mat 9:35-38 (NKJV) Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. [36] But **when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.** [37] Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. [38] Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."*

*Mat 20:29-34 (NKJV) Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. [30] And behold, **two blind men** sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" [31] Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!" [32] So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" [33] They said to Him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened." [34] So **Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.***

*Mar 1:40-42 (NKJV) Now **a leper** came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." [41] Then Jesus, **moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed."** [42] As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.*

*Mar 8:1-9 (NKJV) In those days, **the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat**, Jesus called His disciples to Him and said to them, [2] **"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat.** [3] And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar." [4] Then His disciples answered Him, "How can one satisfy these people with bread here in the wilderness?" [5] He asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven." [6] So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude. [7] They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them. [8] So they ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets of leftover fragments. [9] Now those who had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away,*

2. Jesus was prayerful

Matthew records that immediately after the feeding of the 5000, Jesus sought to be alone in prayer. John the Baptist, his cousin and forerunner had been beheaded and he hadn't been able to withdraw into prayer and be with His Father. I love this example.

Mat 14:22-23 (NKJV) Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. [23] And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.

Mar 6:46-48 (NKJV) And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray. [47] Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. [48] Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. Now about the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by.

Some examples of His prayerfulness:

i. His prayerfulness resulted in Him knowing God's purpose for Him

*"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, **"Everyone is looking for You."** But He said to them, **"Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth."** And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee and casting out demons." (Mar 1:35-39, NKJV)*

- How often do we rush ahead with what we assume to be God's will and ask Him to bless what we have already started?
- How often do we see needs around us and assume that we must be the answer to those needs because we are able to do something about them?
- How often do we allow other people to indirectly steer our direction?
- How many of us are people led, needs led?
- How many of us are people-pleasers?

For many of us, if our ministry is in demand from crowds, we think it must be God's will. We proceed to follow the crowds and the demands for what we can offer. I don't see Jesus always doing this. When the crowds were seeking Him and wanted His ministry, I see Him praying and receiving guidance and clarity from His Father in heaven. He didn't always follow the crowds. He didn't always meet the needs around Him. He rather let His Father direct Him. At times it involved ministering to the needs of the crowds, but this wasn't how Jesus was led. I love this about Him. In the place of prayer He received guidance and made decisions. He wasn't pressured, manipulated or swayed from His purpose by crowds or needs. He didn't fear man or the opinions of man. He was so in tune with His Father's will and was faithful to God's purpose for His life.

From the place of prayer and intimacy with His Father, Jesus lived a life of purpose and perfect obedience. He made wise decisions and choices because they were grounded in prayer and led by the Holy Spirit, not the popular opinion of man.

ii. His prayerfulness resulted in guidance and wisdom in decision-making

*"Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and **continued all night in prayer to God**. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles..." (Lk 6:12-13, NKJV)*

The Gospel writers note that before every important event in Jesus' life, he would take time to go off by himself and pray. The instance referred to above is a time that Jesus was preparing to choose his inner circle, the twelve apostles. He prayed all night before making this decision. Unfortunately, many of us make major decisions without praying them through and then we come back to God in prayer when things don't quite work out how we thought they would, or when things start to go awry. Sometimes we make the decision and just ask God for His blessing on our plans.

There are patterns and principles in the Word for many situations if we are willing to spend time searching out the scriptures. A little time spent in prayer aligning ourselves with God's Word and principles can save a life-time of heart ache.

iii. He lived a lifestyle of prayer

He often withdrew to pray.

"So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed." (Lk 5:16, NKJV)

Often. He had a habit of doing this.

We see the power of this lifestyle when Jesus healed an epileptic boy whom his disciples hadn't been able to. His explanation for their lack of success and His success was partly due to His lifestyle of prayer.

"And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him."" (Mat. 17:14-16, NKJV)

"And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?". (Mat. 17:18-19, NKJV)

Jesus rebukes them for their unbelief and explains they need faith and then says,-

"... this kind does not go out except by prayer..." (Mat 17:21, NKJV)

Jesus lived a lifestyle of prayer. When the need arose Jesus was ready because He lived a lifestyle of prayer. When the opportunity arises, that is not the time to begin praying. The praying must already be happening, so when the opportunity knocks or the door opens, or the need arises, we are ready.

3. Jesus was mission minded

*John 6:14-15 (NKJV) [14] Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." [15] **Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.***

Joh 6:14-15 (NLT) When the people saw Him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, "Surely, He is the Prophet we have been expecting!" [15] When Jesus saw that they were ready to force Him to be their king, He slipped away into the hills by Himself.

Jesus knew what His mission was and what it was not. Assuming the role of an earthly King was not on His Father's agenda for His life. He didn't let the crowds define Him. He didn't let the multitudes sway Him with their needs. They wanted a political deliverer and King. He slipped away from them to a solitary place.

- Are there people you have allowed to define you?
- Is that definition in line with God's?
- Have you allowed a situation, a past, a family, a skin colour, a gender to define you?
- Have you allowed acclaim or popularity to define and direct you?
- I love that Jesus didn't seek crowds or platforms. He sought to be faithful to the mission His Father had given Him regardless of whether he was misunderstood by people or not.

Other examples of Mission-mindedness: Jesus' Galilean ministry

“Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. Later Simon and the others went out to find him. When they found him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.” But Jesus replied, “We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too. That is why I came.” So he travelled throughout the region of Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and casting out demons.” Mk. 1:35-39.

“Early the next morning Jesus went out to an isolated place. The crowds searched everywhere for him, and when they finally found him, they begged him not to leave them. But he replied, “I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent.” So he continued to travel around, preaching in synagogues throughout Judea.” Lk. 4:42-44.

- He knew and understood why He was here.
- He knew what He needed to do now.
- Why were you sent?
- Why are you here?
- What do you need to do in this season?
- Are you purpose oriented, or needs oriented?
- Are you mission minded,
- Are you straightened towards God, or bent towards man?
- Why are you on earth?
- Do you understand what God has put in your hand?
- Can you see the gifts and passions and desires that God has given you?

As we continue reading John 6:22-40, we see this juncture in Jesus earthly ministry was an interesting one.

A. He confronted ‘the crowds’ (Jn. 6:22-40)

Joh 6:22-39 (NKJV) On the following day, when the people who were standing on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except that one which His disciples had entered, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with His disciples, but His disciples had gone away alone— ... [25] And when they found Him

on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" [26] Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. [27] Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

- These are the people Jesus fed the day before.
- They had wanted to make him king by force.
- Now they address Him as "Rabbi" (v25). Jesus knew their real motives.

[30] Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? [31] Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN TO EAT.'" [32] Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. [33] For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." [34] Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." [35] And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. [36] But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.

- They wanted a free meal ticket. They wanted a regular supply of free food by following Jesus. He his purpose wasn't to be a show pony and provider of all their physical needs.
- They were after the gift and not the Giver! We are told in 1 Cor to eagerly desire spiritual things, especially gifts, but not more than the giver!
- Jesus called a spade a spade. I love this about Jesus: *[36] But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe.* Jesus maintained his course and remained fixed on His purpose, not detracted by the pressure from the crowds.

B. He was misunderstood by ‘the Jews’ (Jesus’ hostile opponents) (Jn. 6:41-59)

Joh 6:41-59 (NKJV) The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." [42] And they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, 'I have come down from heaven'?" [43] Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. [44] No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. [45] It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT BY GOD.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. [46] Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. [47] Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. [48] I am the bread of life. [49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. [50] This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. [51] I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." [52] The Jews therefore quarrelled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" [53] Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. [54] Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. [55] For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. [56] He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. [57] As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. [58] This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." [59] These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

The Jews took exception to 2 things he said:

- 'I came down from heaven' (v 42), because they knew his family;
- 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life' (v. 52) they interpreted literally.

Jesus didn't qualify or seek to be understood. Why?

- He knew their hearts.
- He understood His mission and purpose to these people. And it wasn't to be popular or understood or liked.
- He was free to confront and declare the truth to them without making sure He was understood.

C. He challenged his 'disciples' (Jn. 6:60-71).

*Joh 6:60-71 (NKJV) Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" [61] When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? [62] What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? [63] It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. [64] But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. [65] And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." [66] **From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.** [67] Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" [68] But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. [69] Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." [70] Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" [71] He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.*

- The group of followers that he had garnered and gathered also struggled with his teaching, interpreting it literally 'This is a hard teaching! Who can accept it?' (v.60). As a result many no longer followed him (v. 66).
- Interesting that Jesus was so mission-minded and committed to declare what God gave Him to declare that he whittled His group of followers down to a mere 12 from crowds.
- Most of us would have explained and re-explained our teaching as being figurative, so people would understand and our following and "influence"

would remain intact. Jesus made no such effort. He knew they were grumbling (v. 61). He knew that “no one can come to Me unless the Father enables Him” (v.65).

This miracle of feeding the 5000 marked the end of Jesus’ second year and the beginning of His third year of ministry. After this miracle the crowds wanted to force him to be king against his will. They wanted a political deliverer to emancipate them from Roman rule. Jesus rejected their political plan for him and explained his spiritual mission claiming, “I am the bread of life”. At the end of this controversy, only his most faithful disciples remained. He went from extremely popular and sought after, to leading much fewer faithful disciples.

We, too, need to be mission-minded. We need to confront whom and what God calls us to. We need to do the things He desires for us to do. We need to run the race that is set before us.

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb. 12:1-2

- Jesus had a race to run. Jesus ran it with endurance.
- We each have a race. It’s no good me running your race, or vice versa. When you run the race you haven’t entered, you can’t win a prize.

*For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” Ps 139:13-16.*

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:10

Conclusion

Jesus is our role model in life. In studying His life on earth, are many leadership principles we can glean. Today we have seen that Jesus was compassionate, prayerful and mission-minded. Let's endeavour to be leaders that exhibit these qualities.