

Leading Like Jesus

Lessons from Jesus

Introduction

Who has influenced your understanding of leadership?

Perhaps it was a parent, a teacher, a pastor, a manager, a coach, or someone you deeply admire. Maybe it is a well-known leader whose books you have read or whose life has inspired you. Leadership has become one of the most studied subjects in our world today. There are countless books, conferences, podcasts, seminars, and courses dedicated to helping people become better leaders. Whether in business, government, education, the marketplace, or even the church, everyone seems to be asking the same question:

"How can I become a better leader?"

Throughout history, there have been many remarkable leaders who have shaped nations, organisations, churches, and generations. We think of men and women such as Nelson Mandela, Winston Churchill, Mother Teresa, Billy Graham, and John Maxwell. Each is remembered for something unique—courage, vision, compassion, influence, resilience, or the ability to inspire others. We are grateful for the lessons we can learn from their lives.

Today, however, I would like us to turn our attention to Jesus- the perfect Leader.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we know Him first as the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour, the One who gave His life for us and through whom we have eternal life. Yet when we read the Gospels, we also discover that Jesus is the greatest leadership model the world has ever known.

He redefined greatness.

He redefined success.

He redefined power.

He redefined authority.

It should not surprise us, then, that He also redefined leadership.

This morning, my desire is not to give a seminar on leadership, but to open God's Word and learn from Jesus Himself. We will begin by asking, What is biblical leadership? Then, as we walk through the Gospels, we will draw a few leadership lessons from the

greatest Leader who ever lived. My prayer is that we will not simply admire Jesus as our Saviour, but that we will also allow His example to shape the way we lead our families, our churches, our workplaces, our communities, and everyone God has entrusted to us.

Understanding Biblical Leadership

If I were to ask everyone in this room to define leadership, I am sure we would receive many different answers. Our understanding of leadership has been shaped by our experiences, our workplaces, the books we have read, and the people we admire.

Leadership scholar Peter Northouse defines leadership as *"a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal."* John Maxwell puts it more simply by saying, *"Leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less."* These are helpful definitions because they remind us that leadership is about influencing people toward a common purpose.

While leadership scholars define leadership primarily in terms of influence and achieving a common goal, Christian leadership writers remind us that biblical leadership is ultimately about influencing people toward God's purposes.

Henry T. Blackaby & Richard Blackaby: Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda.

Robert Clinton : A leader is a person with God-given capacity and God-given responsibility who influences a specific group of God's people toward His purposes

When we come to Jesus, we discover that He completely redefines leadership. In **Mark 10:42–45**, Jesus says, *"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant."* The world says leadership is about building your own name. Jesus teaches that leadership is about building God's Kingdom by building God's people.

As we read the New Testament, we discover that biblical leadership is expressed in different ways. While not every believer is called to the same leadership responsibility, every believer is called to participate in God's mission. I would like us to consider three expressions of biblical leadership that we see throughout Scripture.

1. Every Believer Is Empowered to Lead a Victorious Christian Life

God never commissions us without first equipping us. Before He entrusts us with responsibility, He establishes our identity in Christ.

The Apostle John reminds us, **"Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world"** (1 John 4:4). Jesus declares, **"I have given you authority... to overcome all the power of the enemy"** (Luke 10:19). Peter reminds us that we are **"a chosen people, a**

royal priesthood" (Our authority does not come from a title or a position. It comes from our relationship with Him. You have already been empowered.

2. Every Believer Is Commissioned to lead others to Christ

Before God calls some people to lead churches, ministries, businesses, or nations, He calls every believer to follow Christ and help others follow Him.

Jesus declared, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...**" (Matthew 28:18–20). This command was not given only to pastors or church leaders; it was given to every disciple of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps this is a good place to ask, **What is a disciple?** A follower may admire Jesus, but a disciple walks with Jesus, learns from Him, becomes like Him, and helps others do the same. One of the highest expressions of biblical leadership is leading people to Christ and helping them become mature disciples who make disciples.

Paul captures this beautifully in **2 Timothy 2:2**: "*And the things you have heard me say... entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.*" That is discipleship. That is multiplication. That is Kingdom leadership.

(1 Peter 2:9), and Paul calls us **ambassadors for Christ** (2 Corinthians 5:20).

3. Some Believers Are Called to Specific Leadership Responsibilities

While every believer is commissioned and empowered, God also entrusts some men and women with particular leadership responsibilities and specific assignments. Throughout Scripture, He raises leaders such as Moses, Deborah, David, Nehemiah, Paul, and the elders and pastors of the Church to shepherd, equip, and strengthen His people (Ephesians 4:11–12).

Whether God has called you to lead a family, a ministry, a business, a church, or an organisation, leadership remains a sacred stewardship. God never raises leaders to build their own kingdoms. He raises leaders to build His Kingdom by building His people.

With that foundation in place, let us now turn our attention to the greatest Leader who ever lived—our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Great Leaders Build People

Our first lesson from the life of Jesus is that great leaders build people.

When we read **Mark 3:13–15**, we find a remarkable statement:

"Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." (NIV)

Have you ever stopped to ask yourself why Jesus called the Twelve?

He could have continued preaching to the crowds. He could have continued performing miracles from one village to another. After all, thousands of people were already following Him. Yet instead of focusing on growing the crowds, Jesus intentionally invested His life in twelve ordinary men.

The answer is found in one simple phrase:

"That they might be with Him."

Before He sent them out to preach, before He gave them authority over demons, before He entrusted them with His mission, He simply wanted them to be with Him. Jesus understood that before people can do ministry with you, they must first do life with you.

This teaches us something profound about leadership. People are God's greatest resource. Buildings are important. Budgets are important. Strategies and structures all have their place. But none of these compare to people. Jesus did not spend the majority of His ministry building programmes; He spent the majority of His ministry building people. He walked with them, travelled with them, ate with them, answered their questions, corrected them, encouraged them, and modelled before them what it meant to follow the Father. His leadership was deeply relational.

Today we often hear people say, **"Leadership is lonely."** While I understand that leadership carries unique responsibilities, I sometimes wonder whether part of that loneliness is self-created. Where did we get the idea that leaders must always remain distant from people?

When we look at Jesus, we see something completely different. He was always among the people. He walked where they walked. He entered their homes. He sat at tables with tax collectors and sinners. Children felt safe enough to run to Him. The sick were not afraid to reach out and touch Him. People were drawn to Him because He was present.

What is equally remarkable is that Jesus intentionally built relationships at different levels. He ministered to the crowds, but He invested deeply in the Twelve. Beyond the Twelve, He sent out the Seventy-Two to minister in His name. Even within the Twelve, He had an inner circle—Peter, James, and John—who walked with Him during some of the most significant moments of His ministry. They were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, in the house of Jairus, and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus understood that building people requires intentional relationships. He did not keep everyone at the same distance, but neither did He journey alone.

This challenges us as leaders.

Who are you walking with?

Who are you intentionally developing?

Who are you mentoring, discipling, and preparing for the future?

Who has access to your life?

Leadership is not simply about gathering crowds; it is about investing in people. Programmes may accomplish much, but people are the greatest investment a leader will ever make.

What amazes me most is that Jesus never built a ministry that depended on Him remaining physically present. From the very beginning, He was preparing others to continue the mission. He taught them, corrected them, challenged them, trusted them, and eventually sent them. His goal was never to make His disciples dependent on Him; it was to develop them until they could faithfully carry His mission forward.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable leadership statements Jesus ever made is found in **John 14:12:**

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

2. Great Leaders Exercise Authority with Humility

One of the greatest tests of leadership is authority. Every leader, whether in the church, the marketplace, the home, or society, will at some point be entrusted with authority. Authority enables us to make decisions, provide direction, influence people, and steward responsibility. Yet as followers of Jesus Christ, we must understand that biblical authority is very different from the way the world understands it. In God's Kingdom, authority is never ownership; it is stewardship. It is delegated by God, exercised for God, and always accountable to God.

If there is anyone who teaches us how to exercise authority, it is Jesus Himself.

After His resurrection, Jesus declared,

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:18–20)

Notice the order. Jesus first establishes His authority and then commissions His disciples. Before He sends them, He reminds them where authority comes from. It belongs to the Father and has been entrusted to the Son. In the same way, every authority we exercise ultimately belongs to God.

This also reminds us that every believer has been entrusted with spiritual authority. Jesus said in **Luke 10:19**,

"I have given you authority... to overcome all the power of the enemy."

Our authority is real, but we must understand its boundaries. Our authority is over the enemy; it is never above God. Everything we have has been entrusted to us by Christ. We exercise authority in His name, under His Lordship, and for His purposes. Authority is never given so that we may elevate ourselves; it is given so that we may fulfil His mission.

God also entrusts some men and women with particular leadership responsibilities. Some lead families, churches, ministries, businesses, schools, departments, organisations, and even nations. Yet regardless of where God has placed us, one truth never changes: the people we lead ultimately belong to Him.

I have always been challenged by Solomon's prayer when he became king. Rather than celebrating his new position, he prayed,

"Who is able to govern this great people of Yours?" (1 Kings 3:9)

Every time I read those words, I stop at one phrase:

"Your great people."

Solomon understood that Israel did not belong to him—they belonged to God. He also recognised the greatness that God had placed in His people. As leaders, we should continually ask ourselves: **Do I see the greatness of God in the people I lead?** Do I see them as gifts entrusted to me by God, or merely as people who help me accomplish my vision?

This changes everything. Authority is never permission to manipulate, control, intimidate, exploit, or build our own kingdom. God entrusts authority so that we may shepherd, protect, encourage, equip, and build His people. Authority in God's Kingdom is never given to elevate us above people; it is given to enable us to serve people.

When we turn to Jesus, we discover the perfect example of authority exercised with humility. No one has ever possessed greater authority than He did. He taught with authority. He commanded storms, and the winds obeyed Him. He cast out demons. He healed the sick. He forgave sins. He raised the dead. He cleansed the Temple when zeal for His Father's house consumed Him. Everywhere Jesus went, He exercised genuine authority.

Yet what amazes me most is this: Jesus never used His authority for His own comfort or advantage. Every time He exercised authority, it was to glorify the Father and to serve people.

Even more remarkable, Jesus understood that authority begins with dependence on the Father. He said,

"Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing." (John 5:19)

Again He declared,

"For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken." (John 12:49)

Jesus never acted independently of His Father. He lived in complete dependence and complete obedience. His authority flowed from His relationship with the Father.

Perhaps nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus knew He had the authority to call on His Father for more than twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53). He had the power to change the situation. He had the authority to avoid the cross. Yet instead He prayed,

"Father... not My will, but Yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

Paul captures this beautifully in **Philippians 2:6–8**, reminding us that although Jesus was in very nature God, He humbled Himself and became obedient—even to death on a cross.

Here we discover one of the greatest lessons on leadership.

The highest expression of authority is not commanding people. It is submitting to God.

Jesus understood both His authority and His assignment. Because He knew who He was and why the Father had sent Him, He willingly submitted Himself to the Father's will.

As leaders, this may be one of the greatest lessons we will ever learn. We lead with confidence because God has entrusted us with authority, but we lead with humility because that authority is not our own. We are simply stewards of what God has entrusted to us.

Perhaps the greatest measure of spiritual authority is not how many people are under your authority, but how faithfully you remain under the authority of God.

3. Great Leaders Love and Serve

Our final lesson from the life of Jesus is that great leaders love deeply and serve sacrificially.

One of the most powerful scenes in the Gospels takes place on the night before Jesus was crucified. John tells us that Jesus knew the Father had placed all things under His power, that He had come from God and was returning to God (John 13:3). Think about that for a moment. Jesus knew exactly who He was. He knew His identity, He knew His authority, and He knew His assignment. Yet what did He do with that authority? He took off His outer garment, wrapped a towel around His waist, knelt before His disciples, and began to wash their feet. The One who created the universe took the place of the lowest servant in the room. When He had finished, He said, **"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you"** (John 13:15). That is leadership.

When we turn to Mark 10:42–45, Jesus explains why He lived this way. He says, **"You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them... Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant... For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."** Once again, Jesus completely redefines greatness. The world measures greatness by position, power, and how many people serve you. Jesus measures greatness by your willingness to love and serve others. The world says leadership is about climbing higher; Jesus says leadership is about bending lower.

What motivated Jesus to live this way? It was love. Everything Jesus did flowed from His love for the Father and His love for people. John 3:16 reminds us, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son."** Love always gives. Love always sacrifices. Love is never merely an emotion; it is demonstrated through action. Jesus did not simply tell people that He loved them; He showed them. He touched the leper, stopped for the blind, welcomed children, fed the hungry, wept with those who mourned, forgave sinners, and ultimately stretched out His hands on the cross and gave His life for the very people who rejected Him.

Paul describes this beautifully in Philippians 2:6–8, reminding us that although Jesus was in very nature God, He humbled Himself, took the nature of a servant, and became obedient—even to death on a cross. The cross is the greatest act of servant leadership the world has ever seen. Love led Jesus to serve, and service ultimately led Him to sacrifice.

As I reflected on this, I found myself asking some difficult questions as a leader. What am I giving? What am I sacrificing? Am I merely expecting people to serve me because I occupy a position of leadership, or am I serving the very people God has entrusted to me? Leadership always costs something. It costs time. It costs comfort. It costs convenience. Sometimes it costs recognition. Sometimes it costs tears. If our

leadership costs us nothing, perhaps we need to ask whether we are truly leading like Jesus.

The greatest leaders are rarely remembered because of the titles they held or the authority they exercised. They are remembered because they loved deeply, served faithfully, and gave themselves away so that others could flourish. Jesus built people because He loved people. He served people because He loved people. He gave His life because He loved people.

Perhaps that leaves each one of us with a few questions to reflect on before the Lord. **Whom am I serving? Whom am I loving? What am I giving? What am I sacrificing? Do the people I lead experience my authority more than they experience my love?** Because when people know they are genuinely loved, service is no longer an obligation—it becomes the natural expression of a heart that has been transformed by Christ.

That is the leadership of Jesus.

Conclusion

As we come to the end of this message, I believe every one of us desires to make a lasting impact. Whether we lead in our homes, our workplaces, our churches, our ministries, or our communities, we all want our lives to count for something that outlives us. Jesus has shown us a different way to lead. Great leaders build people. Great leaders exercise authority with humility. Great leaders love deeply and serve sacrificially.

As we leave today, I want to invite each one of us to reflect before the Lord. **Who am I intentionally building? Whom am I serving? Whom am I loving? Whom am I walking alongside? Whom am I mentoring, discipling, or empowering? Who will love Jesus more because God allowed me to invest in their life?**

You may never hold an impressive title. You may never lead a large organisation. But if you faithfully build people, exercise your authority with humility, love deeply, serve sacrificially, and lead others closer to Christ, then you are leading like Jesus.

May our prayer be that we will not simply admire Jesus as the greatest Leader who ever lived, but that we will become leaders who reflect His heart. May God help us to build His people, advance His Kingdom, and leave behind a legacy that points others to Jesus Christ.