Leadership / Jesus a Great Leader

Two woman chatting in a restaurant:
Woman A: I used to work for a woman who was soooo bossy. She wanted to control everything, and it was all about getting her own way. Everything we did, and *how* we did it and *when* we did it, had to be the way that *she* wanted it to be done. I felt as if my opinion didn't count, even though I knew my job better than she did. She wasn't really very organized, so the business didn't do very well. And the staff were not happy so they didn't stay long. In the end I left.

Woman B: Well, I had a boss once who was the exact opposite. He didn't lead at all. He didn't set goals for his staff. We never had to tell him what we did with our time. We all just muddled along doing our own bit of the work, and often we'd be waiting around for someone else to get things to us, so we could do our jobs. I didn't feel any pride in my work. And it's funny, we weren't happy either, and in the end I left too.

Carol: Hello! Welcome to *Women of Hope*. I'm Carol.

Tammy: …and I'm Tammy. It's great to be with you again. I hope you've had a good week, whatever you've been doing.

Carol: Today we thought we would talk together about leaders, and what makes a good leader. We just heard two friends talking about two very different styles of leadership, and both of them had big problems. Who do you think of as a leader? Is it a president or general?

Tammy: Or maybe you're thinking of someone important in your own life - a parent, perhaps, or a teacher who gave you good direction in life. But have you ever thought of *yourself* as a leader? You probably *are* a leader for *someone* - maybe your children…or among your neighbors or community, even if you're not a leader in your workplace. So, be thinking about how you could be a better leader *yourself* - and also how you would *recognize* a good leader.

Carol: We did some research about leadership and found that people want to follow a leader who they trust. That makes sense, doesn't it? But what does that really mean?

Tammy: I read something that helped me understand…it said that there are three important things that can be seen in a good leader.
First…what kind of person is he or she? What do they believe, what do they value? Are they honest, ethical people of good character? I'll give you an example - sometimes I vote for a politician, not because of the party they belong to, but because I think he or she is a decent, moral person. I feel I can trust them to make morally good decisions.

Carol: So you would watch what they *do*…and listen to what they *say*, and decide if this is someone you want to trust with power.

Tammy: Exactly. The second area is…what does the leader *know*? Does the leader know enough about where they want to lead? Leaders need to see the big picture as well as the small details. Does this leader understand the goals of the group? Do they know what resources we need to reach our goals?

Carol: That makes sense. I wouldn't want to follow a leader who doesn't know where they are going, would you?

Tammy: … no, you'd get lost! And I don't want to follow someone who's going somewhere that I really don't want to go.

Carol: A good leader *talks* to those they want to lead, and *listens* to their opinions too. She finds out how her people think and feel? And that's the third thing to look for. A good leader *does* certain things.

Tammy: A good leader will help the group to agree on their goals. She will inspire them with a strong vision of what could be…and show them how it can be done. She sees the 'big picture', and also helps work out the 'small details' that make up the big picture. She encourages each person to do what they can do best. She thanks everyone for their work…and holds them *responsible* for their work, too.

Here at *Women of Hope* we have a leader, Marli. She is the woman who God gave the vision and idea of this program. She doesn't *do* everything - and neither do Carol and I. There are lots of people who help by doing things they are good at - like Marvin who records our voices. He cares about you as much as we do, though you never hear his voice. But Marli keeps us inspired and true to that vision, and encourages us so that we still love being part of this program.

Carol: Good leaders they take a big role in making decisions and plans - and take responsibility if things go wrong. And they help group members sort out any differences!

Tammy: And they need to communicate well so that everyone understands what they need to know. People follow more happily if they understand what is going on.

Carol: So what we've been saying is: a good leader is first of all a good person…secondly, they know where they are going and what is needed to lead others there.

Tammy: And thirdly, they're active in helping their 'followers' to reach the goals they agreed on.

Carol: And you know, a good leader must also be a good role model for others to follow. As we talk together about the qualities of a good leader, can I share with you my experience of leadership in my family? I lived with a father who acted differently from how he wanted us to act. He disciplined harshly for anything *we* did wrong - and yet he believed that rules were not meant for *him*. I loved him…but often only because he was my Dad. I found it hard to respect him.

Just this morning I was reading in my Bible where Moses, a great leader of God's people, left his final instructions before he died. This is what he said: 'What does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear him, to do what he commands, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart…' (Deut 10:12) Respect and love come together. With my dad, I always felt a conflict - I knew I loved him - but I often found it difficult to respect him and therefore listen to him. So I was *always* getting into trouble.

Tammy: Carol, tell us what it means to 'fear' God?

Carol: Well, to 'fear' the Lord God is to give him the highest awe and respect. For those who follow him, it does not mean to feel scared of him. But out of *respect* for our father, God, we try to live like he does and keep his commandments. Out of *love,* we serve him to the best of our abilities - rather than just out of duty (v.12)."

With all my heart I wanted to love and respect my Dad… But when I put my trust in my father, God and knew that he was trustworthy I found great *joy*. I knew I could love him *and* respect him.

Tammy: This is *Women of Hope*. Today we're talking about good leadership. Fran's with us again today; let's see what she has to say about a great leader.

Fran: Hello, it's good to be here again. Here's a question: would you say Jesus was a great leader?

Carol: Yes, I would. I'll tell you why: 2000 years after he lived on earth, millions of people call Jesus their Lord and Master. We try to live our lives following his teaching. That has to be a great leader!

Tammy: Well, I suppose it depends on what you mean by a great leader. He wasn't a political leader - he didn't rule a country or have power. And he wasn't a military leader, though lots of people at the time hoped that he would raise an army and defeat the Romans.

Carol: That's true, but lots of people followed him. He was certainly the leader in his group of men and women.

Fran: That's right. They called him Master and Lord, and Teacher, which were honored titles then. So how did he lead this group?

Carol: Well… Jesus *took the lead*... He decided *where* they would go, *when* they would go to the capital city or to other towns. His followers just went where he said.

Tammy: Jesus was the *Teacher* in the group - he was always explaining about God's kingdom and how they were meant to live as his followers. The Bible says he taught with authority…people somehow recognized that his authority was from God…that he had come from God.

Carol: Oh yes - I remember his friend Peter saying, 'Lord, who else could we go to? *You* have the words of eternal life.'

Tammy: I think Jesus also led by *example*. They must have noticed how kind he was to the sick, the poor; how well he treated women and children. They also saw how important it was to Jesus to spend time alone with God in prayer. They saw how he ordered evil spirits to go out of people. Then the time came for *them* to start preaching and delivering people from spirits - and he sent them out in pairs with instructions on what to do.

Carol: Yes, and when they returned he got them to report back to him. Then he explained what had happened, and why they sometimes failed. That's really good leadership, don't you think? Showing by example, giving instructions, giving opportunity to practice, and coaching and encouraging them as they went.

Fran: But you know, I don't think they really understood what *kind* of leader he was. Can I tell you about a time when he had to make it very clear?

Tammy: Yes, please. Let's listen together.

Fran: Jesus had been teaching and healing, and he had warned his followers that he would be put to death, and then come back to life. But some of them still hoped that Jesus would become a powerful ruler. Two of Jesus' close followers were brothers, named James and John, the sons of Zebedee; but Jesus nicknamed them the 'Sons of Thunder' (Mark 3:17). I wonder why? I think we would call them hot-heads!

Well, here is the true story from God's word the Bible. (Matthew 20:20-28)

(Story music)

One day the mother of James and John came to ask Jesus a great favor. She bowed respectfully to him. Jesus asked, 'What do you want?' She answered 'Promise me that these two sons of mine will sit at your right and left when you become king.'

'You have no idea what you're asking for', said Jesus. He turned to the sons and asked, 'Can you drink the cup of suffering that I am about to drink?'
'We can', they answered.
'Well, you will indeed drink from my cup', Jesus told them, 'but as for choosing who will sit on my right and my left, that's not my responsibility. These places belong to those who my Father chooses.' And that was the end of that conversation.

Let's talk about this for a moment. What do you think about this mother's request?

Carol: She had a lot of faith, didn't she? Jesus was just a wandering preacher at this time, yet she was quite confident that he would one day be a ruler.

Tammy: And with this confidence, she wanted to make sure her sons got important positions. That's what she meant by sitting at Jesus' right and left – the people who sat there would be Jesus' closest, most honored advisors. Well, I guess every mother wants to see her children do well in the world.

Fran: Jesus didn't tell her she was wrong, but he wanted her and her sons to understand about his kind of leadership. He asked, 'Can you drink from my cup' - did you wonder about the cup? What he meant was the suffering that lay before him. He had already told them about that…and he was really saying that they would have to face suffering too if they continued to follow him.
And he was warning them not to look for glory or special privileges – God the heavenly father decides who will get these.

Carol: We like to think about the wonderful rewards waiting in heaven, but we don't like the idea of suffering on the way there do we?

Fran: Let me tell you what came next in this story from God's word.
Jesus' other followers heard about this conversation, and they became really angry with the two brothers, James and John, for trying to get the special places on each side of Jesus.

So Jesus called them all together to deal with it. He said, 'You know that the rulers of the nations have power over them, and their leaders take over completely. It's not to be like that with you. Whoever wants to be *great*, must become a *servant* to the rest. If one of you wants to be the *leader*, he must be the *slave*. That's what I, the Son of Man, have done. I didn't come to be served, but to serve, and to give my life to redeem many people.'

And that was the end of *that* conversation!

Tammy: I think that was such good leadership - to get together those who were talking behind each others' backs, and help them sort out their problem together.

Carol: Yes - and Jesus really turned their ideas of leadership upside down, didn't he? Most leaders want the power, and the prestige, and the money and privileges of being in charge. Even when we are just leaders in a small area, like our family or an organization in the community, we still like to use power to get our way. But Jesus seems to be saying, 'No, that's not my way of leading. I lead by serving, I use my power to serve others, not myself. And you have to be this way too.'

Fran: So you might ask: did these followers become leaders like that? Well, sort of - they certainly gave their lives and suffered a lot as they spread the message of Jesus. But church leaders haven't always been servant leaders, have they? They are just human beings, and we all have to fight against that desire to get our own way. We can't always take church leaders as our example, but we can take Jesus.

Fran: As we've talked together today, have you thought about ways you can be a better leader, following Jesus' way of leadership? What difference would it make?

Tammy: Did you notice what Jesus said? 'I came to serve and to give my life to redeem many people.' He went on to do just that, when he died on the cross for our sins. He took the punishment for the wrong things we've done. Have you thanked him for that? Have you asked him to be your leader and master?

Carol: And have you asked for his help to live as a servant leader in your home and community? What a difference that could make.

Before we finish for today I'd like to read a letter from a listener in Uruguay. She is making a difference in her community…she writes

'Dear sisters: I receive the prayer calendars and I always distribute them to all who wish to pray here in my church. You can't imagine the joy it gives me when I hear you reading the letters from people all over the world who write from such remote places. It makes me feel closer to these brothers and sisters and I ask the Lord's blessing on them. I am sending you a small offering. Since 1994 I have had trouble with my back and I can't work. I sew and do clothing repairs for the people who live in my area but they are very poor and I cannot charge a lot for my services. I pray for the radio that many will hear the message and be saved.

Tammy: Thank you dear listener for your letter. And God bless you.

If you have any questions about the things we've talked about, you can write to us in care of this station or at TWR *Women of Hope*…. The email address is: TWRWomenofHope@twr.org. If you have missed a program or would like to hear one again you can do that on our website TWRWomenofHope.org or by visiting us on our Facebook page.

We would love to hear from you.

Fran: Goodbye, my friend

Tammy: Goodbye, have a great week filled with new hope!

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