Tools for Wise Leadership

A programme of TWR-Africa, produced by TWR-Zimbabwe, presented by Rev Dr Roy Musasiwa

Series 12: Self-Leadership
Talk 06: The Leader's Knowledge

Welcome to the programme **Tools for Wise Leadership** where we are focusing our attention on the important issue of self-leadership. Indeed in order to lead others well you have to lead yourself well first. The heart, the head and the hands must work together to effect true Christian leadership. In the last programme we concluded our exploration of heart issues by emphasizing the importance of an unshakable conviction of your identity. We are God's original, and nobody else can be you as well as you can. Moreover, there are certain accomplishments that only you can do because you are you. So there is no need to live as carbon copies of other individuals.

Today we are considering the leader's head – the importance of knowledge, understanding and wisdom among leaders. Without these head qualities a leader might work really hard without working smart. Much of the leader's energy might therefore be wasted because of not being properly directed by knowledge, understanding and wisdom. That is why Proverbs 19:2 says. "It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way." In a similar vein Paul says in Romans 10:2-3, "For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge."

The worst case scenario of course is where zeal without knowledge becomes an unguided missile. Some leaders, acting without knowledge of the consequences of what they were doing created disaster rather than benefit for their people. There are many leaders who led their followers into error because they relied on their power and charisma rather than a true knowledge of the will God. One such leader was Jim Jones who was the founder and leader of a sect called the Peoples Temple. Through his charisma he gained a following that eventually led to the mass suicide in 1978 of 914 members of the People's Temple. He was really an unguided missile.

So let us focus on these three entities that we associate with the head of the leader: knowledge, understanding and wisdom. They act like 3 legs of a stool which are all necessary for balance. Knowledge is an awareness of reality gained through experience and study. We then need to interpret that knowledge so as to have insight on that knowledge. That is the stage of understanding. When we translate that understanding into a way of life that corresponds with our God-given purpose we have acquired wisdom. We will now examine biblical teaching on these three issues beginning with knowledge.

The Bible regards knowledge as being very important. Proverbs 20:15 declares, "Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel."

So if knowledge is so important, what happens if leaders lack the knowledge? The Bible explains this. Talking to leaders Hosea 4:6 says, "My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children." May it not be said of you that you have despised or rejected knowledge, and God would also despise or reject you.

In so many places the Bible links behaviour to knowledge, especially in those verses that ask a rhetorical question, "Don't you know...." For instance Rom 6:1-4,

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> *"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?"*

What about 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple." One more example is James 4:4, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

Now here is the question. If knowledge is so critically important what are you as a leader doing to acquire acknowledge? Let us learn from Ezra and the good example of Daniel, Shadreck, Mishack and Abednego. It says of Ezra in Ezra 7:10, "For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel." Studying, teaching and practicing are the trio of activities that make a leader wise and effective.

We also have an excellent example from Daniel and his 3 friends as recorded in Daniel 1:17-20,

> *"To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom."*

The attitude of these young people is very enlightening. They did not despise so-called "secular learning." No. In fact it was God who gave them knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. What was the result? We are told that in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. I really wish Christian leaders would have this same kind of attitude. We need to be people of excellence in our learning, not only the Bible but in all other fields as well.

Before leaving this area of knowledge for the Christian leader we have to issue the biblical caution that knowledge by itself is not enough. In fact knowledge by itself is counter-productive. It could lead to counter-productive pride. Paul begins 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 by saying, "Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." What does this mean? The Living Bible gives a helpful interpretation of this when it says, "On this question everyone feels that only his answer is the right one! But although being a 'know-it-all' makes us feel important, what is really needed to build the church is love." The passage goes on to say, "if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know."

All this is to say that knowledge without love can in fact be counter-productive. Our world is in trouble despite knowledge multiplying in leaps and bounds. We have now gone from information overload to an exponential Knowledge Explosion. There are 3,000 new books published every single day. It is estimated that a week's worth of New York Time's contains more information than a person was likely to come across in a lifetime in the 18th century. It is estimated that 40 Exabytes of unique new information will be generated worldwide this year. That is more than in the previous 5,000 years. We've gone from information overload to information explosion. But the question is whether our world is now a better place because of all this knowledge explosion. Yes, we are now more technologically more sophisticated, but we are not better people.

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So we can confirm that knowledge without love does not make a leader a good leader. As the Bible has already affirmed, knowledge puffs up but love builds. That does not mean that we should despise knowledge. It only means we should acquire knowledge and use it for the purposes the Lord intended.

Next time I meet you on this programme we will explore other aspects of the head of the leader – i.e. understanding and wisdom. Our focus today was on the leader leading himself or herself by acquiring the knowledge that can direct zeal for God's work. So until we meet, like Paul says in 2 Tim 2:15 "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." God bless you.

Discussion Questions for: Series 12 - Talk 06 - The Leader's Knowledge

For this series of *Self-Leadership* you can use the following study questions to guide you in deepening the impact of this series:

Study Question 1: for Personal reflection
What does this episode mean to you personally as a leader?

Study Question 2: for Group Discussion
What does this topic mean you as a group of leaders?

Study Question 3: for applying the topic
What can you apply from this topic in your role as a leader?

Summary:

Knowledge and experience is required in order to be a wise and competent leader.

Discussion Questions:

Study Question 1: Personal reflection

What am I doing as a leader to acquire the right knowledge? Am I spending enough time in God's word to acquire knowledge and wisdom?

Study Question 2: Group Discussion

If knowledge is so important, what are we doing to obtain knowledge? Does knowledge bring about change in my character and leadership style?

Study Question 3: Applying the topic

Knowledge alone can lead to pride, so how would love temper that desire of showing off your level of knowledge?

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