Tools for Wise Leadership

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

Series 10: The Leadership Style of Jesus
Talk 14: How did Jesus Handle Anger?

Welcome to the **programme Tools for Wise Leadership** where we are focusing on the leadership style of Jesus. In the last programme we began to explore the way Jesus handled anger. In particular we explored several occurrences which could have provoked Jesus' anger but did not. From these occurrences we learnt that a true leader is able to control his anger. You cannot be a true leader if you are characterised by habitual anger.

Our focus today are those few times when Jesus did become angry. Here we notice that Jesus was only angry when the welfare of others or the honour of God were at stake. Never was he angry in self-defence. As a leader I want to aspire to this height of emotional maturity. You see there are so many leaders who are walking time-bombs. Any slight provocation can set them off into an explosion with shrapnel injuring so many people around them. That is why the first lesson from Jesus' handling of anger is to be so self-controlled and so self-assured that you do not become angry for yourself.

Let us look at some examples which actually made Jesus angry, where he displayed what we call righteous anger. One such situation had to do with injustice to children. It is recorded in Mark 10:12-16 that people were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

So why was Jesus indignant? After all his disciples were acting in good faith, wanting to protect their master against the intrusion of these mothers and their crying babies. The answer is clear from the text. The disciples wanted to keep children away from the blessings that Jesus would give them. This was enough to make Jesus really angry. It was anger on behalf of the defenceless children, and not anger in defence of his own dignity.

The second example of Jesus becoming angry was over the desecration of the Lord's temple by money changers and traders as recorded in all the gospels. Here's John 2:13-17,

> *"When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!' His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'"*

So what was the cause of Jesus' anger this time? Firstly the Father's house was being turned into a market. The temple was being desecrated. It was now being used for a purpose other than the intended one. Equally seriously the temple had been turned into what other gospels call the "den of robbers". At the time of Passover there would be thousands of pilgrims from Israel and from the Jewish Diaspora. In order to give their offerings only the Galilean shekels or the temple shekels would be permissible. So money changers were making brisk business using unjustified exchange rates for personal gain. Similarly those bringing animals for sacrifice would be fleeced – being

 © TWR-Africa, 2014

charged exorbitant prices. These sellers had indeed become robbers in the name of religion! And for this Jesus was angry. Again this qualifies as righteous anger, this time to protect the honour of God.

Now here is a question for you as a leader? What makes you angry? If most of your anger has to do with how other people treat you then you may not be walking in Jesus' footsteps. Jesus was only angry when the welfare of others or the honour of God was at stake.

So let's ask the question again. What makes you angry as a leader? How do you feel about the widespread child sexual abuse in our world. These sexually abused children become damaged for the rest of their lives. To make matters worse, most of this abuse is from people who should be protecting those very children – people like uncles and fathers. What about anger at the carnage on our roads caused by drunk and careless drivers? There is so much unnecessary loss of life. What about drug trafficking and the effect it is having on our children? Surely this is a justifiable cause of anger. Jesus would have expressed his anger at these situations as he did in other situations where the welfare of other people was involved. But let us remember that Jesus' most dramatic anger was caused by the honour of God the Father being at stake. Today there is so much that dishonours the name of the Lord, but what are we doing about it?

Now I am not saying we should start acting violently and start burning buildings and cars. But our silence on the other hand may show that we are not jealousy for the name of the Lord as Jesus was when he walked on this earth. Edmund Burke was right when he said "The only thing necessary for the **triumph** of **evil** is for good men to do nothing."

The third lesson we learn about anger is well expressed by the Apostle Paul who says in Eph 4:26 "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry." The Bible here is teaching us that there are times when anger is quite justified, even righteous. But what do we do with this anger? There are sinful ways of handling anger and there are righteous ways of handling it. We may sin against ourselves by suppressing anger. This is a way of turning anger inwards against yourself. Then the anger will wreak havoc to your health by causing things like high blood pressure, heart problems etc. The opposite reaction is to sin against God and others through uncontrolled anger. Some express their anger by going into a rage, banging doors or causing other forms of physical, emotional or psychological damage to other people.

By contrast to repressing anger or going into uncontrolled anger, Jesus Christ expressed anger in positive ways. Let me leave you with two ways Jesus dealt with anger producing situations. Firstly he spoke the truth in love. It was never truth without love, or love without truth. So often when we become angry both truth and love become victims, or at least one of these becomes a victim. But not so with Jesus Christ . Yes, he was indignant when the disciples tried to prevent mothers from bringing children to be blessed by him. But that was an opportunity for Jesus to explain that the kingdom of God belongs to people who are like children. He never scolded them, but neither did he stay quiet in the face of the great wrong that the disciples were committing against children.

The second thing Jesus did in the face of anger producing situations was to walk away from them. In Matthew 12 we read about the Pharisees plotting to kill Jesus him after he healed a man with a shrivelled hand on the Sabbath. What did Jesus do? H*e withdrew* from the situation.

In all these situations there was never any hint of Jesus hating or even resenting wrong doers. Even the occasion of driving out money changers from the temple and overturning their tables was not motivated by revenge. It was rather a demonstration of zeal for the Lord whose house of worship had been turned into a den of robbers.

 © TWR-Africa, 2014

What about you as a leader? The lesson you might learn from Jesus is that you must control anger before anger controls you. May the Lord bless you and enable you to practice these tools of wise leadership.

Discussion Questions

We trust you are learning much about the Leadership Style of Jesus. We offer you three discussion questions to dig deeper in the episodes of ***Tools for Wise Leadership***:

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?

Here are the questions for the **Talk 14 - How did Jesus Handle Anger?**

Study Question 1: Personal reflection

Recently, how have you as a leader controlled or been controlled by your anger?

Study Question 2: Group Discussion

How important is it for Christian leaders to control their anger - what are the possible results of uncontrolled anger?

Study Question 3: Applying the topic

What sort of situations can you identify that make you angry and what can you do to protect yourself from 'losing it'?

Could you share your insight on **www.facebook.com/ToolsforWiseLeadership** with other leaders?
The number **+27 60 362 4163** can be used to reach us via SMS or Whatsapp.
You can also write to us via **leadership@twr.org**
Further **Tools for Wise Leadership** resources are available on **www.twr360.org/programs/116/tools-for-wise-leadership** via the web or via the **TWR360** app for mobile devices and tablets.

© TWR-Africa, 2014