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 13: Handling Anger

Welcome to the programme **Tools for Wise Leadership** where we are focusing on the leadership style of Jesus. In the last programme we explored Jesus' amazing humility. Our conclusion was that those who humble themselves, like Jesus, will be lifted up. Those who exalt themselves, like Nebuchadnezzar, will be humbled.

Our focus today is on how Jesus handled anger. Anger is a reality that every person has to contend with. We live in an imperfect world where people will sometimes do or say things that naturally arouse our anger. When you are in a leadership position occasions that arouse anger become even more multiplied. You do your very best to promote the welfare of your subordinates and someone does not appreciate it. Instead you may be unjustly accused of selfishness by those who imagine you are having it easy at their expense. The result may be anger which may range in intensity from mild irritation to rage.

And have you noticed that when you are in leadership people will seem very respectful in your presence but engage in rude gossip behind your back? I experienced such a situation myself. In a telephone conversation one of my subordinates was speaking to another subordinate and saying all kinds of rough things against me without realizing that I was hearing the entire conversation. Now this is a person who acts and speaks very respectfully in my presence. How was I supposed to react after finding out the other side of this person's character? The temptation to anger was very real, until I started thinking of how Jesus handled anger.

The first thing that came to mind is how rarely Jesus became angry according to the gospel records. Is it because everybody was so well behaved Jesus did not need to be angry? By no means. The occasions that could have legitimately aroused Jesus' anger were numerous. Just imagine yourself as a leader in Jesus' position and you confront the situations that I want to describe for you right now.

1. You are ministering in the synagogue at Nazareth. All you are telling them is plain and innocent truth. Yet all the people in the synagogue become furious when the truth you are telling them gets a bit uncomfortable. They get up to drive you out of the town, take you to the brow of a hill in order to throw you down the cliff. How do you react to such unreasonable behaviour of people to whom you are trying to teach the truth? The temptation to be angry is so very real. But you know what? Jesus did not fly off the handle. He never shouted at them or tell them he would never again seek to teach or help them. He simply walked right through the crowd and went on his way without telling them off. What a way to deal with an anger producing situation!

2. Another example where anger could be thought to be unavoidable is described in Matt 12. People bring to you a demon-possessed man who is blind and mute and, out of love and kindness, you heal him. When this happens how do you expect people to react? They should be rejoicing. They should be thanking God for this work of grace, right? But no. When the Pharisees hear of this, they say, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons that this fellow drives out demons." O my goodness. Is that how I am supposed to be rewarded for my kindness? I can imagine myself exploding if I was to face such a situation. But again, not Jesus. He took that opportunity to teach them that a kingdom divided against itself will be ruined. Satan would not want to divide his kingdom by casting out his own demons. Jesus was truly amazing in the way he controlled anger.

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3. Most of all consider how Jesus was treated towards the end of his earthy life. Remember what happened when he was taken into the home of the chief priest? He was treated with all manner of humiliation. Some spat upon him. They gave him imitation royal robes in order to mock him. Meanwhile Peter, one of his closest disciples was busy denying him in the courtyard. How could Peter do such a thing when he had promised never to deny him? At Pilate's residence Jews were throwing at him all manner of false accusations. He was given a heavy cross to bear up Golgotha. He was nailed on the cross with a crown of thorn on his head. How could Jesus handle all these situations without exploding in anger?

So yes, the first lesson we learn from Jesus is how rarely he got angry. Insults and torture directed against him were not enough to make him angry. How was this possible? There is a spiritual and a human answer which could be very helpful to you and me as leaders.

The spiritual answer is that Jesus' reaction to such extreme provocation was supernatural. From the very beginning of his ministry Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit provides supernatural strength to enable us to do what we would be unable to do in the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 includes supernatural joy. Human insults cannot steal the joy of someone full of the fruit of the Spirit. But most relevantly, the fruit of the Spirit includes self-control. This implies that with the power given by the Holy Spirit you can be able to control your anger in the face of insults or injury. That is the spiritual answer.

The natural, human answer is that we become angry to the extent that we negatively interpret what other people do to us. OK, let us say someone insults you. The first question is how you interpret the insult. You either interpret it in terms of yourself being demeaned, treated unjustly or harshly. This interpretation leads to anger and to an attempt to get even with that person. But what if you interpret these actions as coming from a person who is ignorant of the truth of who you are? Or a person who is hurting so much that they just want to hurt other people. We have said before that hurting people hurt people. Maybe this is a person who never experienced love as they were growing up and therefore they do not know how to love. You see when you interpret the other person's actions in terms of a need they have you will feel some empathy for your abuser. Their action is about them and not about you. That is why Jesus could pray even during the pain of crucifixion, "Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing."

Rising above insults and hurts is a real sign of true leadership. Too many people descend to the level of the abuser by exchanging insult for insult, fighting fire with fire. Jesus did not allow his abusers to pull him down to their level. So as you face provocations and insults please remember Jesus. Remember the many situations which could have provoked anger but which did not. Then pray that you too would rise to a supernatural level of response which does not depend on the inclinations of the flesh. Pray too for wisdom in interpreting other people's insulting words or injurious actions. That will make it easier to control your anger and show real emotional leadership. In the next program we turn our attention to situations that made Jesus angry, and how he handled his anger in those situations. So until I meet you again in the next program, practice these tools of wise leadership.

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Discussion Questions

We trust you are learning much about the Leadership Style of Jesus. Three discussion questions can help you explore 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?

You could get together with a group of friends and interact on the questions for the **Talk 13 - Handling Anger**

Study Question 1: Personal reflection

How do most people respond to a situation that makes them angry?

Study Question 2: Group Discussion

How can you react in a situation that you find insulting or demeaning?

Study Question 3: Applying the topic

How can you as a leader teach others to respond correctly rather than react to things that make you angry?

What have you experience in relation to the principles of this episode? Please share your insight with other leaders on **www.facebook.com/ToolsforWiseLeadership**
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