

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 7: Gentle Leaders are Tough but Tender Hearted

Welcome to the programme **Tools for Wise Leadership**. We have so far discussed several characteristics of the leadership style of Jesus. He was a man of authority. He recognized the need to be confirmed in his ministry by the Father, by his disciples and by outsiders. He acknowledged the contribution of others. As a good shepherd He was committed to the sheep, putting the interests of the sheep before his own. He demonstrated courage and one manifestation of courage was his willingness to break customs which were either serving no useful purpose or when they were contrary to his convictions.

Such a characterization of Jesus' style of leadership might lead us to think that Jesus was tough and uncompromising. You might even picture him like an elevated president who is unapproachable. But that would not represent the true character of Jesus. Today I want to show you that Jesus' style of leadership was marked by gentleness. This is not to contradict what we saw earlier about Jesus' style of leadership. He was both tough-minded and tender hearted.

Now this is a wonderful but rare combination of leadership styles. We have some leaders who are both tough-minded and tough hearted. They are both uncompromising in their thinking and unsympathetic to others in their hearts. They are courageous enough to break customs like Jesus did, but in the process they are rough with those around them and are always feared. Then there are leaders who are tender-minded and tough-hearted. They are incapable of radical and analytical thinking, but they are also tough in the way they relate to others. Yet other leaders are tender-minded and tender-hearted. They are soft at heart, but also soft in their way of thinking. And because they have no strong ideas they can be swayed by every idea that comes to them.

The uniqueness of Jesus is that he was tough-minded and tender-hearted. His tender-heartedness comes out very clearly in the way he dealt with the woman who had been caught in the very act of adultery. He treated her with gentleness and assured her of forgiveness. As she was being dragged to Jesus she must have cowered in fear of yet more condemnation. This would have been the case when she was hearing the accusers asking Jesus if he would agree that according to the law she had to be stoned to death.

But imagine her relief as she listened to Jesus saying to those men: "Whoever is without sin let him be the first to stone her." Her relief would have been even more pronounced after all her accusers had left and now she heard Jesus saying, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." This was gentleness par excellence.

Just think for a moment about the two ways Jesus expressed his gentleness to this woman. Firstly, he accepted her. As Youssef says, "most of us have enough guilt to carry without others laying more on us. When we fail, we know it. We tend to hate ourselves for being weak or think of ourselves as evil. We feel so much self-hatred we don't need anyone else to add to it." I wonder what you would have done if you had been confronted with someone caught in such a sin. Many leaders would have lectured the woman about her immorality and the harm she was inflicting on herself and her family. Jesus did not do any of these expected things. In gentleness he accepted her as a lovable human being.

Tools for Wise Leadership, Series 10: The Leadership Style of Jesus

According to Maslow's hierarchy of need we all have the need for love and belonging. That means we all need to be loved and accepted despite our weaknesses. A good leader meets this need in others and is accepting of others as Jesus did this woman. But why is there a tendency to condemn and reject other people when we become aware of some weakness in their lives? Maybe one of the reasons is the psychological phenomenon called projectionism. We tend to project our weaknesses on others who show the same weakness. Who condemns a thief who is caught the most? Those whose stealing has not yet been discovered of course. Who are the people who condemn sexual sins the most? Those who have undiscovered sexual sins. The men who brought the woman to Jesus must have been secretly aware of their own sexual sinfulness. This woman was committing adultery with a man, and yet these men did not also bring the offending man to Jesus. You see the way to avoid condemning yourself for your own sin is to project your sin on another person and then condemn that other person. Is that not the reason Jesus said: "He who is without sin, let him be the first to stone her?" And when Jesus stooped down to write some things on the sand what was he writing? We are not told. But my sanctified imagination tells me that Jesus was perhaps writing those men's sins in the sand. As each man read his sins he quickly sneaked away until Jesus was left alone with this woman.

By becoming aware of the danger of projectionism we can be more accepting of those we lead. You do not lead sinless angels. Each of the people under you will have weaknesses of one sort or another. If you want to be a good leader, then do as Jesus did when he accepted this woman caught in the act of adultery.

The second way Jesus showed his gentleness towards this woman is that he forgave her: "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." He let her know that she was forgiven, but warned her not to do it again. "He didn't harp on her wrongdoing, lecture her about temptation, or confuse her with moralism" (Youssef).

Let me ask you leader: How prepared are you to forgive, even when it is not easy? As a leader I have at times been deeply cut by the actions of other people. Blatant lies have been told about me and some have attempted to exercise their PhDs on me. By PHD I mean the "Pull him down" or "Pull her down" tendency that some people seem to carry with them. The tendency to get-back and get-even with those people is always there. But then I start to think about the forgiving qualities of Jesus. I think of the way he forgave the woman caught in the act of adultery. I think of Jesus being accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the chief of demons! What a terrible accusation, and yet Jesus did not get into a rage and start fighting back. Mostly, however, I look at Jesus on the cross, with a crown of thorns on his head and nails driven through his hands, being spat upon and mocked in every way. One would not think that those who were inflicting such pain on Jesus deserved to be forgiven. Yet Jesus even prayed for them: "Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing." When I see such a forgiving example in Jesus I tell myself that I too should forgive even those I think do not deserve forgiveness. Jesus indeed expressed his gentleness by forgiving others.

This gentleness is part of Jesus' concern for others as opposed to pre-occupation with self. He did not hesitate to rebuke, correct, encourage, and defend etc. according to the needs of the moment. In the case of the woman caught in adultery she was already so loaded with guilt that Jesus forgave her rather than pile on her more guilt. This was being tender-hearted. But Jesus also warned her not to sin again. This was being tough-minded – telling the truth as it needed to be told.

To be a leader you have to discern the needs of others and act accordingly. Jesus was tough-minded and tender-hearted. This is a good example for you as a leader to follow. Until we meet in the next programme practice this tool of wise leadership.

Discussion Questions

The radio programme *Tools for Wise Leadership* is designed to help you with biblical leadership principles. Using the following three types of study questions you can apply what you learn to your life and context:

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?

Do you know a local leader personally? Maybe you could meet with this leader at a suitable time and work through these questions with him or her for **Talk 7 - Gentle Leaders are Tough but Tender Hearted**

Study Question 1: Personal reflection

Are you a leader that is both tough and tender, or only tough, or only tender?

Study Question 2: Group Discussion

What are some of the difficult situations that today's leaders tend to face?

Study Question 3: Applying the topic

You are falsely accused of wrong-doing. What Biblical principles can you apply to the situation?

Please interact with us on www.facebook.com/ToolsforWiseLeadership

Your feedback will reach us via your mobile phone at SMS or Whatsapp to +27 60 362 4163.

You can also write to us via leadership@twr.org

Remember to point your local leaders to the sources for **Tools for Wise Leadership** on www.twr360.org/programs/116/tools-for-wise-leadership on the web and on the mobile app of **TWR360** for Android or iOS devices.
