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 3: Acknowledging the Contribution of Others to our Success

Welcome to the programme **Tools for Wise Leadership.** We have begun a series of programme focussing on leadership style of Jesus. In the last programme we learnt the importance of being confirmed as leaders instead of being self-proclaimed leaders. Today we turn our attention to the matter of acknowledging the contribution of others, meaning those who preceded us and those whose continued contribution is vital for our success.

Concerning giants of the past it was Sir Isaac Newton who declared, "If I have seen farther than other men, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." Now Sir Isaac Newton was an English physicist, mathematician, astronomer, natural philosopher, alchemist and theologian, who has been considered by many to be the greatest and most influential scientist who ever lived. He has been described as one of the foremost scientific intellects of all time. His greatest achievement was his work in physics and celestial mechanics, which culminated in the theory of universal gravitation. Yet with his major achievements he could still acknowledge that the reason he could see farther than other men was because he stood on the shoulders of giants.

Jesus is the Son of God, the Word become flesh. Yet even Jesus was conscious that Moses, representing the law, and Elijah, representing the prophets, were crucial to the success of his ministry and he acknowledged them accordingly. That must be why when he was transfigured on the mountain, he was seen speaking to Elijah and Moses.

But Jesus did not just acknowledge the giants from the past. He even acknowledged his contemporaries as well. For example He was conscious that although he came into his own ministry, John the Baptist had been crucial in preparing his way. So in Matthew 11:11-14 he says of John:

> *Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist … For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.*

You see, there was a widespread belief that Elijah, who was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, would return in preparation for the coming Messiah. Now Jesus openly says that John the Baptist was in fact the Elijah who was to come. This is Jesus acknowledging with gratitude the role of John the Baptist in the success of his ministry.

Acknowledging the giants of the past and the contemporary people who have made a difference to our ministry is a sign of both humility and gratitude. On the contrary those who want to take all the credit to themselves are demonstrating pride and a failure to recognise our need for others. It is a sign of not being grateful for those who have been and are still crucial to the success of our ministry.

But you may ask: How important is acknowledgement as a tool of wise leadership? Well, if you see the link between acknowledgement and gratitude you will appreciate the crucial importance of both. Gratitude comes from recognition that something is valuable to you, and recognition that someone has given you this value. Then once you have this gratitude you will acknowledge and thank the value giver. "Out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks", Jesus said.

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Too often we take our advantages for granted. For example we may take for granted what our parents have meant to us throughout our upbringing and fail to acknowledge them, especially when they are still alive. I ask that the Lord will help me not to make this mistake. I am what I am because my prayerful mother has prayed for me almost daily for as long as I can remember. Without her prayers I might not have found the need to receive Christ as Lord and Saviour in 1966. I might have been swept away by the tide of immorality and could have ended up infected by the HIV virus, and maybe dead by now like most of those who were my contemporaries and even younger. Without her prayers I might not have gone into ministry, and those who are enjoying the college education I am providing through Domboshawa Theological College would not have been receiving that benefit. You certainly would not have been listening to this radio programme from me if it was not for her love, prayers and care for me in my upbringing.

Just ask yourself right now: Who has God used to make you the kind of person you are, and to achieve all that you have achieved? Why don't you become like Jesus and acknowledge them both privately and publicly?

But what does acknowledging and thanking others do? Well, firstly thanksgiving promotes healthy relationships. There are marriages which are not thriving because the couple are taking each other for granted. There is a wife who is never thanked; in fact all that she does is not counted as work because she does it from home – from looking after 9 children, fetching wood and water, cooking, ironing etc. At work, there are many unhappy employees because their value to the organization is never acknowledged. So they are discouraged. You see acknowledgement and thanksgiving promote healthy relationships.

The second benefit of thanksgiving is that it multiplies that which you are thankful for. A thankful attitude comes from what Delanyo Adadevoh calls an abundance mindset as opposed to a limited supply mindset. A limited supply mindset says: I should not give because there is a limited supply. If I give there will be less left-over for me. An abundance mindset says: Let me give because there is enough for us all. Here I am not talking about giving material things only. The giving I am talking about includes words of affirmation – thanking and appreciating others. If you believe there is a limited supply of appreciation, you will withhold appreciation from others because you believe by not appreciating others you reserve appreciation for yourself. You will instead develop a critical attitude and be very quick to see what is wrong, and very slow to see what is right about situations and people.

Yet the truth is that an abundance mindset **attracts** abundance, and gives abundantly. The abundance mindset believes that there is enough for everyone. The more thankful you are, the more others thank you. The more critical you are, the more you withhold appreciation the less appreciation flows your way.

Moreover whatever you acknowledge and appreciate will tend to multiply. If your subordinate does something good, even if it is small, you can multiply that good thing by noticing it and appreciating it. The result is that the subordinate will do more and more of what is noticed and appreciated. When someone is appreciated for coming to work on time they will tend to always come to work on time. On the other hand those who are scolded for poor performance will tend to become discouraged and will therefore perform even more poorly in future. Thanksgiving multiplies that which you are thankful for.

Here is one more benefit of being thankful and acknowledging others. Being thankful leads to personal joy. You have a choice. You can be either ungrateful and resentful, or you can be a grateful and joyful person. You cannot be both thankful and resentful. By the same token I have never seen a complaining person who is rejoicing and celebrating life. That must be the reason why

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1 Thessalonians 5:17 says rejoice evermore, and then immediately proceeds to say that in everything give thanks. An unthankful heart forsakes the present joys and blessings and concentrates (or worries) on what might not be right. Thanksgiving leads to personal joy

Well our time is gone for today. I trust that during this week and beyond you will remember to thankfully acknowledge others in the past and in the present. That will improve your relationships, multiply that which you are thankful for and give you a joyful way of life. So until we meet in the next programme, practice these tools of wise leadership.

Discussion Questions

Hopefully the Leadership Style of Jesus is meaningful to you. Here are three types of discussion questions to explore ***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?

Maybe you can bring a group of colleagues together to discuss the questions for **Talk 3 - Acknowledging the Contribution of Others to our Success**

Study Question 1: Personal reflection

Who can you thank as those that paved the way for you to receive the blessings you have today?

Study Question 2: Group Discussion

Looking back on Christian history, who can we remember and acknowledge as faith heroes?

Study Question 3: Applying the topic

Is there anything that you can do today to leave a legacy that will benefit those who come after you?

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