

## What If We Worked for Jesus?

by Mark Safferstone

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Leaders ? we're guided by them, challenged by them, fascinated by them, and at times, quite frankly, we're disappointed by them. We elect them to public office, work for them and worship along side them in church. Like ship captains watch for lighthouses in stormy seas, we seek direction from them. We pray that they serve as anchors in our lives during times of uncertainty. We look to them for inspiration, for exceptional leaders give us hope and the promise of a future yet to come. In our homes, wives and children look to the men of the household for spiritual leadership.

A number of books have been written on the subject of leadership, which makes me believe that leadership principles are often studied, rarely understood and difficult to put into practice. I searched the library in preparation for this teaching, and the first book I came across was simply titled *Leaders*. I found books that talked about the importance of leaders being charismatic, situational, transformational and visionary, but I'm not exactly sure what those words really mean. I found a book that identified the most important factors that contribute to effective leadership and another that talked about the challenges facing today's leaders. Still more books explained how to become a leader while others admonished leaders ? pointing out why they can't lead. There's even a book that reveals *The Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun!*

Based on this research, I concluded that the number of books written on the topic represents our frustration with the leaders in our lives and our never ending search for the perfect leader. I've been exposed to a few good leaders. But in many aspects of my life, I, too, have been disappointed by leaders who lacked integrity, and in some cases, the skills to do their jobs effectively. Given our lack of confidence in worldly leaders, the thought occurred to me , what if we worked for Jesus? What kind of leader would He be?

In preparation for this morning's teaching, Dennis suggested that I study the Book of Mark. Written to appeal to the Roman mind, this Gospel emphasizes Christ's strenuous life and his authoritative characteristics, while portraying Him as the

model servant leader. Mark provides us with a special vision of Jesus and reminds us that, as compassionate as he was, Jesus was a man of courage, dedicated to carrying out His mission on Earth.

As I read the Book of Mark, along with reviewing parts of Matthew, Luke and John, five aspects of Jesus' leadership style emerged, consequently, making him an excellent boss. Jesus challenged the process, created a vision, enabled others to act, modeled the way and encouraged the heart. Let me describe each of these in more detail and provide scriptural and practical examples of what it would be like if Jesus was our boss.

- **Challenging the process.**

Jesus was not satisfied with the status quo. He took tremendous risks in an effort to change men's minds and hearts. In Mark chapter 11 verses 15 ? 18 we read that *On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations' But you have made it a 'den of robbers.'" The chief priests and teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.*

This passage provides us with a powerful example of Jesus' unwillingness to tolerate an accepted practice, openly converting currency for excessive profit in the Court of the Gentiles. He was offended by those conducting business activities in His Father's house. As a boss, Jesus would expect us to act with honor and integrity, as well as think in innovative and creative ways. Jesus would challenge us to approach all that we do with a pioneer's spirit ? improving or finding new solutions to difficult problems. He would expect us to examine our daily activities, determining their value and priority. If we are doing something that does not bring honor and glory to His kingdom, He would expect us to confess our sin, receive forgiveness, then radically change our ways, seeking counsel and accountability as needed.

- **Inspiring a vision.**

Possessing Godly wisdom and discernment, Jesus tried to create Heaven on Earth, something that he hoped his followers would ultimately accept as their responsibility. Jesus breathed life into others' hopes and dreams. In Mark chapter 1 verses 14 ? 18 we learn that *After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.*

In Jesus' day, it was expected that a son would follow in his father's footsteps, eventually taking over the family business, so to speak. Simon and Andrew's career change was not a simple decision, one which, I am sure, was neither understood nor easily accepted by their father. As a leader, this verse shows us Jesus' ability to motivate others to take action, even though the details are unclear. It demonstrates His ability to inspire us in ways we can't imagine, trusting in Him for all of our needs. As a boss, He would let us know that our reward isn't in our weekly paycheck or annual performance evaluation, but that our ultimate reward is in Heaven.

- **Enabling others to act.**

Jesus enlisted the support of those who would live with the results of His ministry on Earth. He built a strong team, encouraged unity and created a sense of ownership. In Mark chapter 3 verses 13 ? 15 we read that *Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve ? designating them apostles ? that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.*

From this passage, we can see that Jesus would be extremely successful in today's business environment. He would carefully select a reasonable number of dedicated men to work with. From other passages we know that Jesus selected a diverse group of individuals who possessed a variety of skills and personalities and that Jesus, at least initially, would trust them. Jesus would spend a great deal of time with this group, training them both individually and as a team. He would give them significant responsibility, patiently and continuously coaching them and providing

feedback ? encouragement ? on their performance. If Jesus' teachings were difficult to grasp, He would invite his team to question Him until they understood completely.

- **Modeling the way.**

Jesus' actions spoke louder than his words ? He practiced what He preached. He led by example and it was His words and His actions that earned the respect of others. In John chapter 8 verses 3 ? 11 we read that *The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say. They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them. "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. Again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left with the woman standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."*

This passage demonstrates Jesus' ability to act in accordance with His beliefs while, at the same time, holding others accountable for their actions. Consequently, working for Jesus could be difficult. Meetings would start and end as scheduled. Phone calls would be promptly returned. Reports would be accurate and submitted on time. The check book would always balance to the penny. The network would never go down! Problems would be anticipated and solutions would be proposed. And, yes, customer complaints would be welcomed, thoroughly investigated, and solved, to the satisfaction of the customer. Jesus would act according to his beliefs and He would expect us to do the same.

- **Encouraging the heart.**

Jesus, the model servant leader, recognized other's needs and aided them through genuine acts of caring. As I read the Book of Mark, there are numerous examples of

Jesus' compassion and sensitivity. He drives out evil spirits, heals the sick and the paralyzed, and restores sight. He senses His disciples' fear, calming a storm and feeding thousands in need. Through these acts of kindness, we see Jesus tirelessly serving others, and doing so with great humility. Given the legalistic attitude and behavior of the Pharisees, Jesus' ministry must have been a true source of hope and encouragement for all who came to know and love Him.

If we worked for Jesus, He would be aware of our contributions and would continuously appreciate and recognize our accomplishments. If we needed tools or training to do a better job, Jesus would see that we got what we needed ? quickly and without unnecessary red tape. We wouldn't have to worry about working in bad weather or being downsized. As a boss, Jesus would see that we were paid fairly, have adequate health care insurance and satisfactory retirement benefits. And He'd know the number of vacation and sick days required by our family's circumstances.

After we see Jesus' leadership style in action, the question that comes to mind is, "So how does this apply to me ? at home, at church, at work, at school, and in my day-to-day relationships with others." At home, the men of the household should assume the responsibility for spiritual leadership, providing for our families, loving our wives and teaching our children. And quite honestly, this is an area that I need tools and training. Women of the household should respect their husbands and nurture their families. At church, we should seek ministry opportunities, contributing our gifts and talents to the growth of the Body and remembering that New Life Community Church is not a building, but a family of believers. No matter what we do for a living, Colossians chapter 3 verses 23 ? 24 guides our attitude and behavior regarding our jobs, *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.* We should approach our work in a manner that brings glory and honor to Jesus. As the Pharisees often tried to trap Jesus for what he preached, non-believers try to trap us by looking for the inconsistencies in our beliefs, our words and our actions. As students, we should accept the authority of our teachers, learning the subject and using the educational experience to build our character. And in our day-to-day relationships, we should demonstrate Christ-like compassion and sensitivity, serving and encouraging others.

A few moments ago, I asked the question, "What if we worked for Jesus? What if He was our boss?" Well, quite frankly, Jesus **is** our boss ? and if He isn't, He should be ? for it is His life that serves as the perfect example for all that we do.