

Open Handed Leadership

By Michael Clark

God's leaders are never threatened by another man's ministry or calling? To the contrary; they encourage others to go on in their calling and are servants to the one called. Where is this kind of leader today? Few and far between I would say.

Jesus said,

"The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors....but you shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger" (Luke 22:25-26).

When the disciples were arguing over who would be greatest in the kingdom, He sat a little child down in their midst and said, "Unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven..." (Matt. 18:1-3).

Today in the Church this concept of Godly leadership from a position of weakness has been lost. Instead, there is a twofold dynamic which restricts its spiritual growth. One aspect of this is the "Give us a King" mentality and the other, men who "love the preeminence" (3 John 9) taking control of the church. These both restrict the life of the church in the Holy Spirit and sever it from God's blessing.

The Israelites in the wilderness rebelled against God and said, "Let us make us a captain and let us return into Egypt." (Num. 14:4). When we want to make a man our leader, we are telling God we want to go back to Egypt. The "one-man band" style of leadership is not God's way, nor do Godly men desire it.

Moses cried out to God that leading the children of Israel in the wilderness was too big a burden. He asked for help. God agreed to take the anointing on Moses and put it on seventy other elders who were proven so they could also lead. When the anointing fell on them, they all prophesied continuously, even two who were not present at the time but elsewhere in the camp. Joshua wanted to forbid Eldad and Medad from prophesying because they were off doing their own thing. Moses

exemplified God's heart when he said, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them." (Num. 11:29).

Godly leadership is never threatened when God leads others to minister in the gifts the Holy Spirit gives to them. In Mark 9 the disciples found someone who wasn't of their number casting out demons in the name of Jesus. They forbade him to do this, but when they reported the incident to Jesus, He surprised them by replying, "Forbid him not...for he that is not against us is on our part."

The disciples of John the Baptist were threatened when they realized that Jesus, whom John had baptized, was now baptizing more disciples than John. The prophet's reply to them is recorded in John 3:26-30: "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven... He must increase, but I must decrease."

Paul's letters repeatedly encourage men to edify one another. Some of the most notable passages are found in I Corinthians... "Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are a variety of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.... But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills." (1 Cor. 12:4-11). Paul also said, "...When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." (1 Cor 14:4-6). Other like passages are Romans 12:6, I Corinthians 7:7, Ephesians 4:7 -13, I Thessalonians 5:20, and I Corinthians 14:39.

Can't you see that God's leaders are never threatened by another man's ministry or calling? To the contrary; they encourage others to go on in their calling and are servants to the one called. Where is this kind of leader today? Few and far between I would say.

Paul said, "I will not be burdensome to you for I seek not what is yours, but you, for the children ought not save up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will gladly spend and be spent for you." (2 Cor. 12:14-15).

We who have been under tyrannical leadership expect God's leaders to treat us that way; Rick Joyner calls this expectation "the tyranny of the familiar." (Rick Joyner, *The Journey Begins*, Morning Star Publishing, 1992. P. 69) In 1 Samuel chapter 8, the people rebelled against God, who they could not see, and asked Samuel to give them a king. "We will have a king over us," they said, "that we might be like all the nations and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." The Lord instructed Samuel to do as they wished, for they had rejected God that He should no longer rule over them. When we take a man, whether he be a pastor a prophet or whatever, and put him in a position to rule over us, we reject God's rule and we get what we deserve. I believe this is the root of the division in the Church today.

Paul chastised the Corinthian church when he said, "For you, being so wise, bear with the foolish [leaders] gladly. For you bear with anyone if he enslaves you, if he devours you, if he takes advantage of you, if he exalts himself, if he hits you in the face. To my shame, I must say that we have been weak by comparison." (2 Cor. 11:19-21).

Jesus said to the Church at Pergamum, "...you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore or else... I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth." (Rev. 2:15-16). The word Nicolaitan in the Greek is from two words, Nikos and Laodikeus, and it literally means victorious over the people. The false doctrine of clergy ruling over the laity like a conquering monarch goes back to the first century of the Church and God hates it!

Here in America we tend to choose the beautiful and the powerful as our leaders. Saul was tall, dark, and handsome. He really stood out in a crowd (1 Sam. 9:2). God chose him to save the Israelites from the Philistines. He was definitely king material, but the trouble with a king is that he will take your sons...for himself [in his armies], work the people in his fields for his own gain, put them in forced labor for his war machine, take your sons and daughters to be his house servants, and take away your fields, orchards, and vineyards and give them to others. He will also take a tenth of your income for his own purposes (1 Sam. 8:9-18). God was warning Israel that a man can't handle power righteously. As Lord Acton so aptly observed, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Years later, God repented of choosing Saul as king and chose another, this time a man after His own heart. David was a lowly shepherd boy, but Saul herded asses (1 Sam. 9:3). David was just a boy when God chose him (You must become as a child...). When Samuel was looking over his brothers in Jesse's house, he was about to choose another "tall, dark, and handsome" type when God warned him not to. "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance, or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him [Eliab]; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'" Samuel asked Jesse if these were all his sons. "Oh yeah," Jesse seems to reply, "there is David. He's out with the sheep because I knew there was no way God could want the runt of the litter." (1 Sam. 16:1-13 my paraphrase). Everyone was surprised when Samuel chose David because of his heart and not his stature. David could have been the kid left standing there alone after both captains of a sandlot baseball game had chosen their teams. You want to choose elder material for the body? Pray first and watch God choose from the world's rejects. Do you remember the story of Gideon? Our God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the mighty (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

Christ came to set men free of the tyranny of sin and sinful men who would bind burdens and put them on men's shoulders but do nothing to carry those burdens themselves (Matt. 23:4). Don't be foolish and allow yourself to be deceived. If your fellowship group is based on this "give us a king" model, ask God to lead you to Godly leadership, elders who are about the business of building up the saints to do the work of ministry.

Remember God's way is to give. "Give and it shall be given unto you....For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return." (Luke 6:38). If you are employing a tight fisted style of leadership over Jesus sheep don't be surprised if you are losing them. Jesus is drawing His flock to Himself and out of the hands of abusive and possessive shepherds. Read and pray over Ezekiel chapter 34. When the steward forgot that he, too, was a servant and began abusing his fellow servants he lost his stewardship and was cast out into the place that was appointed for the hypocrites. But to those who he found giving His household "meat in due season (the word that God is speaking to the Church today)," He will make him ruler over all His goods (Matt. 24:41-45). Remember it was prophesied about Jesus that

"a bruised reed He would not break and a smoking flax he would not quench." (Isa. 42:3). Strengthen that which remains.

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