

## 3 thoughts on servant based leadership

We often look at Jesus act of washing his disciples feet as a model for servant-based leadership. Just like we love constant reminding of the gospel, we love a continual reminder of this leadership foundation. Yet what were some factors that actually positioned Jesus to lead in this way?

Here's three simple thoughts:

### **1. Jesus was motivated by Love**

**“...having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” John 13:1**

Jesus had a love for his own people that was quite remarkable. I'm always amazed by his constant patience, his ongoing commitment and his unparalleled devotion to his disciples. He provided regular encouragement whilst not shying away from stern rebukes. You just have to look at his prayer in John 17 to see how deep his affections were for those he lead. As a leader, Jesus was motivated by love for his disciples.

When we truly love those we lead I believe it produces both humility and responsibility.

**Humility** because it is God who gives a leader their followers.

**Responsibility** because it was God who has entrusted us to lead them.

**“Treat your men as you would your own beloved sons. And**

**they will follow you into the deepest valley.”** Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

A leader like Jesus is firstly motivated by love.

## **2. Jesus was aware of the opposition**

**“During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him.” John 13:2**

Jesus was aware of opposition. In some of my favourite movies, we’ve seen the good guy get unknowingly betrayed by an undercover spy. Not so for Jesus. He was actually aware of the opposition against him even down to the exact person (John 17:21). This wasn’t his first opposition – the religious leaders plotted to kill him, his family thought he was crazy and his own home town wanted him out! As a leader, we are to be aware of opposition that stands in front of us.

We need to know that opposition is part of God’s bigger picture. In this we affirm that he works all things for the good of those who love him (Rom 8:28). In his excellent book *Spectacular sins*, John Piper asserted *“the apex of evil achieved is the apex of the glory of Christ.”* *“at the all-important pivot of human history, the worse sin ever committed served to show the greatest glory of Christ and obtain he sin-conquering gift of God’s grace.”* Such is God’s ability to harness evil and turn it into glorious good. The leader is not immune to this truth.

Therefore, we must be aware that opposition is not only inevitable but welcomed. An old sailing principle rings true that says, by harnessing the oncoming wind (opposition) against your sail, you can actually sail at a faster rate than if you had that same amount of wind blowing behind your sail. Jesus knew that opposition wouldn't prevent him carrying out what he was called to do.

APPLICATION: There's nothing you'll experience that Christ hasn't already defeated!

**“thus the expert in battle moves the enemy, and is not moved by him.”** – Sun Tzu, *The Art Of War*

### 3. Jesus was secure in His identity

**“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God.”** John 13:3

When it comes to identity, knowing who we are dramatically influences how we lead. We lead out of an identity not for an identity. As Mark Driscoll says, “We *receive* an identity *from* God rather than *achieve* an identity *for* God.”

Perhaps some of the greatest work on identity and the leader comes from an understanding of the trinity. It is by a work of **Viv Thomas** that drew out the significance of a leader's

relationship with the trinity. I'll expand ever so briefly below. In essence, when a leader understands their proper relationship with the trinity, the following implications occur:

- i) It fights against ego and isolation

**Ego**, because the work of leadership is being done in a team. Often a leader can feel like it's them against the world. They are the only one who gets the vision and no one else 'get's them,' – think Sam Witwicky in Transformers. However, within a relationship with a Trinitarian being, there is not one person but rather four people on the team. There are 'multiple' leaders all pulling together in the action of 'leading'. Therefore there is little room for ego to boast or gloat.

**Isolation**, because the community is now established where the leader is not alone. Often a leader can feel like they are the only one on the journey and they feel alone in that. Understanding that a relationship with the trinity draws you into a divine conversation, means you are invited to experience deep rich community just like the trinity has within it's own members. This helps push back on feelings of isolation.

- ii) It influences how you determine success and risk

**Success**

Leaders often feel like they aren't achieving much or getting anywhere. In one sense this is part of the result of the curse, but it can be magnified by a failure to properly understand and define what 'success' is as a leader. When a leader realizes the significance of being in relationship with the trinity, that this Holy God has welcomed in a sinner by Christ's redemption, to partner with him in leading God's purposes, all of a sudden you realize that you've reached the pinnacle of success. You don't get any higher than God! Nothing you can achieve as a leader will be greater than being part invited to dine with the divine God.

## **Risk**

When you have it all and can't lose it, you are prepared to risk it all. As you go with the divine backing of the Trinity, you can take risks that God is calling you to take. Now I don't even mean subjective risks by the Spirit's leading – which is evident in scripture, history and our own experience, but objective risks of leading people to live out the gospel in the lives as revealed in scripture. This is risky. A people, truly on mission to see the gospel spread is a risky mission. As a leader, you're now freed up to take the necessary risks.

Therefore we see how identity, particularly in relation to the trinity, has a dramatic impact on how we lead. It fights against ego, isolation, narcissism, cowardness and apathy.

## **CONCLUSION**

We see that Jesus was motivated by love, aware of opposition

and secure in his identity. This is what allows us to be servant leaders.