

The Characteristics of Leadership

Happy Sabbath to all.

Earlier this week, pastor sent out an email regarding a blessing, an example of a family that, although of the world, nevertheless has things to teach to those who are willing to listen. One of the principles we can obtain from situations like this is that, regardless of origins and current state, the people of Yah must be humble enough to receive insight wherever it occurs. The messengers that our Father sends to us might not be exactly what we expect, but all that happens – we know – is permitted for a reason, and it is to our benefit, therefore, to always seek the blessing in every event of our lives.

I have another, similar, example to share from this week, and in fact led to the topic for tonight, which is about the characteristics of leadership.

At the university at which I teach, we have weekly visits from individuals of note in the community. They will sometimes speak to social issues, to political matters, or to other topics that may be of interest to the faculty and students here. This past week, we were expecting a group to give a presentation about an ongoing border dispute between Belize and Guatemala, but they had to cancel.

Instead, one of the adjunct teachers here offered to give a talk about leadership, and I have to admit, it was very inspiring. This instructor described her experiences growing up in poor circumstances, raised by a community that functioned as an extended family, pooling their resources for the good of all. She spoke about boldly going to speak to the director of an international university, and saying that, although she did not have the formal qualifications for a scholarship, she pledged that if she was allowed to obtain an education, she would return to her home and give back to her community.

Her proposal was accepted, and as a result she was able to attend several conferences where, speaking boldly to those who would later go on to become community, and even political, leaders in their countries, she was offered the opportunity to attend schools in other countries, and offered jobs working on large, visible social projects. She described traveling through poor parts of Africa, where dictators and oppressive religious beliefs led to people living in terrible conditions, with neither justice nor freedom.

She used these experiences to make several points about leadership, such as not taking those around you for granted, taking the opportunity to travel if at all possible, learning what we can about other languages or cultures, and valuing what others have to teach us.

There is certainly some value in all of that, but for me, the more important lesson about leadership was something that she did NOT emphasize, and that is the way in which she was able to accomplish all that she did.

She was bold. She did not let her lack of resources, or qualifications, or family background, or reputation hinder her from believing that she could accomplish great things. And because of that belief, because she did not focus on what her apparent limitations ought to be, she was able to accomplish quite a lot, and in several important circles internationally. She was able to do all that she believed she could do.

Now, there is obviously a lesson in that.

The speaker did not say very much about her faith; it was not really a strong element of her story to the audience. It would be unlikely that she holds ideas about overcoming sin anywhere close to ours; however, I was impressed with the things that she said.

And beyond that, it led me to thinking about what the characteristics of leadership are, for the building-up of the Body of Yahshua. This is not a complicated idea, and will not require a lengthy study to examine; at the same time, I believe that there is a great pearl of wisdom here that we might do very well to take into the Feast time with prayer and with meditation.

Leadership is not something that we have spoken about very often in our meetings, at least not overtly, but I think that it is something we should discuss. In case you have not seen my post on the CSDA forum, (for those of us planning the upcoming Feast) I have proposed that our theme be “The Heavenly Society.” I find that the characteristics of leadership must be an element of that theme, because I believe it to be true that not many of our members – or at least not ALL of them – have really thought of themselves as leaders.

The Bible asks the question in many ways, and through various means, “What is truth?” As a people, we have a faith that leads us to seek out, and live by, the “truth as it is in Yahshua.” Having the faith of Yahshua, this means that we believe what He believed, and that we know that what He believes is objectively true. When seeking the truth about ourselves, we do not need to do what the world does – going on long journeys, earning awards, or (as the Babylonians did) trying to make a “name” for ourselves, a very significant concept. Instead, we find who we are through our connection with the Father and Son, and their dwelling within us, and their calling us to service, defines who we eternally are in objective truth.

What are some of the things that the Word of Yah, our Father’s greatest message to us, tells us that we are, both individually and as a group?

There are many verses I could cite, and I am sure you can think of several, but here are just a few key ones:

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” (Rev 20:6)

“And [Yahshua] hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (Rev 1:6)

“Then said Yahshua to them again, ‘Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.’” (John 20:21)

Speaking of Israel, whose spiritual promises were passed on to those who are of “Abraham’s seed” through Yahshua, (Gal 3:29) our Father said, “Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of Yahweh thy Almighty One, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He hath glorified thee.” (Isa 55:3-5)

Yah speaks to His people and says, just as He had given David to them as a leader and a commander, so “thou,” speaking to the nation in general, will have the nations run to them because Yahweh is their God.

Again, there are many other verses that we could list to demonstrate this idea, but it is clear from these that there are a number of names by which Yah’s people are to be called. They are priests, and kings, leaders and commanders. Yahshua said to His Church, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”

Perhaps you were not aware of this, but the word “apostle” does not mean “a leader in the Church.” It has come to mean that through use over the past centuries; however, the word – as it was defined at the time the Bible was written – was a very general term, and it meant, “One who is sent forth with orders.”

Yes, within the Church structure, within the organization of the Body, the leaders may be called bishops, or elders, or apostles, and that is the correct term by use. However, what I want you all and each to do is think about it like this... Yah has called you, and placed His covenant around you. He has drawn you unto Himself, and then sent you out into the world with “orders” for His kingdom. This makes you, in the Biblical meaning of the word, an “apostle.”

You may be male, or female, or old, or young... but you have been sent forth as an apostle to the world, as a messenger and ambassador, for the Savior of all. If you have not, up until this point, thought of yourself as a leader, it is time then to consider yourself such, because the “truth as it is in Yahshua,” the truth that He has said about you, is that you have been given to this world as a gift, just as Yahshua has been given to us as a gift. Much of what is true from the Father to the Son is true from the Son to His Bride, and is true from the Bride to the world.

And what does this mean, that you are a “leader?” It means that you are an example to others. It means you are a teacher of others. It means that the nations of the world will come to you, because Yahweh is your Almighty One. Now, there is nothing here about this being the case whether you want it or not. You have chosen to serve Yahshua, and that is where your choice lies, and where it was made. If you have chosen Yahshua as your Savior – truly chosen Him – then you have also chosen to be what He has created you to be. And once you have chosen to BE, then that is what you ARE, and there is no choosing after that, so far as your nature goes.

I hope that this is not too complicated to understand. The Bible uses examples of things like fig trees and olive trees. And It says, “A fig tree cannot bring forth olives.” A fig tree cannot choose to act contrary to its nature. Similarly, human beings cannot choose to act contrary to their nature; however, there are times during which we are allowed (through grace alone) to choose what our nature is to be. Once we have made that choice, we have not lost our free will; but if we have chosen the born-again nature, we have become “slaves to righteousness,” and our actions, our choices, are constrained (joyfully) to remain within that context. This is the essence of the Sabbath rest, not a striving to be anything, or to attain anything, or to earn anything... but a rest, and an acceptance, and a willingness to grow according to the divine similitude. Just as there was a Tabernacle in Heaven containing the Law, after which the earthly tabernacle was patterned, so our High Priest is in Heaven, embodying the Law, after which the Christian is patterned.

With regard to freedom the point is simply this: we can express our preferences, and our choices with regard to those things we like and dislike; however, we are not “free” to choose unrighteousness, or else

we violate the truth that Yahshua has said about us, and reveal that we are not members of His Covenant at all.

And with regard to leadership, it is not a matter of whether or not you think yourself to be a leader, or believe yourself capable of it... if you are Christ's indeed, He has said, "I have sent you forth as a leader and a commander." That is who you are, and like Moses, that is what you must come to accept – even as a Sabbath rest.

Now, even though I have called this study "Characteristics of Leadership," what I would actually like to do is only speak about one of them, and leave you to ponder (and to hopefully discuss) the others going into the Days of Unleavened Bread.

That characteristic, which I have already mentioned in my initial example, is boldness. Consider the speaker whose words inspired me this week. She did not (in the eyes of some) have any qualifications to speak of. She did not have any reputation as an academic, or a researcher. And yet, she describes standing up amongst those whom the world considers its luminaries, and speaking "from the heart," as she said. And when she did this, without letting the fear of man restrain her, she accomplished amazing things.

And how is it with us? Our Father has promised that we need not be worried, if we are called to testify before the unbelievers, and even those hostile to our faith, for in that same hour, the Spirit will give us the right words to say. I say, then, that we of all people in the world have the most cause for boldness, for speaking fearlessly, for daring without limit, for our eyes have seen the King, and our mouths shall speak of His glory.

If those who have not shared this relationship with our Father can say to the world, "I want this," and, expecting to receive it, do receive it, how much more do we have the authority to do this? And if this testimony, given by one not in covenant with the Most High can be an impressive example of leadership, so that the various countries of the world should know her name, what greater testimony ought we to have?

So then, I have said this before, but I say it again here in the context of leadership, and the calling that we have received from our Father: be bold. Do not accept any limitations upon your abilities from friends, family, or strangers. Do not let any flawed, human mind define who you are. Now, we who resist the SDA trademark lawsuit are doing this very thing as a collective people. We have met those (even recently) who have said, "The General Conference owns the name 'Seventh-day Adventist.' Since they own it, we cannot call ourselves by that name." They have become guilty of surrendering their "leadership" in Yahshua. They have let men tell them who they are, and therefore they cannot be bold as Yahshua has called them to be bold. They cannot be examples, as Yahshua has called them to be examples. They cannot be like Him, because they are not perfectly following the Lamb, whithersoever He goeth.

Being a Protestant, and resisting the Beast as I am describing, this is one (and grand) way to demonstrate leadership. We do this, collectively, as a Church. But Yahshua calls us also to demonstrate this principle as individuals, for remember there are Two Temples – the Church, and the individual Christian. What is true in one, so far as principles go, must be true in the other. Therefore, we cannot let anyone but Yahshua

tell us who we are, not even our own minds – for they are often polluted by errors of the past, and we cannot give them dominion over us, but must come to think as Yahshua thinks, who knew no such pollution.

Last week, I spoke about the steps to repentance. I spoke about not merely feeling “sorry” for sin, or praying for forgiveness if we have had an error revealed to us. But in order to truly repent, we must take practical steps to remove the corrupting influence from our lives. Therefore, consider yourself as Yahshua would have you be – a leader. See if you have, up until this point, been guilty of resisting this declaration of truth. See if you have, up until this moment, allowed Satan and his agents to convince you that you are not able, or qualified, or smart enough, or strong enough, or faithful enough, to be a leader among men. See if you have committed this error, and then, brethren, repent.

Understand that you have erred. Let the guilt of it “kill” the flesh that caused it. Pray for the sweet forgiveness of the Father and Son. And then, finally, act. See what it is that has caused you to think of yourself as anything less than an apostle of Christ Yahshua. See what persons, or events, or beliefs, have kept you from this glory, and then put them away from you. If it is a person, rebuke that person – harshly if necessary, and then try to win their soul through *agape* love. If it is a thought from your past, deny it, and replace it with the truth we are seeing here tonight. If it is an action, or habit, or anything else that holds you back from this boldness, from this opportunity for miracles, cast it away, and receive the measure of the Spirit into the space that is left behind.

If we will do this, brethren, then the world will know us for who we are, those who have been sent forth from Yahshua with orders. They will come, as Yah has promised; those other nations will come to us as Isaiah foresaw, and we will have something to tell them.

Are there any questions or comments as we close?