

Begun—July 10, 2019

Last edited—June 22, 2020—draft edit complete

(Draft)

Chapter One

Was Jesus a Leader?

*The ultimate test of leadership is not what the leader does ...
but what others do as a result of what the leader does*

1 - Based on popular understandings of what leadership is, or images of what a leader should look like, Jesus hardly qualifies.

2 - He had little to no social or economic standing. His movement enjoyed only the most basic operational support. He was not interested in direct political influence.

3 - Surrounded by the might of Rome, and the religious authority structure into which he was born, he appeared, humanly speaking, relatively powerless.

4 - He did have a small group of close students, and a larger community of followers. But when things got dangerous, they were unable to protect him.

5 - What are the marks of leadership? Power? Notoriety? Ability to give commands? Wealth? Adoration by the crowds? Authority to impose one's will on other people?

6 - *The supreme ingredient of effective leadership is beneficial influence that endures.*

7 - Reviewing the legacies of most leaders throughout history, we find their influence typically died with them (or before). The results of their work did not last.

8 - Studying the public record of the depth and breadth of his influence across the centuries points to Jesus as the most influential leader in human history.

9 - Those who self-identify as his followers are now distributed throughout the earth—on every continent, in every country, within virtually every social grouping.

10 - But his true influence cannot be measured in numbers. It rests rather in the deep, enduring, transformation he brings to individual lives—from paupers to kings.

11 - Although publicly condemned by Rome to a shameful death, his disciples multiplied throughout Roman society, one of the most violent and licentious ever.

12 - This did not happen by top-down power—political or otherwise—but through a bottom-up movement of people transformed by his life and teachings.

13 - His wisdom gave answers for life that philosophers had been seeking for 500 years. Political, military, religious and intellectual leaders followed him. They still do.

Eight Characteristics of Jesus' Leadership

14 - **Hiddenness.** Jesus had no interest in self-promotion. He knew who he was. His Father knew who he was. All truth-seekers would come to know who he was.

15 - He was content to spend years in obscurity at the carpenter's bench. He waited, unnoticed, for his Father's timing—for God's "wait" and God's "go."

16 - The Son of God, in hiddenness, out of public view, was being formed in his human character: "Although he was a son, he learned obedience" (Heb. 5:8a).

17 - Jesus lived in sync with movements of the Spirit. He was not distracted by material power structures or values. He knew another reality—an unseen kingdom.

18 - "Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand'" (Mk. 1:14-15a).

19 - God is largely among us in hiddenness—intentionally. This reveals much about the nature of his kingdom. It is central to his strategy for making all things new.

20 - **Submission.** God is equipping leaders to carry spiritual authority. But no one is ready to exercise spiritual authority who cannot submit to spiritual authority.

21 - Jesus submitted to the authority of his parents. "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them" (Lk. 2:51a).

22 - Jesus submitted to the authority of Rome. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mk. 12:17b).

23 - Jesus submitted to the authority of the Jewish leaders. He was clear on how they had strayed from God's ways. But he refused to lead a rebellion against them.

24 - He attended synagogue services. He paid the temple tax. He taught in the temple. He sent a cleansed leper to the priest to offer the gift Moses commanded.

25 - Jesus even submitted to Judas! "Jesus said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly'" (Jn. 13:27b). So there is a sense in which God submits to us!

26 - Jesus' ability to submit to the authorities of his day reflects his life-long practice of submitting to the authority of his Father.

27 - "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (Jn. 5:30).

28 - Jesus made it clear that the fruitfulness of his followers' (including leaders!) depended on their willingness and ability to live in continual submission to him.

29 - "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5).

30 - **Character.** Jesus was fully God. But he was also fully man. He went through the human process of character formation.

31 - "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

32 - There is a close relationship between hiddenness, submission and character. God forms the character of his leaders in hiddenness: Moses, David, Elijah, Jesus.

33 - But character, as it relates to Jesus' influence (leadership), extends beyond the purity of his own life. It points to the texture of the life he works into his disciples.

34 - "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Lk. 6:40).

35 - Nothing has contributed more to Jesus' influence throughout history than the profound character transformation that has taken place in his disciples.

36 - Christlike character—not outward methodology—is the essential quality of Christian leadership. Where character is malformed, leaders malfunction.

37 - **Authority.** Waiting in hiddenness, allowing the Father to form his human character, Jesus was being prepared for unique authority.

38 - "The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:28b-29).

39 - Jewish leaders felt their authority threatened by him. So they challenged him. Leaders whose authority comes only from human sources will be insecure.

40 - Jesus felt no need to defend his authority. He submitted to the authorities of his day, but his authority came from somewhere else.

41 - "The chief priests and the scribes with the elders came up and said to him, 'Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority'" (Lk. 20:1b-2). They could only think in terms of human authority.

42 - "He answered them, 'I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?'" (Lk. 20:3).

43 - "So they answered that they did not know where it came from. And Jesus said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things'" (Lk. 20:7-8).

44 - Jesus' authority. John's authority. Moses' authority. Elijah's authority. Spiritual authority is imparted by God. He protects and defends it. Man can't block or copy it.

45 - The authority God gives does not force its will on others. It operates by love. It is expressed in relationship. It cultivates the kingdom righteousness of the heart.

46 - "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, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet" (Jn. 13:3-5a).

47 - **Suffering.** Isaiah described the coming Messiah: "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3a).

48 - Why was it unavoidable that the Christ suffer? Of paramount importance was that he came to bear the consequences of human sin.

49 - "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

50 - But the causes of his suffering were broader, and point to why those who truly follow him will suffer with him: the flesh, the world and the devil.

51 - The flesh: In Scripture, “flesh” points to our natural human life. It opposes God because it is “me-centered” and thus driven by agendas of self-interest.

52 - “And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him” (Mk. 14:1b).

53 - The world: Think of the “world” as the flesh solidified and entrenched socially, historically, religiously, politically. Kingdoms of this world oppose Christ (Ps. 2:2).

54 - Hours before his crucifixion, Jesus said to his disciples: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you” (Jn. 15:18).

55 - The devil: He constantly opposed Jesus—sought his death after he was born, tempted him in the wilderness, put betrayal into Judas’ heart, and much more.

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

57 - The more effective a Christian leader is, the more he/she will have to respond to spiritual attacks from the darkness.

58 - Jesus: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Matt. 16:24b-25).

59 - The call of God to leadership passes through suffering. As leaders we discover that the cross comes before the resurrection.

60 - **Love.** Jesus identified love as the core characteristic of his life and work. “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love” (Jn. 15:9).

61 - He made love the defining characteristic of his disciples. “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn. 13:35).

62 - Love, as Jesus taught it, has revolutionized individuals and communities down through the centuries. There is depth to his teaching unknown before or after him.

63 - “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Lk. 6:27).

64 - As was the case with all of his teaching, Jesus actually lived the truths he taught.

65 - The people looked on. The rulers scoffed at him. The soldiers mocked him. “Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do’” (Lk. 23:34a).

66 - Neither “success” nor fame nor academic degrees nor large crowds mark the one who leads following the ways of Jesus. The defining characteristic is love.

67 - **Messaging.** To lead effectively requires clear and consistent messaging.

68 - Jesus' first public leadership act was one of messaging. He announced the mission. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17b).

69 - Next he called disciples. He began to train them as future leaders of his movement by imparting his message to them—the gospel of the kingdom.

70 - "Afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him" (Lk. 8:1).

71 - Where is the gospel of the kingdom of God in our churches today? What would be the results if we were to align our messaging with that of Jesus?

72 - The transferring of his message went beyond public events. He shared life with his disciples. Deeper understanding was imparted in the context of close friendship.

73 - "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (Jn. 15:15).

74 - Jesus stayed "on message" concerning the new availability of God's kingdom through him right up until the time of his ascension.

75 - "He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

76 - **Reproduction.** Jesus had three short years to catalyze a movement that would re-direct history. He focused on developing the movement's future leaders.

77 - Jesus used six processes to reproduce leaders: calling, being with, teaching, modeling, releasing and protecting.

78 - Calling: They did not volunteer. Volunteers fade away when costly opposition comes. He called them. They knew it. They obeyed, accepting the consequences.

79 - Being with: He shared life with them. They became brothers. He imparted to them the wisdom and courage they would need through life-on-life relationship.

80 - Teaching: He taught them hitherto unknown truths about the kingdom of God. "Many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Matt. 13:17b).

81 - Modeling: He took them with him. They observed him as he ministered. "And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' And immediately they left their nets and followed him" (Mk. 1:17-18).

82 - Releasing: When they were ready, he sent them out to do what he had done. "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you'" (Jn. 20:21).

83 - Protecting: He protected them by his resurrected Presence. "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20b).