

IMITATING GOD'S LEADERSHIP

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INTRODUCTION:

Most of us, at one time or another, have heard this statement: *"If you want to be successful just find someone who is successful and do what he or she does"*. How true would you say this statement is? Several years ago (2001) Jim Collins wrote a runaway bestseller: **Good To Great**. It has sold millions of copies. In the book he showcased companies that share certain traits that took them from "good-to-great." The book was the results of 5 years of researching 28 companies. The result was a set of key determinants that, if applied, could help other companies move from good-to-great. Just imitate? Well guess what?

Years later some of these "perfect" good-to-great companies have turned out not to be so great. This is a reminder that leaders must be careful relative to who and what they choose to imitate. Jesus put it in these words: *Let them alone. They are blind leaders. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a ditch (Matthew 15:14)*. The only consistency in leadership is CHANGE. Therefore, if we are prone to imitating certain leaders and their programs, we must be very careful.

Church leaders are not exempt from seeking out leaders and programs they deem successful, or someone else affirmed the success, and trying to imitate them. I am not saying this is wrong, only that it has some built in challenges and potential problems.

Following Leaders In The Bible

I am quick to affirm that the Bible is the perfect leadership manual. It contains teaching and examples of leadership; both good and some bad. Truth is truth regardless of the source or application. I am a proponent of studying and learning from Bible leaders. God has left us a record of them for a reason. They were written for our learning (cf. Romans 15:4). Yet, we realize that none of those leaders were perfect. Let's take a moment and have a roll call of some of the leaders we read about in the Bible. Keep in mind that leadership is influence on others to reach a predetermined objective. This occurs in two basic ways; by what you SAY and what you DO. With what you DO being the more powerful of the two.

ROLL CALL:

As the name of each leader is called take a moment and write down a trait he has that you would like to have or imitate. Would it be his: (1) Character? (2) Attitude? (3) Faith? (4) Behavior? (5) Sin? (6) Skills? (7) Obedience? (8) Courage? (9) Actions as a leader? (10) Truthfulness? (11) Integrity? (12) Vision? (13) None? Then write down a weakness, if there was one, in the leader that you seek to avoid:

ADAM:

NOAH:

ABRAHAM:

JOSEPH:

JOSHUA:

SAUL:

DAVID:

SOLOMON:

SAMSON:

ELIJAH:

AHAB:

JEREMIAH:

NEHEMIAH:

JOHN THE BAPTIST

JUDAS:

PETER:

PAUL:

DEMAS:

Our list could go on and on but these names are sufficient to get our minds on the subject of traits in leaders. Which of the above leaders is your favorite and why? Let's turn our attention to the Perfect Leader—our heavenly Father.

The Perfect Leader

I find it interesting, since writing *Imitating My Father's Leadership*, how many men have said that they had never thought of God in the terms of leadership. I'll admit that for years I failed to do so too. Then one day it hit me: God was, and is, the perfect leader! Therefore, since He is our heavenly Father, as we imitated our earthly fathers, we should seek to imitate Him.

There are numerous passages in the New Testament that command us to imitate God. The basic word translated *imitate* from the Greek is **memetes** and means: "Follow, follower, to follow." Here are some verses where we are admonished or commanded to imitate (follow) God and the apostle Paul:

- *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. Walk in love...(Ephesians 5:1,2).*
- *Therefore I urge you to imitate me (1 Corinthians 4:16).*
- *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).*
- *And you became followers (imitators, jjt) of us and of the Lord ... (1 Thessalonians 1:6).*
- *For you brethren, became imitators of the churches of God ... (1 Thessalonians 2:14).*
- *Brethren, join in following (imitating, jjt) my example, and note those who so walk, as you have them as a pattern (Philippians 3:17).*
- *[T]hat you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:12).*
- *And who is he who will harm you if you become followers (imitators, jjt) of what is good? (1 Peter 3:13).*

For illustration purposes let's look at one of God's major, if not the major, leadership traits—LOVE—and analysis how we can imitate it (or if we are imitating it). *And we have known and believed the love God has for us. GOD IS LOVE, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him (1 John 4:16; cf. John 3:16).*

Let's go to Paul's great treatise on love in 1 Corinthians 13 and see if God practices each one; not only practices but practices them perfectly. Since God is love, I will substitute His name for love in 1 Corinthians 13 (from the CEV):

- ... *God is kind*
- ... *God is patient*
- ... *God is never jealous*
- ... *God is never boastful*
- ... *God is never proud*
- ... *God is not rude*
- ... *God isn't selfish*
- ... *God is not quick tempered*
- ... *God doesn't keep a record of wrongs*
- ... *God rejoices in the truth*
- ... *God never rejoices in evil*
- ... *God is always supportive*
- ... *God is always loyal*
- ... *God is hopeful*
- ... *God is trusting*
- ... *God never fails*

Now go back beside each trait of God (love) and write a brief statement about how it relates to leadership.

Are you ready to become a serious imitator of God's leadership? What intentional things will you do to become a closer imitator of God?

My book ***Imitating My Father's Leadership*** can be ordered from the Amazon tab on this site.