

## **Celia Apegyei-Collins, Distinctive Christian leadership**

Well, leadership. So, it's been bandied about is it the same in biblical or Christian leadership as it is in secular leadership and it's worth exploring. And so, what is biblical leadership? What is Christian leadership? The greatest challenge that we face today in the 21st century is actually not terrorism but a lack of good godly competent leadership, especially in the public sphere. Our lives are shaped by leaders every day. Every decision they make affects us.

And so, this is not a subject matter that we can sit back and let others write on. You see the future doesn't just happen. No further happens just like that. It is a reality that is created by those strong focused and intentional enough to take the necessary actions that make success and high performance and the well-being of any society possible. If we're gonna see great leadership, it's got to be intentional. So, leadership generally manifests itself during a time of controversy or crisis.

So, crisis is a wedding between danger and opportunity. It's all around us. Our nation particularly in the U.K. today is in such a distinctively sensitive place that our future could go any way and I think no self-respecting Christian should sit back and let it happen or let matters happen and say que sera sera. We can take hold of leadership and we can direct it as we want to see it happen, as has been done in history. It has been said that leadership is like beauty, it's hard to define. As they say, beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, but you know it when you see it.

So, what is this thing that we call leadership? According to the secular, leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less. They say that leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal. They also say leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. In fact, it is said that the test of true leadership is whether it results in the successful achievement of any objective that it sets itself. Leadership is when you know the way and you show the way. It can be anything. It's very wide, it's very myriad. Interestingly, it focuses on results, it doesn't really care about the journey. It focuses very much on an end product and doesn't focus on the leader that is producing those results. In many ways the end justifies the means.

Leadership also can be said is a process of social influence which maximizes the efforts of others towards the achievement of a goal. Never in the middle of all of this do we see any standards or any principles that are bearing on who we call a leader. It's very important to note that influence is the capacity to affect the way people behave, to affect their attitudes, to affect the way they think. It is the capacity that one has to modify behaviour. Now this is a very great posting because whoever is a leader can determine how other people behave in society.

According to Jesus, and He is the only one who makes a distinction between secular leadership and biblical or what we call godly or Christian leadership. According to Him, He says domination, He says, you will not lead like the world does. They lead to dominate. It's about power. He says it's about wealth. It's about self-importance. It's about self-seeking. It's about self-promotion. It seeks privilege, honour, and position. Selfish ambition. Control, the key. And wealth. And Jesus is categorical that we will not be that way. It seeks even more power every day.

Now I come from Africa, I can tell you this. Power corrupts absolutely power. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. Once people have had a taste of power, they don't want to let go. They'll do anything to sustain that power because of what it gives them. In fact, somebody put it like this. He says power is like saltwater, the more you drink it the thirstier you become. And so, Jesus introducing His concept of biblical leadership is very important because no one is more harmful than a leader with a wrong philosophy. No one is more dangerous than the leader with a wrong belief system, a leader with the wrong disposition or the leader with a wrong attitude. I like what Goethe says. He says, there's nothing more dangerous than an active ignorance.

So, you can go into leadership very ignorant. In fact, one day I was sitting on a flight with someone in a nation I won't mention, and she happened to be going for a member of Parliament position. So, I was very excited because I like politics. Anybody that leads me, anybody who determines my future, I want to interview them, you know? So, I'm talking to this person, I say, "So, what do you think about this in leadership?" She didn't have anything to say. The way we were going I realized she was pretty ignorant about leadership. So, I said, "So, how many books, "which books do you read on leadership?" "None." And I could, right there, prophesy what her leadership would be like or what that nation would be like.

So, what is this biblical view of leadership? Jesus said this, He says, "Among the heathen, kings are tyrants "and each minor official lords it over those beneath him "but among you it must be quite different. "Anyone wanting to be a leader among you "must first be your servant. "And if you want to be right at the top, "you must serve like a slave. "Your attitude must be like My own "for I, Messiah, did not come to be served "but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many." This is from Matthew 20:26 to 28 from the Living Bible. You see it's about two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world that Satan controls. He does control it because he did offer it to Jesus. The cheeky man, whatever he is. And so, it's about two kingdoms and where your perspective, your belief systems, your values are coming from.

Leadership, according to Jesus, is servanthood. Biblical leadership has to do with serving the people that you lead. It's first of all not about your position. It's not about a title. It's about a towel. Now it's very, very hard to wash the feet of others if you're standing on a pedestal controlling them. According to Mark 10:35 to 45, it's about sacrifice. It's about service. It's about suffering. And indeed, we see that throughout biblical history, that God does give criteria for Christian leadership. He gives criteria for electing political leaders. In Deuteronomy, chapter 17, way before Israel even thought that they were gonna have a leader, or they were gonna ask for a king, this is when they had theocracy. He said one day you're gonna ask for a king. The temptation to copy popular culture among the nations around you is gonna take over you and you're gonna ask Me for a king. And what when you do, I want you to select that king according to a certain predetermined criteria.

So, He says you'll select a brother. In other words, this is somebody we know. In fact, I always teach people, I said, let's examine not, let's elect or follow not just after a political persuasion but examine the quality and the character of the person that's

gonna deliver the leadership. Because leader is as leader is. I can't give you what I am not, and I can't take you where I haven't been. And so, it's very important, so God says examine a brother, choose somebody you know, choose somebody who has similar values to you. He also mentions choose somebody who doesn't chase after women, choose somebody who's not really into accumulating wealth and who is not power drunk.

In the Old Testament He names it like this, who doesn't want to collect or amass horses, as in chariots for warfare. So, somebody who is not power drunk. We know in Timothy He says a bishop must be like this. He must not be pugnacious; he must be a husband of one wife. In fact, interestingly, He said he must have a good reputation in the public sphere. He must have a good, not just among Christians because leadership is influence. If I don't have a good reputation, nobody's gonna listen to me. And so, He's talking more about disposition and power. In fact, He Himself selects a political leader called David and He uses this criteria in Psalm 78, verse 72. He says He called a man to lead a nation, a community, a city, He said according, number one, to the integrity of his heart. And number two, the skilfulness of his hands.

So, God addresses character, He addresses competence. I think He leaves us a pattern for biblical leadership. This is also important because a lot of times when we talk about biblical leadership, we think God is only talking about character, but I've also seen very good people who are terribly incompetent. We don't want incompetent public leaders. We want the balance of both because of who you carry. In fact, Christian leadership, it's about Him. We reflect the One who governs through us. And so, there are three key areas where the difference between Christian leadership and secular leadership can be noted.

The very first one is a model, the Christian leadership models something or it gives models of what leadership ought to be. The Bible uses interesting words like shepherd, one who guards and who guides and one who cares. It uses the word for leadership as steward, one who acts responsibly in relations to his master's property. A Christian leader understands the earth is still the Lord's, the fullness thereof, the people there and they that dwell therein. So, I can't come in to post and do what I like.

Now a secular leader does not defer to any lord. He is lord all by himself. And so, he doesn't defer to another and he definitely doesn't see himself as a steward of another's property. The model of overseers, someone who watches over a situation and is ready to act responsibly when necessary to maintain order. And administering to all of these words are New Testament models for biblical leadership. But in the New Testament there's one word that Jesus uses for secular leadership and that word is archon, A-R-C-H-O-N in the Greek. That word is never used in the Christian setting because it is a word that means to rule or to dominate. We have only one Ruler and His name definitely is not Celia.

Number two, the other thing that is a distinction between Christian and biblical leadership is motives. Motives are forces that work within us, that drive us to the degree of controlling our actions, is our why. Why do you want to do this? Why are you doing this? What's your why? Why do you want to be in leadership? You know

many, many years ago, I used to look after a Bible college and I remember somebody wanted to come into college so one of the questions was, "Why do you want to come to Word of Life Bible College?" And he says because I want to be powerful or I want to be a big preacher. It was nothing to do with serving people. It had everything to do with the elevation, the prestige that having a Bible school degree would afford them. The why of a leader is very important. The only person or the only people who are concerned about the why is people with a biblical perspective. Motives are significant. They influence our action. Why do we want to lead? Why do we do what we do? True leadership will always have a true and godly why as to why it's there. Mordecai tells Esther, you've come into the kingdom to bring redemption. True leadership is always very redemptive. It redeems a situation.

The third thing that distinguishes us from secular leadership is our morals and our values. Values are non-negotiable guiding and belief system that informs our choices. It informs decision making. It informs actions. Morals operate as kind of internal yardstick. It is not about a personal code of conduct. As you can see in the secular today, I can chase as many women as I like or men. I can do what I like, and I am accountable to nobody because if it feels good, do it. Biblical leadership says that you have to adhere to a certain code of conduct. The thing about morals is they're not just a set of rules, they're things you imbibe, you believe in, they distinguish you, your filter, you're thinking through that. It's not just about morality, about sexual morality, it also affects the way that I treat people. The Bible says don't lord it over them. They're somebody's property, they're God's property. It also affects the way we do HR if you like. It affects the way that we govern people. It affects the way we handle finances of a community, of a nation, of a city, of a business. It affects morality. We have seen how immorality, even in handling finances, people's patience has brought our nations to a financial ruin. So, these things are important.

Joseph did not violate his moral code in the face of threats and in the face of bribery. Daniel did the same. The leader's moral code will be reflected in the way he handles his duties. And so, integrity becomes a very big thing as a moral value. David was called to shepherd people by the integrity of his heart. We know how he treated his enemies. When he had opportunity even to kill Saul, he didn't. We know that when people were weak, he didn't want to go to war. He shared equally among them. The moral leadership affects everything. It affects the way we relate. It affects the way we steward things. It affects the way we see ourselves. And so, morality is important.

A recent survey that was done in the secular, they asked several business employees what quality they most admired in a leader. And without exception everybody put integrity as number one. Integrity is what God insists that we have as a criteria that governs our leadership. You can have a big business. You can be prosperous, but God says you failed. You see God is not interested in the map; He's interested in the compass. The kind of person that you are is what you deliver, and God is interested in that. And so, integrity has to do with wholeness. It demonstrates a consistency between articulated values and behaviour. In other words, Christian or biblical leadership demands that what we say we believe in, what we say we adhere to, we also live by. Oh, if only our politicians would do the same. What we hear in a manifesto is not always necessarily what we see happen.

So how do we remain committed to counter cultural biblical leadership when society has different expectations? I think number one, remember who you are. Character is a very interesting word. Another word for character is image. Whose image are you made from? Where did you come from? Because I can't give you what I'm naturally not. The true Christian is hewn out of the Great Leader. We follow our founder. We behave like our founder. And so, remember who you are. I'm not just a mere human being. In fact, Paul says if you behave in an immoral way, are you not a mere human being? Those who come to Christ and profess to be Christian, are not just Christian because they have religious duty, they're Christian because of their nature. Remember who you are. Leadership is important because the King Nebuchadnezzar and Darius both, Nebuchadnezzar and Darius put people in place, in position.

And I found this thing and it troubled me, it challenged me, it inspired me. He said that the king may not suffer loss. In other words, every biblical leader is there to make sure that our King of Kings doesn't suffer any loss to His earth, to His kingdom agenda, to His business. I like also what Malachi says. He said the lips of the priest should preserve knowledge. The people should seek knowledge from his mouth. Remember who you are. You're a person to whom people must come for solutions. Interestingly the Bible also says you are the salt of the earth. So, this is how you counter. You remain committed to the counterculture.

Interestingly again, not a subculture. We don't run away from culture. We don't say we're running away from leadership because of all the bad things that are associated with it. No, we raise up something that's counter. It says you are the salt of the earth. When you compromise your savour or your saltiness or your values, your morals, the model that you must become, the example that you must become, you're good for nothing. So, compromise makes us good for nothing. Staying committed to a counterculture keeps integrity, our essential integrity, our structural integrity, our operational integrity, our relational integrity.

By the way, the founder of all leadership does inspect us for all of these things. He inspects his church for structural integrity. He inspects us for operational integrity. He inspects us for character integrity, mindset integrity. Our habits are another thing that ground us, that cause us to stay consistent in spite of pressure. Look at Daniel. When the going got tough, he only knew that the answers came from God. He went back and he knelt down. Today you're gonna have to make a choice. Am I gonna be popular or am I gonna remain true to God? The reason I put down habits, habits are those things that you practice every single day and if you do those things consistently, when push comes to shove, no matter what is brought up against you, instinctively you go back to your habit, instinctively. Daniel, it wasn't that Daniel wasn't afraid of the lions' den, it's just that he'd done this thing as a normal part of his leadership life, his public leadership life, that when things hit him, he didn't panic. He just did what he normally did.

Habits are very important. If you don't think that's true, then ask Sampson. He kept going back to this bad lady called Delilah. And even when she let him down, betrayed him, put his life at risk, he kept going back instinctively. And if you're listening to me today, one of the things I want to say is develop godly habits very early in your life. Otherwise, when you get to a place of influence and you don't have good habits, it's too late. It'll fail you. Another thing that causes us to remain

consistent and committed to a counter cultural biblical leadership when society expects something different, is a sense of stewardship and accountability. Mordecai told Esther; you have come into the kingdom for such a time as this. You must steward this situation. You must steer it to a godly, a good end. You must deliver people. Whatever leadership is, it's very, very redemptive. Every leader goes into a situation and is a change agent, changes it for the better or towards it for better.

Another thing is that we must be resilient. Know who has called you and don't be afraid of their faces. Today more than ever in the U.K. it's a political reality. You cannot be afraid of the press. You cannot be afraid of public opinion. The only person you got to fear is God. If God put you there, He has a way of saving you. Continual intimacy with God in prayer, knowing His Word, being rooted and grounded and assured of His love and His presence.

And then competence as we round off. Competence is very important. You see influence is that which modifies behaviour and attitudes and causes for lordship to come. But you need power. Power is almost like the permission people give you to lead them. You need power to do so. And one of the things that cause people to follow you or listen to you and forget whether you're a Christian or not is if you provide answers. Have you ever sat with people and somebody's speaking up and maybe it's medical and they're using all these terminology about the Australian flu and none of us understand what they're saying but we all keep quiet and listen? We don't look at their colour. Even when don't necessarily understand the accent, we strain, everybody's silent. At that moment they're taking on leadership and we're following them. Why? Because they have answers.

I have thought if we have answers enough and we're relevant, people will forget other things. You understand what I'm saying? People will forget other things. You see it won't matter anymore because the world is looking for answers. There is no such thing as a vacuum. They will follow anybody. People just follow instinctively anybody that seems to have answers. And I think we do have answers because after all we are connected to the One who made the earth and who have solved problems from all of eternity. And so, nobody cared that even though the Egyptians didn't sit in the same room with foreigners that they would make a foreigner their prime minister in the form of Joseph. Why? Because Joseph had a 14-year economic plan for Pharaoh. In fact, he said he became the father of Pharaoh. Can you imagine? A foreigner just coming out with it.

We know that Nebuchadnezzar bowed and honoured Daniel because he brought answers, because he was competent, because he was an expert. I think if we become experts who deliver solutions, positive, lasting solutions, people will pay attention and perhaps we will influence them and they'll ask us, how is it that you have these answers? And we will say to them, it's God.

In fact, as I finish off, it's interesting that both Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar said to Daniel and to Joseph you can give me these answers because of the Spirit of God that is in you. Counter cultural producing or providing Christians attach themselves to people in structures that are in danger of rotting while availing themselves to Jesus Christ's redeeming power to work. We don't walk away from society. We don't separate ourselves from society. But like yeast we infiltrate society bit by bit, one

step at a time. Believing that we're agents of change. Believing that we're in the kingdom for such as this. Staying at it, seeking the Lord for answers. And the Lord assures us this thing we call earth, this kingdom here, will all become the kingdom of our God and His Christ. God bless you as you change your world, as you shine that light in a dark world.

Bless you.

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