

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP—ITS COST

John 20:26-31

Intro.

I. This summer I read a book by J. Oswald Sanders, entitled, “Spiritual Leadership.” This book is a classic look at the topic of leadership and is a good book for anyone who aspires to lead in the church.

II. I want to examine six areas of leadership that involve some cost. It may be a good analogy to consider leadership as an investment. It costs you something, but you get something in return. If you do not make the investment, you will never reap the return. Jesus is a model for our own leadership.

Dis.

I. SELF-SACRIFICE.

a. “Samuel Zwemer remarked that the only thing Jesus took pains to show after His resurrection were His scars.” (J. Oswald Sanders) John 20:26-31.

1. The scars in His hands were evidence of His self-sacrifice. His love. His willingness to give Himself for the greater good of others.

2. This defines the essence of leadership. It is selflessness. It is self-giving. This requires a tremendous investment.

3. It really does not surprise me that few men are willing to make this investment. But, those that are, will be greatly rewarded. The return on such an investment is the recognition of God for faithful service, the reward of eternal life and the enrichment of life now with the love and respect of others.

b. We have no right to demand that others follow us if we are unwilling to show them that we would sacrifice self in order for them to be blessed.

II. LONELINESS.

a. Because the leader must always be ahead of his followers, he lives with a particular loneliness. “Most of the worlds’ greatest souls have been lonely,” wrote A. W. Tozer.

b. Jesus knew what most of His followers did not know. Jesus continually taught His disciples the significance of His death. They did not grasp it until after His resurrection. He taught them parables. The meaning of these parables He had to explain in order for them to grasp the spiritual significance of them. Matt. 13:36—the Parable of the Tares. They had difficulty understanding who Jesus really was—John 14:9, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?”

c. When Jesus died upon the cross, His disciples forsook Him. Previously, Peter had denied Him. This is particularly difficult to bear. When Jesus needed him most, he failed him. This defines the peculiar loneliness of spiritual leaders.

III. FATIGUE.

a. “The world is run by tired men.” “If you want to get anything done, ask a busy person.”

b. Jesus labored diligently. He grew tired and pressed on. Matt. 9 records the activities of Jesus. He heals a man sick of the palsy. He calls Matthew to follow Him. He ate with publicans and sinners. He answered questions posed to Him, v. 14. He was summoned by Jairus to heal his daughter. He healed a woman with an issue of blood. He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. He healed two blind men. He healed a dumb man with an evil spirit. v. 35, "and Jesus went about all the cities and synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people."

c. There were times when He sought solitude. These times indicate the need for rest and renewal.

IV. CRITICISM.

a. There is nothing else that so kills the efficiency, capability, and initiative of a leader as destructive criticism...It tends to hamper and undercut the efficiency of man's thinking process. It chips away at his self-respect and undermines his confidence in his ability to cope with his responsibilities. (Sanders, p. 120).

b. Jesus was accused of being a glutton and winebibber Matt. 11:19; He was accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, Matt. 12:24. He was accused of having a devil and being mad (John 10:20).

c. Jesus had to bear unjust criticism. He could not defend Himself in every instance, though He did in many of them. His life vindicated Him against every false criticism.

V. REJECTION.

a. "He came unto his own and his own received him not." John 1:12. The divine commentary of John on the rejection of Christ by the Jews.

b. After a day of hard sayings from Jesus, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. John 6:66-71.

c. It is difficult to deal with rejection when you are doing all you can to help others out of a spirit of love.

VI. PRESSURE AND PERPLEXITY.

a. Facing the agony of the suffering that was to come, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was under pressure at this time. He knew and felt stress. The sacred account states that he sweat as great drops of blood. Matt. 26:37,38. Luke 22:44.

b. While on the cross, Jesus uttered the words, "My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me." Matt. 27:46. When Jesus became the sin-bearer, He felt the loneliness of accomplishing the work of redemption. In that moment, he felt alone. God left Him to die for the sin of the world.

Conclusion. Leadership is demanding. Leadership requires an investment of self. Leadership requires character. The call to leadership is a call to follow Christ in this special area of spiritual labor for the kingdom of God.