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BOOK REVIEW: The Leadership Style of Jesus By Michael Youssef

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BOOK REVIEW
The Leadership Style of Jesus
By Michael Youssef

An individual project submitted in complete fulfillment
of the requirements for the MBA degree
MGMT 5800

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I. Introduction

The leadership book examined is The Leadership Style of Jesus by Michael Youssef. This book is an enlightening book that challenges the reader to consider their own characteristics. The author examines five parts of leadership including the beginnings of leadership, the qualities of leadership, the temptations of leadership, the problems of leadership and the future of leadership. Each section includes sub-segments that pose challenges, scenarios and stories related to the topic at hand. After reading the book, I have evaluated three sections I found the most interesting including forgiveness as a quality of leadership, anger as a temptation of leadership and where leaders come from as the future of leadership is debated.

II. The Qualities of Leadership

A. Forgiveness

In the section discussing the Qualities of Leadership, the author addresses seven different qualities including The Leader as Shepherd, Man's Rules Versus God's Principles, Courage, Gentleness, Generosity, Truthfulness and Forgiveness. I will take a deeper look at forgiveness. Authentic forgiveness means that one is forgiving and also wants the person to be forgiven by God. God wants us to forgive others for their mistakes and forget about the sin so that the relationship can progress without impairment and no hard feelings are felt any longer; this is when one has truly forgiven. There are a few suggested ways to incorporate a Christlike forgiving spirit. The first is self-examination which requires you to ask yourself why you are holding a grudge and not forgiving and forgetting the situation. The second is to pray to God to help you forgive those who have hurt you so that you can truly understand and love them. Lastly, you have to make a concerted effort to forgive others and have an expectation that you

will be able to do so. This particular idea requires you to learn from the situation and to become more empathetic to others (Youssef, 2013).

B. Evaluation

The Christlike behavior shared here is related to forgiveness and stresses the need to forgive and forget the mistakes of others; this is when one truly forgives. While this is a very nice characteristic to have, I often wonder how many individuals might be too proud to admit their own faults, or surrender to someone else's wrong doing. What the author suggests here is that by doing so, you are being the better person, you are asking God to forgive them as well and you are channeling your thoughts and feelings to something more positive. The book is clearly written for Christians. This chapter takes a close look at the prayer, Our Father, in an effort to absorb the meaning each word in that that prayer conveys. I do believe the author is successful in delivering his point. I imagine this is a challenging characteristic to develop however, with the strength of a higher being, anyone can overcome it.

III. The Temptations of Leadership

A. Anger

In the Temptations of Leadership section, Youssef discusses three temptations leaders encounter including power, ego and anger. To examine anger more closely, the author observes the difference between sinful anger and righteous indignation. Anger is an expected part of life yet each person handles it differently. Good leaders do not get angry very quickly, it's a slow build. Furthermore, the anger is not controlling. Actually, the leader remains in control and directs their attention to the cause of the anger such as injustice or a sin. Additionally, this leader does not use anger as an excuse for hurting others or for unspeakable behavior. A Christlike leader channels their anger towards the problem in a positive manner. For instance,

Candy Lightner experienced the nightmare each parent fears with the loss of her daughter to a drunk driver who would not be required to face jail time. Candy was outraged by the injustice but channeled her anger towards a solution by establishing an organization to stop drunk driving and support victims. This organization is the well-known group, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) (Youssef, 2013).

Naturally, stressful situations follow those in leadership positions. If one is unable to control their reactions to day-to-day demanding situations, their leadership performance can weaken. Youssef offers several steps for overcoming challenges with anger in order to lead like Jesus. For one, the leader must take ownership of their emotions. Secondly, leaders must understand the damage anger causes on the body and wellbeing. Third, leaders should follow Jesus' anger management style by only getting angry over sin and injustice rather than petty, insignificant matters. Lastly, anger should be directed toward the problem, not the person. By this, the goal should be to seek redemption as opposed to revenge (Youssef, 2013).

B. Evaluation

The Christlike behavior Youssef suggests here is very nice to do and I think can be accomplished by very strong individuals. Controlling anger as proposed above is probably one of the most challenging things a person can change. These sort of reactions do not come naturally to most. The natural tendency would be to get angry at a person or hold a grudge. The minority of people are those who can channel their anger towards creating positive results such as Candy Lightner with the development of her MADD organization. I do believe this style can be acquired over time with consistent dedication put forth. Yousseff did not stress that the four step process would be challenging to overcome. What could have also been suggested was that those who would like to become Christlike leaders should document their feelings in a journal to

capture moments of angry and to also document ways in which they coped with those feelings. I think this would be a great for reflecting on one's personal behavior, especially after being caught up in the heat of the moment. While reading the four steps is easy to do, this behavioral change is a mental change which requires time and commitment; it is not easy to do.

IV. The Future of Leadership

A. Where Leaders Come From

The Future of Leadership section talks about Where Leaders Come From and Turning Followers Into Leaders. I will examine where leaders come from specifically. The opinion is presented that there is only a select number of people a leader can count on to lead and after continually giving those key people more responsibility, they will eventually burn out. What this section proposes is that leaders can be made. According to the book, about 85% of leaders became leaders due to the mentorship and observing of other established leaders (Youssef, 2013). Essentially, we are products of our environment. Youssef suggests seeking out commendable traits of character, rather than skill. Those character traits include integrity, work ethic, moral virtue and faithfulness. This is exactly what Jesus did when he called upon the twelve disciples to follow him. These men were uneducated, working class individuals who did not necessarily have leadership traits at the time but who did possess some of the suggested character traits shown above. There are some things to realize when in a leadership role. For one, no individual is irreplaceable. Many times, people are unaware of their leadership abilities until they are put into a situation where they have to rise to the occasion. There are many hidden leaders in any group who will surface once they know they are needed or wanted. Lastly, majority of the time, leaders learn as they go. Youssef concluded by suggesting putting your

faith in God and praying for wisdom so that the spirit will lead you in the right direction when searching for a true leader (Youssef, 2013).

B. Evaluation

This book is clearly written for those of Christian faith. This section directs readers to prayer for the answer as I know many devout Catholics practice this. While I agree with the proposed suggestion for finding individuals with admirable character, I also think it is challenging to find individuals to perform a specific skill. While this may be teachable in certain circumstances, it may not be realistic. Additionally, the author does not address the challenges leaders may face in the real world. For instance, for those in the customer facing-service industries, having employees available is a must and many times desperate times call for desperate measures. Personally, I have been called upon to perform when I may not have been prepared to do so. However, when in the situation natural instinct emerges and positive performance was conducted. I think Youssef's points are right on target and very factual. Overall, I think the point Youssef is trying to make is that with patience, leaders can identify other good leaders.

V. Conclusion

Overall The Leadership Style of Jesus by Michael Youssef is a worthy read and one that I will recommend to others. This book is definitely written for Christians however, those of non-Christian faith can gain something from each point the author makes. The fundamentals of each topic are clearly explained making it easy to grasp the concept. One shortcoming I found is the book does not address the reality of each situation; while it is easier said than done. One suggestion I would have to improve this book or perhaps to build a sequel would be on how to handle these situations in the real world. Perhaps this can be more of a workbook than anything else. All in all, I really enjoyed the book and learned a tremendous amount about myself and

about what it takes to be a Christlike leader. Additionally, it helped me recognize and understand unique traits in the many mentors in my life.

References

Youssef, M. (2013). *The Leadership Style of Jesus*. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers.