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At the Heart of Christian Leadership: Jesus' Style

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July 2026

AT THE HEART OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP: JESUS' STYLE



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TESTIFY MAGAZINE (TELLING PEOPLE'S STORIES - AFFIRMING GOD IS ALIVE!)

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**At The Heart of Christian
Leadership: Jesus' Style.**



AT THE HEART OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

How often do we find that churches in the modern era are led and managed according to a preacher's theological background, denominational traditions, or personal leadership style? As a result, disagreements and even conflict can arise within church leadership and/or governance regarding how the church ought to be governed. Yet we sometimes forget that Jesus Christ remains the greatest and most influential leader the world has ever known. From Him, we can learn timeless principles and values of leadership that transcend culture, denomination, and tradition.

In this article, I would like to examine "Jesus' style of leadership" in the light of various leadership models found in ministry today. In doing so, I draw not only from Scripture but also from my own observations and experiences of pastoral leadership within local and international churches over the past thirty years.

As Christians, whether African, European, Asian, or American, we are all called to learn from Jesus. There will always be a gap between Christ's perfect example and our imperfect attempts to imitate Him, yet He continually calls us to follow in His footsteps. While Jesus came to earth primarily to fulfil the Father's plan of redemption through His death and resurrection, He also spent three years teaching, mentoring, discipling, and demonstrating what godly leadership looks like. Through His preaching, teaching, miracles, and personal example, He showed ordinary men and women how to live as citizens of the Kingdom of God.

As a South African deeply connected to the African continent, I believe it is important to recognise that African cultural values often differ from those of the Western world.

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Consequently, we should be careful not to assume that Western leadership models are automatically the standard by which church leadership should be measured. Our task is not to imitate American or European leadership styles uncritically, but rather to ensure that every leadership model is evaluated according to biblical principles. Wherever culture aligns with Scripture, it can be embraced; where it conflicts with Scripture, it must be corrected.

Jesus Led Through Serving

Jesus established a revolutionary model of leadership by leading through service. One of the most powerful examples of this occurred when He washed His disciples' feet (John 13). This act made His disciples uncomfortable, particularly Peter, because it appeared inconsistent with their understanding of authority and leadership.

Yet Jesus demonstrated that true authority is not diminished by humility—it is strengthened by it.

After washing their feet, Jesus said:

“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” (John 13:14–15 NKJV)

Jesus Himself declared: “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:28 NKJV) Jesus warns us not to place our confidence in titles, positions, or public recognition.

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Whether we are pastors, bishops, evangelists, teachers, doctors, directors, or ministry leaders, our value does not come from our title but from our relationship with God and our willingness to serve His people.

This challenge is particularly relevant within many African contexts, where titles and positions often carry significant social importance. While there is nothing wrong with honouring leadership, problems arise when authority becomes centred on status rather than service.

Unfortunately, modern Christianity has not been immune to this danger. In some circles, success is measured by the size of a church, the number of satellite churches, or the prominence of a ministry. Yet biblical leadership is not primarily about building personal empires; it is about building the Kingdom of God. Churches may grow numerically, but without sound doctrine, discipleship, accountability, and spiritual maturity, growth alone is not a reliable measure of success.

A leader who understands his identity in Christ does not need to seek validation through titles, influence, or public acclaim. Such a leader is free to serve others because his worth is already secure in God.

Leading through serving means placing the lordship of Christ, the well-being of the Christian community, and the mission of the church above personal ambition and self-interest.

Jesus Led by Multiplication

Jesus' mission was to reconcile humanity to God, yet His chosen method for accomplishing this task was remarkably simple: He invested His life in a small group of disciples.

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Discipleship is, at its heart, an investment.

Jesus selected twelve ordinary men and systematically trained them to follow Him (Luke 6:12-16). He invested His time, energy, knowledge, wisdom, and love into their lives. He knew that through these men the Gospel would eventually spread throughout the world.

His leadership strategy was multiplication rather than accumulation. In His High Priestly Prayer (John 17), Jesus prayed for His disciples and prepared them to continue the work after His departure. The result was evident in the early church, where the apostles devoted themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4).

“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:4 NKJV)

One of the most profound lessons from Christ’s ministry is that He prioritised the formation of people above the expansion of programmes. He invested in character before responsibility.

Many leaders today struggle with multiplication because they fear being overshadowed, replaced, or forgotten. However, multiplication can only occur when leaders are willing to equip others, delegate responsibility, and eventually step aside to allow the next generation to lead.

A leader’s success should not be measured by how indispensable he becomes, but by how effectively he prepares others to continue the work.

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Sadly, many promising young leaders leave churches and ministries because they are never given opportunities to grow, serve, and develop their gifts. When leadership becomes controlling rather than empowering, division often follows.

Jesus showed us a better way.

Jesus Led by Walking Alongside Others

Jesus did not lead from a distance. He lived, travelled, worked, prayed, and ministered alongside His disciples. Peter received personal instruction from Jesus on numerous occasions. When Peter stepped out of the boat onto the water, Jesus taught him about faith (Matthew 14:25–32). Peter also accompanied Jesus to the Mount of Transfiguration, where he witnessed Christ's divine glory (Luke 9:28–36).

These experiences shaped Peter far more deeply than classroom instruction ever could.

In many traditional societies, learning takes place through observation and participation. Apprentices learn by working alongside experienced craftsmen. They watch, listen, imitate, and eventually become skilled themselves.

The same principle applies in Christian leadership.

Many years ago, when I was only sixteen years old, I surrendered my life to Christ and was filled with a deep passion to share the Gospel with the lost, the forgotten, and those living on the margins of society.

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While still attending school, I approached Pastor Walter Snyman, then Senior Pastor of Lighthouse Church in Goodwood, Cape Town, and asked if I could accompany him on an evangelistic outreach to minister to sailors and prostitutes in the Cape Town Harbour.

At the time, I knew very little about preaching and even less about theology or Christian doctrine. Yet I knew one thing with certainty: God had saved me and transformed my life. Having lost my biological father at the age of four, I had spent much of my childhood searching for acceptance, guidance, and belonging. In Christ, I found the Father, Friend, and Saviour my heart had longed for.

That outreach opened my eyes to what true ministry really means. Even at sixteen years of age, I began to understand that effective evangelism involves more than simply speaking about Christ. It involves sharing life with people, listening to their stories, understanding their pain, and demonstrating genuine compassion.

Looking back today, I believe God graciously equipped me with the understanding necessary to point hurting people toward the One who could heal their brokenness, forgive their sins, and give them eternal hope.

Jesus Led by Personal Example

Jesus did not merely instruct His disciples—He modelled the life He expected them to live.

The disciples observed Him constantly.

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They watched Him pray, preach, teach, heal, serve, and minister. They accompanied Him into synagogues, villages, homes, fields, and cities. They saw Him at weddings and funerals, during times of joy and times of sorrow.

Jesus taught:

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” (Luke 9:23 NKJV)

He also commanded:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you... By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34–35 NKJV)

The disciples learned these truths not simply because Jesus taught them, but because He lived them.

They witnessed His compassion, humility, courage, obedience, and unwavering commitment to the Father’s will. They saw Him withdraw into solitude for prayer. They watched Him persevere through opposition and suffering. They observed His complete dependence upon God.

Leadership by example remains one of the most powerful forms of influence available to any Christian leader.

Throughout my own ministry, I have had the privilege of mentoring

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young people, counselling individuals struggling with addiction, and walking alongside fellow believers facing trials and difficulties. Many have told me that they learned more from observing daily Christian living than from any sermon or lecture.

They watched how I treated my wife, how I responded to hardship, how I encouraged others during difficult seasons, and how I sought to demonstrate honesty, integrity, compassion, and faithfulness in everyday life.

I do not mention this to draw attention to myself, but to highlight an important truth: people are looking for leaders whose lives reflect the message they proclaim. Both believers and unbelievers are drawn to authenticity. They want to see Christianity lived out in practical ways.

The Church does not simply need leaders who can preach biblical truth. It needs leaders who can demonstrate biblical truth through their character, conduct, and daily lives.

Conclusion

May the Church of Jesus Christ throughout South Africa and across the African continent raise up a new generation of leaders who are willing to set aside personal ambition, titles, and privilege in order to serve others faithfully.

May these leaders walk in humility, transparency, accountability, and courage. May they invest in those who follow after them, leading not from a position of superiority but from a posture of *servanthood*.

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Above all, may they reflect the example of Christ Himself—the Servant King—who came not to be served, but to serve.

For at the very heart of Christian leadership is not power, position, prestige, or prominence.

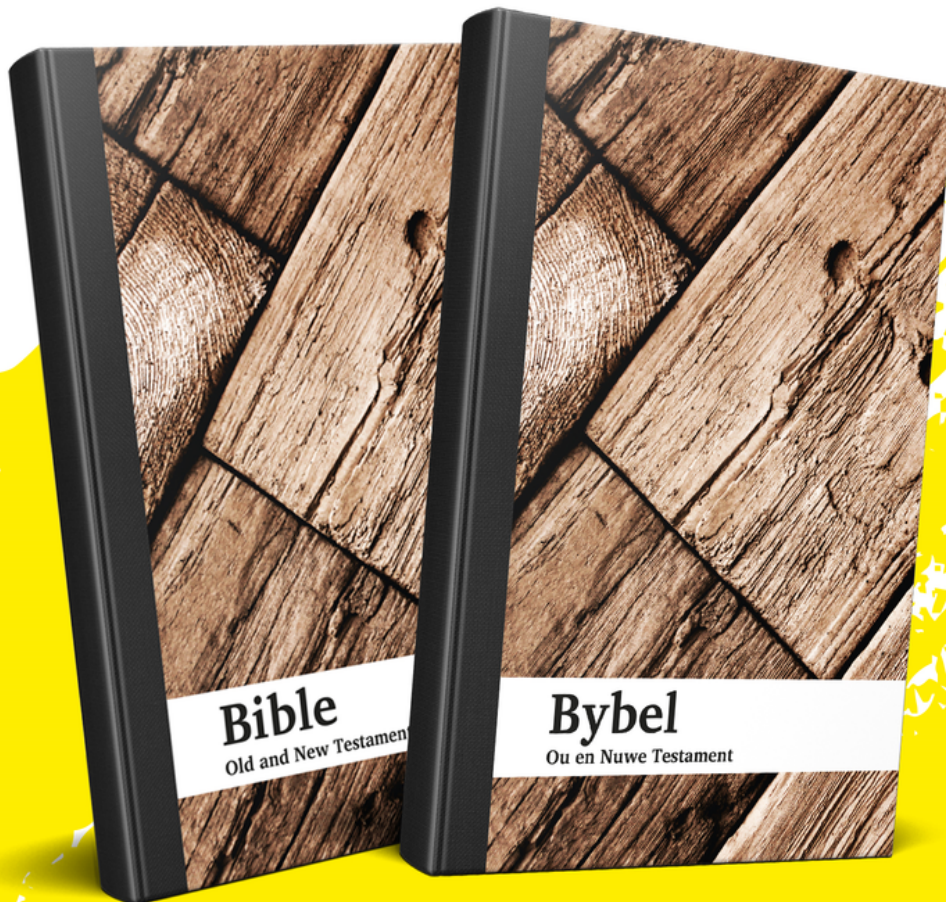
At the heart of Christian leadership is Jesus.

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Psalm 1 vers 3 sê :

"En hy sal wees soos 'n boom wat
geplant is by waterstrome, wat sy vrugte gee
op sy tyd en waarvan die blare nie verwelk nie;
en alles wat hy doen, voer hy voorspoedig uit."



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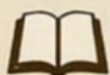
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HAVE YOU ACCEPTED JESUS
CHRIST?

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Romans 3:23 ESV

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

The abovementioned verse is an extremely well used verse and many people know it and can even quote it off by heart, but the significance of it is the reality that every single person needs to contemplate.

If you have not accepted Jesus as your Personal Saviour yet or are thin king about it, you have to start here. The reality of your sin problem cancels and disqualifies you from the very presence of God and this bars you from eternal Life. Your choices are simple here, either an eternity with God or an Eternity without God. I would think that the logical answer would be an Eternity with God. Why? Well let's look at this:

2 Thessalonians 1:9

"They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might"

NASB

This is the reality of a choice that omits Jesus as your Personal Saviour -

= Everlasting Punishment

= Destruction

= Shut Out

= No Godly Presence

= And no Glory at all

This is not something to take lightly and by the way this is not scaring you into making a false decision, God is love, thus we as His followers are love, this means if I say I have the love of God, it is my duty to tell you the truth and point you into the right direction.

So in looking at the sin problem and the reality of this, what is the answer then? Let's look at this:

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

NASB

What a wonderful solution to an immense problem, God has made a way and in making the way He has also made it very clear that this is the only answer to the problem. You have to accept Jesus His Son in order to obtain Eternal Life and ward off all the destruction and other bad things spoken about in the previous Bible verse.

It also makes it very clear that this can only be done through JESUS CHRIST His Son, there is no other way to salvation or Eternal life other than through Jesus, NONE!

Let's look at this too:

John 1:12-13

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

NASB

Wow! Just look at this, not only do we get Eternal Life but we become Children of God. The impact of this is massive as it speaks to the fact that we now belong to the family of God and receive the benefits of being part of a family, and not just any family but a royal family (1 Peter 2 vs 9).

So in looking and understanding all of this, How do you accept Jesus as your Personal Saviour?

Romans 10 vs 9-10

"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

NASB

Let me just make one point very clear before we look at the above verses, your salvation cannot be obtained by good works, you cannot go to Heaven or be part of God's family because you are a good person, or you do good deeds, No! The Bible makes it clear, if you want to accept Jesus as your Personal Saviour then it gets done on the basis of two things. These two things are critical because it will also help you on your work with the Lord and attain righteousness and a life pleasing to God.

Firstly, you have to confess with your mouth that Jesus is your Lord, this is very important because by your confession God will know and people in the world will know. This is significant because one does not hide a light under a bowl. Everyone must see and hear that you are a child of God.

BELIEF

And secondly you must believe in your heart, with your whole being and understanding that Jesus was raised from the dead and is alive and is your only Saviour.

So if you have read all of this and the Holy Spirit is directing you to accept Jesus as your Personal Saviour please pray the prayer on the next page, God loves you so much.



ACCEPTING JESUS IS EVERYTHING!

PRAYER FOR SALVATION

Dear Lord Jesus,

I understand that I am a sinner and in need of desperate saving, The Bible tells me clearly that the only answer is for me to confess with my mouth and believe in my heart. I am now confessing with my mouth that I am accepting You as my Personal Saviour and believing in my heart that you are alive and well and dwelling within me. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of other Believers and allow me please to follow in your footsteps. Amen!

Wow! Congratulations if you have just prayed this prayer, and know that you are now part of the family of the Kingdom of God. Please tell someone about your decision, pray all the time and read and study your Bible. Find a Holy Ghost, Bible preaching church and join.

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