

Tools for Wise Leadership

A programme of TWR-Africa, produced by TWR-Zimbabwe, presented by Rev Dr Roy Musasiwa

Series 10: The Leadership Style of Jesus

Talk 11: Being Wise in Speaking the Truth

Welcome to the programme **Tools for Wise Leadership**. We have so far discussed various important aspects of the leadership style of Jesus, the greatest leader who ever lived on this earth. In the last two programmes we discussed Jesus as a man of truth. He spoke truth mingled with grace. The THINK concept was very much applicable to Jesus: What he said to or about other people was true, helpful, important, necessary and kind.

Let us conclude our discussion on truth by addressing the important issue of the relationship between truth and wisdom.

Firstly: Wisdom means there are times when we should withhold truth. Some people may imagine that as long as something is true it must be spoken out. That is NOT the case. There are many things which are true but which God has not chosen to reveal to us. For example, God knows when you and I will die, but in his wisdom he has chosen not to reveal that information. **Wisdom** is needed in terms when we say the truth, to whom we say the truth and how we say the truth.

Take the issue of who we say the truth to. Sometimes we can do more harm than good by saying the truth to the wrong person, or at the wrong time or in the wrong way. Jesus said we must not throw pearls before swine. There is a good case for withholding part of the truth from those who either are not yet ready for it, or who will wrongly use that truth. Herod wanted to kill Jesus, so he was not a suitable candidate to be told that the wise men would not return to his palace to tell him where Jesus was. Pharaoh was not a suitable candidate to be told that the Israelites were leaving Egypt to go and settle in their own God-given land for good. That would have been like throwing pearls before swine. So Moses, on God's instructions, told Pharaoh to let the people go and worship God on the mountain. That was in fact the truth, but not the whole truth.

Jesus spoke in parables so that those who were not ready for the real truth would hear and hear but not understand, see and see but not perceive. His parables were meant to reveal inner truth to some people and hide it from others. Sometimes Jesus preferred to wait for people to perceive the truth by themselves. For example he never flatly told his disciples that he was the Christ, but let them discover this truth by the way he lived it. When he performed many miracles he strictly charged those who experienced those miracle NOT to go and tell anyone. Why? Because Jesus knew that when people heard of the miracles they would want to follow him for the wrong reasons. Jesus also knew that many people had the wrong concept of what the Messiah should be like. So a premature revelation of his Messiahship would provoke a wrong reaction. For example after the feeding of 5000 families, some people were about to come and take Him by force to make Him their earthly king. Such people were not yet ready to know that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Wisdom dictates that truth should not be told to the right people at the wrong time.

Then there are people who are not entitled to know some things. Should everybody know where you keep your organization money? What if some people are thieves? Telling thieves where your money is is an invitation for them to steal.

The second issue is to say that as leaders we must be willing to face truth no matter how unpalatable it may be. Here I am not talking about speaking the truth, but receiving the truth. Some people have the attitude that says that if truth is unpalatable I would rather not know. It is better to stay in

Tools for Wise Leadership, Series 10: The Leadership Style of Jesus

blissful ignorance than to confront uncomfortable truth. I am related to a certain lady whose illness kept degenerating. I advised her to take an HIV test but she refused. She said she would rather stay with a faint hope she was HIV free, than to take the test and confirm that she was HIV positive. She said she could not live with that truth and preferred what she thought would be blissful ignorance. Unfortunately the ignorance turned out to be anything but blissful. She continued to deteriorate until she was finally hospitalized. At that time the truth could not be hidden. She was now at the terminal stage of AIDS. Had she faced the truth earlier she might have received appropriate assistance and might still be alive today.

If you want to be an effective leader you must not live in denial of the truth. Some deny truth because it is unpalatable. Others deny the truth because it is not exciting. Hence some prefer “signs and wonders” more than truth. That was the case even in Jesus’ day. In John 4:48 Jesus said, “Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders you will never believe.” Charles Spurgeon said while commenting on John 4:48, “Craving after marvels was a symptom of the sickly state of men’s minds in our Lord’s day; they refused solid nourishment, and pined after mere wonder. The Gospel which they so greatly needed they would not have; the miracles which Jesus did not always choose to give what they eagerly demanded.”

Indeed Jesus was right when he said, “Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders you will never believe.” Paul said the same thing in 2. Timothy 4:3-4 when he said,

“For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”

This has become very true in Africa where there is now a mushrooming of so-called prophetic movements which emphasize the sort of signs and wonders associated with prosperity. People flock to them to have their IDs and addresses revealed and even to receive so-called “Miracle Money”. People are indeed turning their ears away from the truth and turning aside to myths. As a leader, however, you must cling to the truth as revealed in the Word of God.

The next issue for leaders is how we must resist the temptation to tell subtle lies and half-truths. Michael Youssef points out several ways in which the mishandling truth can easily happen.

- Firstly we can sing hymns of dedication like, “Have thine own way, Lord” or “Take my life and let it be, consecrated Lord to thee” and yet hold back on commitment.
- Secondly we might stay silent when we should speak up. Our silences might imply agreement or consent when in fact we do not agree.
- Thirdly we may make promises we have no intention to fulfil.
- Fourthly we might allow others to believe we have made spiritual achievements which we haven’t. We might even give testimonies of breakthroughs which have not happened to the extent we claim.
- Sometimes we mishandle truth in the matter of compliments. When we receive compliments we tend to downplay the compliments in an effort to appear humble.
- Or maybe we give false compliments. For example, when someone has spoken badly but asks what you thought of the message what would you say? Many people would flatter the speaker just to please the speaker when in their hearts they are not impressed by the message at all.

Anyway Youssef offers a fitting concluding word:

For many the struggle for truthfulness may be a lifelong battle. That only means we must be on guard and work at it. But we have the example of the way, the truth and the life before us always. And we continue to remind ourselves that true leaders love truth – and so does God.

Tools for Wise Leadership, Series 10: The Leadership Style of Jesus

Until we meet in the next programme, may the Lord bless you as you live a life of truth. This is a tool of wise leadership indeed.

Discussion Questions

Dr. Roy Musasiwa has been teaching us on the *Leadership Style of Jesus*. Please continue using the three discussion questions to explore the episodes of *Tools for Wise Leadership*:

Study Question 1: for Personal reflection

What does this episode mean to you personally as a leader?

Study Question 2: for Group Discussion

What does this topic mean you as a group of leaders?

Study Question 3: for applying the topic

What can you apply from this topic in your role as a leader?

Are you already mentoring a younger leader? You may want to use these questions for the **Talk 11 -Being Wise in Speaking the Truth** while interacting with this younger leader:

Study Question 1: Personal reflection

Have you ever had to withhold the truth from someone to either protect them or the ministry?

Study Question 2: Group Discussion

How do people generally react when they receive unpalatable truths regarding themselves or their families?

Study Question 3: Applying the topic

As a Christian Leader, how can you wisely practise sharing whole truths and receiving whole truths?

Could you make some notes on your answers to these questions and share them on

www.facebook.com/ToolsforWiseLeadership with other leaders?

Should you have more personal questions kindly write via SMS or Whatsapp to +27 60 362 4163.

You can also contact us on leadership@twr.org

Further episodes and audio programmes are available for **Tools for Wise Leadership** on

www.twr360.org/programs/116/tools-for-wise-leadership on the web and on the mobile app of **TWR360** for Android or iOS devices.