

FROM THE 2019 NEW YEARS RETREAT

Leadership

LECTURE 2

Rev. In Kee Kim



Discernment is Wisdom

Today, I am going to continue a little more about **discernment**. In Acts 10, Peter once had a vision in which he saw the heavens open and something like a large sheet came down. In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures, but these creatures were prohibited to eat by the law. Then he heard a voice saying, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean." The voice replied, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." This was a big moment for Peter, for his prejudice was shattered and this was an important turning point for Paul's mission with the Gentiles. As a Jew himself, Peter and Jewish people have three main identity markers: Sabbath, Circumcision and the Dietary Rule.

Discernment is very difficult but very important. Discernment It is not just street-smarts, nor is just academic knowledge. Discernment is a spiritual wisdom. Bonhoeffer said in his book, *Life Together*, "Silence before the Word leads to right hearing and thus also to the right speaking of the Word of God at the right time. Much that is unnecessary remains unsaid. But the essential and the helpful things can be said in a few words." What Bonhoeffer was writing about was discernment – right hearing and right speaking at the right time. Discernment is different from judgment. Judgment is looking down on others and criticizing them. It doesn't come from love and respect, but it comes from arrogance. Often, it is an emotional reaction. Discernment is wisdom, for it comes from above and is not just for yourselves but for all. In order to have good discernment, you have to have an intimate relationship with God.

Jesus was often trapped by people, for they saw Jesus as the threat for their well-established system. They tried to find faults in him, and they wanted to prove him wrong. They could not just kill him; they had to kill him as a criminal. For example, when a woman was caught in adultery, it was a very emotionally charged situation and people were filled with rage and their eyes showed it. However, Jesus knew exactly what they were doing, and he didn't respond emotionally. He didn't follow the political atmosphere, but instead wrote something down on the ground. He was probably collecting his thoughts for discernment. Finally, Jesus said: "Let the one who has no sin cast the first stone." In this situation, Jesus was not only not trapped but he also saved the life of this poor woman.

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Isaiah 42:1-4

This is a good passage to think about leadership. There are some points that overlap with what I already said but this is a good summary. Leaders should have a **strong sense of calling**, they should feel "it is something I must do, regardless of how much I get rewarded for that." Whatever we do, we should feel the sense of calling. As parents taking care of children, as church members taking care of the church or as citizens, taking care of the city you live in. When you have the sense of calling, you will get energy and passion. When you have the sense of calling, God's Spirit is moving within you. God's Spirit gives us dreams and vision.

Traits of Leadership

Acts 2:17

"In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

This sense of calling comes from being connected with God. Leaders need to be connected with God.

John 15:5

Jesus said: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me, you can do nothing."

It is very important to be connected with the divine. When you deal with problems, before you think about what to do, first be connected with God. Moses was deeply connected with God, God said, he is my friend. From that connection, he was able to live out his calling.

John 15:7

Jesus said: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

Leaders should be gentle and humble. Gentleness and humility are not the signs of weakness. On the first Sunday of this year, I already reflected on the humble leadership. Humility is to trust that there is power more powerful than your own power. The power that comes from above beyond themselves.

Matthew 11:28-29

Jesus said, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Spiritual Leaders

Jesus' leadership was the leadership of giving us true peace and rest. Leaders should know how to control their emotions and not let emotions carry them away. When emotion takes us over, our discernment will be clouded. Additionally, feelings of hatred and anger will lead us into judgmental attitude and even in violence. Leaders should not lead by emotion or just cold intellect or manipulation, leaders should lead by the principle.

Leaders should be emotionally mature and understand the depth of the Word of God. Yelling and emotional fights will not do any good, it is not the way to lead and is weak leadership. Yes, Jesus was angry occasionally; but that was holy anger. That was an exception, don't mistake your emotional immaturity for holy anger.

Spiritual leaders should be always on the side of the weak and the vulnerable, that was what Jesus did. He was on the side of those who were marginalized. To side with the strong and defend the voice of the strong and carry out the agenda of the strong and the powerful are not the signs of spiritual leadership. That's the characteristic of the worldly leadership.

When James and John wanted to sit on Jesus' right hand and the left hand, and therefore when the other 10 disciples were upset, this was what Jesus said:

Mark 10:41-44

So, Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.'

“He will not grow faint or be crushed.” (**Isaiah 42:4**)

Sometimes we get discouraged when things don't go as well as we wish. No matter what we do, sometimes there is no change and we feel helpless and we feel our limitations. But in these situations, we should not give up. Leaders should have patience; leaders should not give up for difficulties will be always with leaders. We always face problems, experience crises and sometimes see no light, but we should not easily give up. Moses is a good example. He worked so hard and he took the Israelites through almost impossible situations from the hands of Pharaoh. And yet all he got was complaints from people whenever their situation was not very good. He couldn't even enter into the promised land when that was the original purpose of Moses' journey. Moses might have asked himself: What was I working for all this time? And yet Moses led them to the end.





Aspects of Leadership

Lastly, I would like to reflect on different aspects of leadership in summary.

To lead is to Engage

Indifferent people cannot be good leaders. Leaders should care and should actively engage. Leaders cannot be bystanders. You have to engage your situations and see what is needed. Jesus' good Samaritan story shows that very well. The Samaritan engaged with the situation while the priests just passed by.

To lead is to Relate

Leaders should be interested in people. If the first point is to engage with the situations, the second point is to engage with people. Like Jesus and the Samaritan woman, Jesus approached her and engaged conversation with her. Leaders have to understand people and enter into their lives. Leaders should have empathy and compassion, to feel the pain and despair and suffer together.



To lead is to Communicate

Leaders should know how to communicate. Depending on your communication skills, your situations can be better or worse. You have to know what to say and what not to say and how to say it. Communication is not just delivering information; it is to know what people need and speak it.

To lead is to live out who we are

Be the best version of yourself. Understand well who you are, your authentic self, not the false self. You cannot be somebody else. The purpose of leaders is not to make people like you. Each person has a unique personality, experience, talents, and passion. Respect each individual's uniqueness and help them to be the best version of themselves.



To lead is to Serve

Leaders are servants who know the needs of the people and serve them. Leaders serve their needs, not their wants, they are not slaves who blindly give what people want. That was the difference between Moses and Aaron. Aaron was so scared that he gave what people wanted. When the people wanted a golden calf, Aaron made it and gave it to them. And he said: "Do not let the anger of my lord burn hot; you know the people, that they are bent on evil" (**Exodus 32:22**). His excuse was so lame, this is what he said: "They said to me, 'Make us gods, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' So I said to them, 'Whoever has gold, take it off; so they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!'" (**Exodus 32:23, 24**).

Aaron just threw it into the fire and the golden calf came out. He didn't shape it. He was afraid of people, and so he gave what they wanted. He didn't care whether it could be medicine or poison for them. Leaders should love people. However, loving them doesn't mean to give everything they want. You should understand their needs and sacrifice yourself to meet their needs. When leaders have too strong of a desire to be loved, they will become slaves, not servants.

Discussion

Questions

"To lead is to engage", "To lead is to relate", "To lead is to communicate", "To lead is to serve", "To lead is to live out who we are."

1. How do you understand each point? Discuss together to have a deeper understanding
2. Which ones are your strengths and also your weaknesses? How do they enhance your leadership and weaken your leadership? Share any thoughts for improving your leadership?
3. Come up with your own sentence, starting with "To lead..."