

The Wisdom of Leading and Following Well

John 10

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In John 10 we encounter a theme that is found consistently throughout scripture; that of the relationship between the people of God and their leaders. Throughout their history, the nation of Israel followed many leaders, some of them good and some of them...not so good. The context of John 10 is a failure of leadership. After the miraculous healing of the blind man, the Pharisees completely miss the boat. Not only do they humiliate and reject a man who has just experienced salvation and healing (9:34), they fail completely to acknowledge the work of God in and through Jesus Christ. The Pharisees expose themselves for who they really are...blind guides who have little or no concern for the flock in their care. The metaphors that Christ uses to admonish these leaders are rich with practical wisdom for the church today, particularly in the way we lead and follow.

The Wisdom of Following

One of the dominant images in the Bible for the people of God is that of a flock of sheep. In John 10 Jesus envisions himself as a shepherd who goes ahead of the sheep, leading them safely. The relationship is one of intimacy and trust, communication and care. The sheep need a shepherd. If you are a Christian, you are a sheep. You need guidance. It is a dangerous world out there for sheep. Snares, traps, and predators lurk around every corner. Ours is a world that is hostile towards the things and the people of God. To acknowledge your need for guidance and leadership is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of wisdom. So, how well do you follow? The Christian life is marked by following. We follow Christ as our Lord and Savior, but we also follow those who have been ordained by Christ to provide leadership in the church. Do you know how to be a follower? Are you teachable? Is your life marked by a humble acknowledgement of your need for guidance and instruction?

Choose Wisely Whom you Follow and Listen To

Even sheep, although helpless and at times prone to wander, have the ability to discern good leadership from harmful leadership. They won't follow a stranger and they are discerning of those who have come to "steal, kill, and destroy". In the spiritual realm, we need to be very discerning about who we follow. Not all leaders out there have the best interest of the flock in mind. Not all voices, authors, or TV preachers represent the truth and wisdom of God. Choose wisely whom you listen to and follow. How closely do their actions cohere with the work and witness of Jesus Christ? How true is their message to the Gospel of Christ as it is revealed in scripture? Discern...listen carefully...and then follow.

I am the Good Shepherd

All of this of course brings us back to Jesus. He is the true shepherd and the gate to eternal life (10:9, 11). In Jesus we find the leader we most desperately need, the ultimate authority and voice in our lives. He is the one who is trustworthy because He lays down His life for the sheep (11). All other voices and authorities are to be compared to and modeled after Christ. At the Cross of Christ we find the ultimate expression of wisdom, authority, submission and noble leadership. We desperately need to be led by Jesus! If we miss this, we have missed the whole point of John's Gospel. Have you submitted your life to Christ as your leader and Lord? If not, will you do that today? It is the wisest decision you could ever make.

For Further Reflection

This week, spend time in John 10 and reflect on the following questions.

How well do you follow? Do you find that you are open, even desiring, of Godly counsel and instruction?

How well do you discern the voices out there? To what degree is the life and voice of Jesus Christ your gauge for all other voices and authorities?

Are there any areas in your life that you have not brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ?