

# Session 7

## LEADING GREAT

Jesus was an extraordinary *leader*. He didn't come as a religious figure. He came to bring about extraordinary change. Unfortunately, our cultural pictures of Jesus—handed down through art, literature, and movies—aren't particularly leadership oriented.

In paintings, Jesus is often pale and frail. In movies, he has to be helped into boats because he's basically wearing a skirt. He comes across as kind of weak and ineffectual. He might even seem a little nerdy. But there's no way we'd be talking about Jesus two thousand years later if there wasn't something extraordinary about his leadership.

Think of Jesus' leadership this way. In a mere three years he built his brand. Two millennia later, there are thousands of franchises of that brand all over the world. And Jesus didn't rack up a single frequent-flier mile establishing and spreading those franchises. He did it all from a relatively small piece of land in the backwaters of the Roman Empire. *That's* extraordinary.

In this session, we're going to look at a passage of Scripture in

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## *Follow* - PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

which Jesus gives us his secret to great leadership. If you're a follower of Jesus, this is the kind of leadership he has invited and even commanded you to imitate.

### **DISCUSSION STARTER**

What famous leader do you most admire? What do you admire about that person?

## VIDEO OVERVIEW

### For Session 7 of the DVD

After Jesus established his church and it began to grow, his disciples were in positions of authority. They had spent three years in close contact with Jesus. People new to the faith looked to them for wisdom about what it looked like to follow Jesus.

Before his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus had a conversation with his disciples about how to lead. The conversation happened as a result of a conflict among the disciples. The story took place shortly before Jesus' arrest, at a time when the religious and political pressure was building on him and his followers. It's found in the gospel of Mark.

*They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."*

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*Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."*

*"What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.*

*They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."*

### **Mark 10:32-37**

This is such a strange beginning to the story. Jesus was trying to prepare his disciples for the terrible events to come, events that would shake the foundation of their faith. And it's as though James and John didn't even hear what he was saying. Instead, they asked if they could sit at his right and left when he finally powered up and established his kingdom. More than anything, they wanted to make sure they were as close as possible to the source of power and influence.

Just as interesting is how the other disciples responded:

*When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.*

### **Mark 10:41**

The other ten disciples weren't indignant because James and

John were insensitive to Jesus. They were indignant because they wanted to be on Jesus' right and left too. Who did James and John think they were to ask if they could be closest to Jesus?

So, now we get to Jesus' big statement about leadership. In the next verses, he not only explains how he has led them over the past three years, but also how he expects them to lead once the church is established and they're in positions of authority.

*Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.*

**Mark 10:42-44**

We all know how leadership works in the world around us. People with authority leverage it for their own benefit. If you're the boss, everyone over whom you have authority is there for your pleasure. They must do your bidding. It's all about you because you're on top.

And when you're not on top, it's best to be as close as possible to the person who is on top. That way, you can exert influence. You can make sure the boss's authority works in your favor. That's

why James and John asked to be on Jesus' right and left.

But Jesus turned this dynamic on its head. If you want to have authority like Jesus had, you have to be a servant. You have to put the needs of those over whom you have authority ahead of your own. That's how Jesus led.

If you're going to be a Jesus follower—not a consumer but a follower—you have to learn to lead this way. You have to learn to serve the people you lead instead of lording it over them. This isn't intuitive. It's not the way we usually see leadership play out in the world around us. But it's the standard to which Jesus calls his followers.

Great leaders—leaders such as Jesus—leverage their authority for the benefit of the people under their authority. They look around and ask those they lead, "What can I do to help?"



4. In what ways do you live for your own name and your own glory?

What have you gained from approaching life that way? What has it cost you?

5. Over whom do you have authority at work or at home? In light of Andy's teaching, in what ways can you change your current approach to leading?

6. Think about someone you lead. What is one thing you can do this week to leverage your authority for that person's benefit? What can this group do to support you?



## **MOVING FORWARD**

If you want to lead like Jesus, you're going to have to confront your ego. We've all grown up in a culture that says it's all about us. Our careers, our names, our brands are all that really matter. But if you're going to follow Jesus, it means looking in the mirror and asking yourself this question:

*Am I really worth living my life for?*

Is your name great enough to give your life to? No. But don't feel bad. That's true of all of us. Unless you're the President of the United States or a famous historical figure, no one but your family will remember you five years after you're gone. If you are a famous historical figure, your memory will go on a little bit longer, but not much in the grand scheme of things.

You have an opportunity and a responsibility to leverage whatever authority God gives you in this life to bring praise and glory to his name. Your name isn't worth living for. Your glory isn't worth living for. God's is.

## **CHANGING YOUR MIND**

*"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

**Mark 10:45**