



# Marketplace Moments

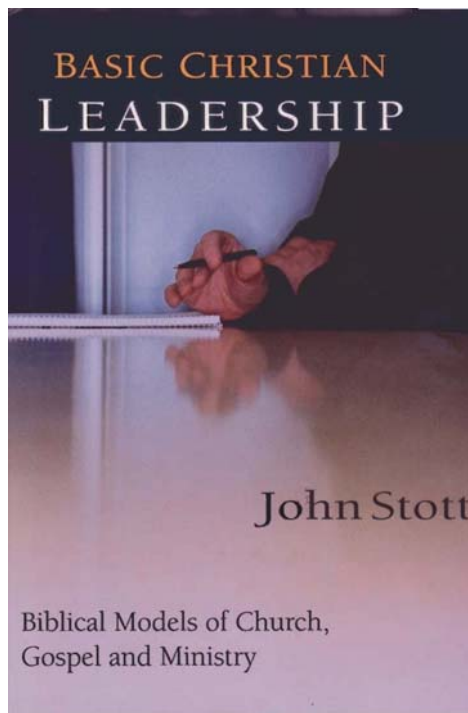
## Bibliophoria

### Basic Christian Leadership

'Leadership' is an overused word in today's society. All too often we find book after book on this topic at a general bookstore. Even at a Christian bookstore, there is no shortage on this topic. I feel personally that many of such Christian leadership books, however well intended, unfortunately takes principles from popular leadership theories (that may not necessarily contradicts scriptures) and the gives them a 'justification' with scriptures, sometimes out of context.

We have another problem which was highlighted to me in a conversation with a brother; HH. HH asked a pertinent question: 'Why are we so obsessed with the term 'servant leadership'? What is wrong with just being a plain 'servant', which God has called us all to be?'

In the account of Matthew 20, when the mother of James and John came to ask Jesus a favor, that her sons may sit at the right and left of Jesus in His kingdom. Jesus gently teaches the twelve, saying "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,<sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--<sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be



served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28).

I wonder if the publisher have discussed that the book if titled 'Basic Christian Servanthood' may not be such a good sell. I need to clarify that I am not anti-leaders. However, I am concerned if our perspective of leadership is drawn from scriptures. rather than read into scriptures.

On the back cover writes 'John Stott fears that too many Christian leaders have uncritically adopted secular models of leadership.

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## Of the Heart and Mind

### Christianity—Religion of Convenience and Comfort?

We were getting ready to have a family dinner at a local hotel with a one-for-one buffet deal. My sis called to make a reservation but it was full and we were put on the waiting list. Days went by and we were not sure if we could get a place. Then one of the staff at the restaurant called. Someone has cancelled. Yeah! We get to 'buffet' our bodies. But what shocked us was the reason for the cancellation. **The assigned table was too far away from the food.**

Come on lah! Wah lau eh! How lazy can Singaporeans get? I mean, I have heard reasons, like maybe a better deal at another restaurant,

After the clamoring within my own mind, I came to consider perhaps I too have such inclination. After all, I am a product of my own Singapore culture. When I look for a parking spot for my car, I insist of finding one closest to the lift or entrance. Minimize walking distances. On a cloudy day, I look for sheltered carparks and linked walkways. When we plan for programs at our workgroup for venues to hold meetings, we try as much as possible to be close to the MRT. Otherwise, people might not come because it is too 'ulu'. It seems like anything more than 15 minutes by car and 30 minutes by public transport is considered by most Singaporean

standard 'far'. Walking distances kept within 300 meters. Ask any friend of yours who is not a local for an honest opinion.

Have we gotten too comfortable? Even in our faith, do we find convenience a higher priority than work, ministry and relationships?

A.W. Tozer in one of his chapters titled 'Faith is a perturbing thing' writes that the meaning of 'faith' has been 'insidiously changed that hardly a voice has been raised to warn against it. But the tragic consequences are all around us'.

'Faith now means no more than passive moral acquiescence in the Word of God and the cross of Jesus. To exercise it, we have only to rest on one knee and nod our heads in agreement with the instructions of a personal worker intent upon saving our soul. The general effect is much the same as that which men feel after a visit to a good and wise doctor. They come back from such a visit feeling extra good, withal smiling just a little sheepishly to think how many fears they had entertained about their health when actually there was nothing wrong with them. They just needed a rest'

'Such a faith as this does not perturb people. It comforts them. It does not put their hip out of joint so that they halt upon their thigh; rather it teaches them deep breathing exercises and improves their posture. The face of their ego is washed and

their self confidence is rescued from discouragement. All this they gain, but they do not get a new name as Jacob did, nor do they limp into the eternal sunlight'

Tozer continues 'This generation of Christians must hear again the doctrine of the perturbing quality of faith. People must be told that the Christian religion is not something they can trifle with. The faith of Christ will command or it will have nothing to do with a man. It will not yield to experimentation. Its power cannot reach any man who is secretly keeping an escape route open in case things get too tough for him. The only man who can be sure he has true Bible faith is the one who has put himself in a position where he cannot go back. His faith has resulted in an everlasting and irrevocable commitment, and however strongly he may be tempted he always replies, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou has the words of eternal life."'

Tan Soo Inn from a more contemporary perspective in his article 'How to approach a bear' speaks of his friend about Christians singing our 'boyfriend' songs to Jesus. How casually we approach the Almighty God. 'It seems we are more afraid of bears than God'.

He continues 'A lonely and fatherless generation wants to draw near to God. They crave intimacy. But on their terms. And they run the danger of idolatry, drawing close to a god of their own making.

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Miroslav Volf is but one of many voices who warn us of the dangers of confusing God with our images of Him. He warns us that:

"But in fact our images of God are rather different from God's reality. We are finite beings, and God is infinitely greater than any thoughts we can contain about divine reality in our wondrous but tiny minds. We are sinful beings, and God is different from what we conceive in our selfishness and pride."

At the end of the day, many of us in Singapore are really looking for a convenient, painless and comforting religion that makes us feel really good about ourselves being Christians.

We want God to work on our own terms rather than His.

Otherwise, we are too busy with our own lives, we can't really be too bothered by God. In a conversation with a sister-in-Christ once, my wife asked why even though she knows that she is at a place and situation where she is neither growing or finding purpose in the Lord and suggested some positive steps towards some changes. To her shock, the reply was "I am too busy to even bother". Are we really THAT busy?

Many of us too often stay in our comfort zone and remain there. Even if we know that those situations are neither healthy or conducive for our maturation in our walk with God, to make lifestyle changes

or simply just to meet with other brothers and sisters, it is just **too inconvenient**.

One of our greatest enemy and challenge today is 'Religious Convenience'. In a highly commercialized, fast paced and service oriented society, if it ain't convenient, we don't have the time for it. Either we are too busy or too tired.

I have heard that MacDonalds have recently implemented a new drive through ordering system that can shave off 10-15 seconds. I suggest that we all hit the emergency 'STOP' button and ask ourselves two questions:

- 1) What are we so busy with?
- 2) What is the hurry?

By Timothy Liu

## Thank You for Smoking

Recommended by a movie buff friend, I picked this up wondering, only hanging on to the trustworthiness of her words.

This is a satirical comedy of a lobbyist for Big Tobacco, Nick Naylor (by Aaron Eckhart) whose entire career is to be the 'spin doctor' but yet trying to remain as the role-model for his son.

One can view this movie from various perspective.

Firstly, it is a great conversation piece for ethics. It sees how justification is done and how the process of searing the conscious can be achieved.

Secondly, one can look at the various ways of presenting truth and how arguments are struc-



tured, rightly or wrongly. This helps in deciphering common leaps of arguments in the construct of reason and thoughts.

Lastly, it looks at understanding what integrity means. Nick's

role as a dad needs to find that when the issue becomes personal. As a human, he experience a different challenge at an emotional level, when the matter comes upon his son. It is very much like how many of us may intellectually agree or disagree with a number of issues until we come face to face with the challenge in a personal dimension. That is when it becomes more than an issue.

Great conversation piece for geeky and brainy friends. But more importantly, for many of us, to consider the power of words, arguments and images, public policies or advertisements alike, and their covert attempts to influence our lives

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## Kingdom Building at the Workplace

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The antidote, he contends is a biblical approach to servant leadership, exemplified by the apostle Paul in his ministry to the church in Corinth.'

It is also interesting to note that a brief search on my NIV version finds no reference to the word 'leader' in the NT (plenty in the OT) but over one hundred times to the word 'servant'. I believe that itself speaks volumes.

John Stott takes an expositional study of the first 4 chapters of 1 Corinthians. He explores a biblical understanding of church, power, Holy Spirit and Holy scriptures, Trinity and mod-

els of ministry.

Stott writes 'During the last thirty-five years or so I have had the privilege of traveling to many countries and observing the church and its leadership. As a result, it is my firm conviction that there is too much autocracy in the leaders of the Christian community, in defiance of the teaching of Jesus and his apostles, and not enough love and gentleness. Too many behave as if they believe not in the priesthood of all believers but in the papacy of all pastors.'

'Our model of leadership is often shaped more by culture than by Christ. Yet many cultural models of leadership are incompatible with

the servant imagery taught and exhibited by the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, these alien cultural models are often transplanted uncritically into the church and its hierarchy.'

The book has primary focus on the local church context. However, so much can be learned and also applied into a context at the workplace. It will take some pondering and perhaps can be used to discuss in small groups.

I could probably sum up simply with this, 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord' (1 Cor 1:31.)

By Timothy Liu