



Two Leadership Paths

Choosing the way of Herod or the way of Jesus.

By Steve King

THE INSIGHT FILLED ME with hope and fear at the same time. I was preparing a message on leadership from Mark 6:1-32 when it dawned on me that I have only two options before me every day as a Christian leader: to lead the way of Jesus or to lead the way of Herod. My hope grew as I grasped that my union with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit compels me to lead the God-glorifying way of Jesus. Yet my fear grew as I realized that my culture and sin-bent entice me to lead the self-glorifying way of Herod.

Before we explore these two radically different leadership paths, I have a confession to make. Even though I have studied leadership extensively and have led as a senior pastor for more than 30 years, in the past I had just borrowed or mimicked my definition of spiritual leadership from others. I did not make myself biblically and clearly define what a spiritual leader actually is. Two years ago, that changed. I commissioned eight other leaders to join me in scripturally defining spiritual leadership and then designing a process for multiplying healthy ministry leaders.

As we studied the Scriptures, our thinking evolved from seeing leadership as simply influence to seeing it as Christ-shaped influence. Eventually, we realized that there is a difference between influence and leadership. Though every believer is a person of influence, not every believer is a leader. The difference between influence and spiritual leadership is revealed in our definition of spiritual leaders:

Spiritual leaders are shaped by Christ to equip and mobilize others to fulfill God's purpose.

This type of leadership demands that one abandon the way of Herod and intentionally follow the pattern of Jesus.

Leading the way of Jesus (Mark 6:1-12; 30-32) Jesus' disciples

did not follow him because of his position and status in society; he was an itinerate rabbi and carpenter. They were compelled to follow him solely based on his moral authority (Mark 6:1). He developed his moral authority over 30 years in a disciplined walk with God (Luke 2:52). For example, in Nazareth, Jesus relied on moral authority to respond to misinformed and stinging criticism. Jesus' clear conscience and confidence in his identity shielded him from an ungodly response (Mark 6:2-4).

As a builder of disciples, Jesus trained by modeling and empowering. Although clearly a mission-minded and visionary leader, Jesus never made his disciples feel like pawns for his plans. Instead, following Jesus resulted in being empowered and equipped to fulfill God's purposes. First he modeled a holistic approach to ministry with preaching, healing, and serving, and then he sent them in teams to go and do what they had seen him do (Mark 6:7-13). Following Jesus both fueled their faith in God and fostered effective teamwork.

Jesus' disciples were not only empowered by him but they were also accountable to him. At the end of their mission, they reported back to him (Mark 6:12-13, 30). Then, ever the servant leader, he cared for his band of brothers and urged them to rest, modeling a balanced life and preserving an emotionally healthy team (Mark 6:30-32).

Jesus was shaped by his heavenly Father to equip and mobilize his disciples to fulfill the Father's purposes. The perfect model for all leaders, he led by (1) relying on moral authority, (2) training through modeling, (3) empowering followers, (4) expecting accountability, and (5) nurturing the personal lives of those on his team.

Leading the way of Herod (Mark 6:14-29) Herod's leadership stands in stark contrast with Jesus'. Even though Herod had status and authority as a king, he lacked moral authority. He was ruled by his violated conscience. While shoring up his power in Rome, he had an affair with Herodias, his half-brother Philip's wife. Herod then divorced his first wife, married his brother's wife, and became a stepfather. His violated conscience would pollute his leadership and put him in a position to be manipulated (Mark 6:14-16).

Herod had an encounter with John the Baptist, a leader whose moral authority both attracted and convicted him. John the Baptist was the only man courageous enough to confront Herod about his unlawful marriage to Herodias. Herod's response to this "just criticism" revealed his abuse of power and manipulative leadership style. Herod, spurred on by his wife, Herodias, imprisoned John. However, even though John was physically confined, it was Herod who was held captive by the iron bars of his own violated conscience (Mark 6:17-19). In contrast, John's clear conscience and moral authority gave him a platform to urge Herod to break free from his first leadership style (Mark 6:20). But Herodias knew how to manipulate Herod's selfish, sensual, and self-destructive leadership, using her own daughter as a pawn to push Herod to "save face" by taking off John's head (Mark 6:21-29). Herod would remain imprisoned by his violated conscience and would eventually lose his position and die in exile. His leadership style puts on display the folly of violating our conscience and using others by mobilizing them to serve our own selfish purposes. While Jesus nurtured his team, Herod destructively manipulated his.

As a builder of disciples, Jesus trained by modeling and empowering.

Warren Wiersbe, in his insightful book *Meet Your Conscience*, captures the essence of what the New Testament tells us about how our conscience functions as both a window and a judge. As a window, our conscience lets the light of God in, but it is not the light (Matt. 6:22-23). As a judge, our conscience bears witness to the law in our heart, but it is not the law (Rom. 2:14-16). Each time we violate our conscience, the window that lets in the light is smudged, and therefore the judge sees less and less. Therefore, we can progressively develop a weak, defiled, evil, and seared conscience (1 Cor. 8:7; Heb. 10:22; 1 Tim. 4:2). On the other hand, we can strengthen our conscience by knowing who we are in Christ and living it out in the power of the Holy Spirit; progressively developing a strong, clean, good, and blameless conscience (Rom. 14:1-12; 1 Tim. 1:5 and 19, 3:9; Heb. 10:22; Acts 24:16).

We have only two options before us every day as Christian leaders: the way of Jesus or the way of Herod. Be hopeful because our union with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit compel us to lead the way of Jesus. Be fearful because our culture and sin-bent entice us to lead the way of Herod. Use the chart below to review our only two options and pass it along to others you lead. Determine to be a leader who is shaped by Christ to equip and mobilize others to fulfill God's purposes. Turn your back on leadership that is shaped by selfishness and that mobilizes others to fulfill your own purposes. ●

Our Two Leadership Options Mark 6:1-32

<i>The Way of Jesus</i>	<i>The Way of Herod</i>
Moral authority <i>Foundation = trust in God</i>	Authority of position <i>Foundation = seeking self-protection</i>
Empowerment of others <i>Gives away authority</i>	Uses others for selfish purposes <i>Clings to authority</i>
Clear conscience forged by accountability to God and others.	Defiled conscience, refusing accountability to God and others.
Servant who nurtures the team	Manipulator who uses the team

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