

**VALUABLE LEADERSHIP: BIBLE STUDIES**

*The following Bible studies are intended to accompany the ‘Valuable Leadership’ series of six videos. The first set of discussion questions are also displayed at the end of the video*.

**Video one: What are our values?**

(How our personal values shape our leadership)

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| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. List the values you would like your life and witness to express. 2. In what ways are those values on show to others? 3. Choose one value and think of some ways in which you could make it more visible to others? |

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| **Read the Bible passage: Mark 3:1-6**  **Comment on the Bible passage**  As we reflect on our values, especially as other people experience them through our behaviour, what better place to go than an account of the way people experienced Jesus? The obvious value Jesus puts into action here is his compassion for the man with the withered hand. This value expresses God’s heart for those who suffer.  In contrast, the story exposes that the Pharisees do not hold this value. No doubt if asked on different day they would positively affirm a belief in compassion. But on this day, their silence in the face of the question from Jesus reveals their much more deeply held value of legalism. Jesus is angry and grieved by their callous attitude.  What makes things worse is that, as Pharisees, they hypocritically give the impression that their behaviour is always intended to please God. Their attitude and actions or, in this case, lack of action, show the opposite is true. Jesus, in contrast, is always consistent with his stated values even when putting them into practice comes at great cost. How easy it would have been for Jesus to think, “I’ll just heal this man tomorrow and avoid the fuss”. But Jesus doesn’t let opposition override the expression of his values. |
| **Questions on the Bible passage**   1. There can be times when you are influenced to act in ways contrary to your personally held values. It might be a more subtle pressure to conform to ‘the way we normally do things’ rather than the hostile attitude of the Pharisees that Jesus experienced. Have you ever experienced this pressure to not live out what you value? 2. There may also be times when the challenge to live out what you value, or would like to value, is not in the face of outside pressure but from within. Selfish desires and other sins (pride was the sin of the Pharisees) can override an expression of our values. We need the transforming grace of Christ to change our hearts to be like his. What Christlike values would you like to live out with more conviction and consistency? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, when we think of Jesus and how he related to people with both compassion and with the courage of his convictions, we confess we often fall short. Help us by your Holy Spirit to take on the values of Jesus in our leadership. Values of patience, kindness, boldness and truth. Values of grace and forgiveness….  [*mention any other Christlike values that came up in your discussions*].  Help us to learn more about ourselves through listening to others and allowing them to affirm our strengths and spot the weaknesses we so often either downplay or even fail to see. In doing this, help us not to feel discouraged but rather seek your help to grow to be more like Jesus. Help us in all aspects of our walk with you but especially in our leadership and influence on others.  Help us to lead like Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen. |

**Video two: Valuing achievements**

(Why and how to celebrate when people do good things)

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| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. Think of a time when you have felt valued, or undervalued, in church life. 2. Why are we often uncomfortable about expressing our appreciation of others in the church? 3. In what ways could we celebrate the good things God does in church life? |

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| **Read the Bible passage: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3**  **Comment on the Bible passage**  We don’t have to look far in the Bible to see people being celebrated for what they have done. Jesus often commends people. Paul makes a practice in his letters of mentioning individuals who have worked hard in Christ’s service. Paul also praises whole churches.  One example of this is in the opening verses of 1 Thessalonians. Paul together with Silas and Timothy praise the church in Thessalonica for their hard work and endurance. Yet even as this praise is given the focus is kept on the glory of God. It is expressed as a prayer of thanks to God. It also pinpoints the source of what they do and how they do it as being from God in the following ways:   * Their work comes from faith in God * Their labour (or ‘deeds’ in some translations) is motivated by a godly love * Their endurance (or ‘steadfastness’) arises from the hope they have in Jesus   Human effort on its own is not praised here – instead they are praised for what God is doing in and through them. |

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| **Questions on the Bible passage**   1. Following the pattern in 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3, think of some examples of how you might praise people while keeping the focus on God through thankfulness to him and by identifying him as the source of what is good about who they are and what they do. 2. What is the result if we don’t give people praise? What is the result if we give praise without ever acknowledging God? How does drawing attention to what God is doing in and through others set them on the right path to continue to grow in dependence on him? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, help us to have eyes to see what you are doing in and through your people. Help us to encourage them by praising them for what they are doing in such a way that glorifies you.  We confess that often we see only the things that are going wrong around us and neglect to see what you are doing, however small or insignificant that might seem to us. We know you work in the smallest things and the biggest things – from the public platform of preaching to the quiet encouraging word in someone’s ear.  Help us to take a lead in that ministry of encouragement as an act of worship to you and a blessing to others.  *[Spend some time thanking God for specific people and their work in Christ’s service.]*  In Jesus name, amen. |

**Video three: Valuing learning**

(Understanding the process by which we learn to lead)

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| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. Think of something you have learned as a leader by practice and experience. 2. Think of something you have learned as a leader through difficult circumstances. 3. In what situations might what you have learned through painful personal experience be especially helpful to others you lead? |

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| **Read the Bible passage: Genesis 45:3-7**  **Comment on the Bible passage**  If there is anyone in the Old Testament who rose to a leadership position through adversity it was Joseph. Being sold into slavery by his own brothers and thrown into prison because of a false accusation led unexpectedly to Joseph being promoted to the second highest leadership position in Egypt. In this climactic moment in the story, Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers and shares his belief that all this was no surprise to God.  The Bible doesn’t specifically say how those crucible experiences shaped Joseph but there is no doubt that each step of the way Joseph was being shaped for a greater leadership position. Joseph’s attitude was crucial to this process. When things looked bad he trusted in God and was shown favour. Even when he was suddenly promoted by Pharaoh, it must have seemed like a daunting task, but God had prepared Joseph and he continued to trust in God.  One of the greatest crucible moments for Joseph must have been to see his brothers again with all the turmoil of emotions that would bring. In this situation, he exercises leadership by not allowing a desire for revenge to shape his actions. Instead he brings about a situation in which there is forgiveness and reconciliation. This culminates in the moment described in this Bible passage when Joseph tells his brothers and us through divinely inspired Scripture, that God is in control. |

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| **Questions on the Bible passage**   1. The benefit of hindsight is a wonderful thing. What is it about faith in God that would have sustained Joseph through his difficult experiences? 2. Are there difficult times in your life that you can see God has used to bring you to where you are now as a leader? Think of things that would never have happened except for changing circumstances or a perspective you gained through those times that you would not otherwise have had. |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, help us humbly accept that we are never finished learning to lead in this life. We pray that you would equip us to lead well in so that we honour you by serving well those we are called to lead.  We thank you for all we have learned through our experience of leadership and for the people who have taught us to be leaders by word and by example. We thank you too for shaping us through adversity to be better leaders today, even though those it was difficult to walk through those experiences at the time.  Most of all we thank and praise you for the grace shown to us in Christ Jesus. We thank you for our salvation and we thank you for the gift of leadership that is also the result of your grace shown to us. Help us to lead in a way worthy of the responsibility you have given us. Help us to lead more and more like Jesus in whose name we pray, amen. |

**Video four: Valuing understanding emotions**

(How to lead through relating to people’s emotional responses to our leadership)

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| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. Think of a time when you were surprised by someone’s unexpected emotional reaction to something that was happening in church life. How did you respond? 2. Think of a leader who brought energy and enthusiasm to a group in which you have been a part. What was it about them that made people feel positive? What can you learn from that for the way you lead? |

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| **Read the Bible passage: 1 Kings 12:1-19**  **Comment on the Bible passage**  Rehoboam lacked the wisdom of his father King Solomon. He seriously miscalculated how people would respond to his harsh decree and, as a result, the kingdom of Israel split in two. Rehoboam rejected the advice of the older and wiser men and chose to go along with the immaturity of the younger men. It’s easy to imagine the older men saying, “I told you so”, behind his back – probably not to his face for fear of losing their heads. They wouldn’t have been surprised at the result but Rehoboam was.  The other person who wasn’t surprised by what happened was God. In the preceding chapter in 1 Kings, we read that this was part of his sovereign purpose to punish Israel for idolatry. God brought this about by allowing Solomon’s unwise successor to exercise leadership that failed to understand the people and how they felt. |

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| **Questions on the Bible passage**   1. In verse seven, the older men counsel Rehoboam to be a servant to the people. In what way do they say he should serve the people in order that they would, in turn, serve him as their king? 2. Rehoboam’s poor leadership contrasts with the transforming nature of Jesus’ leadership. Jesus promises us that his yoke is easy and his burden is light (Matthew 11:30). How does understanding how people feel, allow us as leaders not to impose a heavy load but rather to help the people we lead serve willingly and gladly? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, we sometimes find that people don’t respond to our leadership as we would like because we don’t understand them well enough. Please help us to grow in our empathy for the people you have called us to serve. Help us to lead in a way that models the servant leadership of Jesus.  Help us to know when people are overburdened by what we want them to do and how to alleviate that burden. Help us to lead in a way that doesn’t make their situation worse but instead brings your light and your hope to transform their situation.  *[You may wish to bring specific leadership challenges to God as part of this prayer.]*  In the name of Jesus who transforms us, amen. |

**Video five: Valuing the right focus**

(How to lead purposefully with God at the centre)

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| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. Think of a time when you felt the primary focus on ***who*** God is got blurred in the circumstances of leading in your church life. How did that happen? 2. Think of a time when ***why*** we are doing something got lost in the circumstances of leading in your church life. Why did that happen? 3. Think of a time in your church life when ***what*** exactly you needed to do became very focused. What brought that clarity? 4. Think of a time in your church life when ***how*** things got done was like clockwork. What went before to create a smooth path to delivery? |

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| **Read the Bible passage: 1 Kings 12:26-33**  **Comment on the Bible passage**  In this account of what happens immediately after the nation of Israel splits in two we read about a pragmatic but ungodly decision made by the new king of the northern kingdom. In considering his strategy, King Jeroboam forgets the ‘who?’ question and jumps straight to the ‘why?’ His thinking is driven primarily by self-interest – he wants to make sure the people will continue to be led by him. This resulted in the answers to his ‘what?’ and ‘how?’ questions being things that were clearly forbidden by God’s Word.  It’s unlikely we would so flagrantly fly in the face of God’s decrees not least because we lack the almost absolute power a king wielded in those days. But this story illustrates how not making God the ‘who’ at the centre of our leadership can get us off track from God’s purposes. Ignoring what God clearly tells us in Scripture is an obvious way to go astray. However, the greater danger is probably in more subtle temptations to lead for ourselves and not in the service of others for the glory of God. Those pitfalls can be more difficult to spot unless we are honest with ourselves about who is in the centre of our thinking. |
| **Questions on the Bible passage**   1. When we lose focus on God by not placing him as the ‘who’ in the centre of the ‘who, why, what, how?’ leadership process something else will always take that central place. Our idols are harder to identify than the golden calves in this Bible passage. What might we, even inadvertently, put ahead of God if he is not in the centre of our leadership? 2. It’s not wrong to be pragmatic and practical – but if we start with pragmatism it is easy to be led astray from God’s purposes. We may even have good aims but the means to get there could be wrong or misguided. Why is the means to achieve something as important, if not more important, as the end, in God’s eyes? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, we confess that often we take our eyes off you and put other things in the centre of our leadership. We elevate our own concerns, our own ideas, our own priorities above you. Sometimes we listen to others too readily without being as discerning as we should. Other times we fail to listen because we think we know the answer already.  We do these things unintentionally rather than deliberately but we confess that even to forget to place you in the centre is sinful.  Help us to always place you and your purposes above all else. Help us to think about what your heart is for the people we serve as leaders and the mission you have given us to lead. Help us to know your Word and apply it in the situations you have called us to be leaders.  Father God, we pray that in putting you and your purposes in the centre we would see more clearly **why** we should be doing **what** we do. We pray too that we would be led by you in **how** we do what we do so that all we do honours you. May your name be glorified through our leadership. In Jesus name we pray, amen. |

**Video six: Valuing an outside perspective**

(How to identify your church’s culture)

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| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. Think of something in your church life that you do in a certain way because, ‘you’ve always done it that way’. 2. Think of a time when a visitor or newcomer to your church asked a question about something you do that seemed strange to them, but seemed very normal to you. What did you learn about how your church looks and feels to others from that conversation? 3. Think of an important change you have made or hope to make in church life. What values could be encouraged to create a culture that will make that strategy fly? |

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| **Read Bible passage: Acts 2:42-47**  **Comment on the Bible passage**  This description of the church in its early days seems almost perfect. People outside the church looking in had a very positive picture. They saw the church culture and they liked what they saw. From reading on in Acts and the letters of the New Testament we learn that the early church soon developed various problems. It was, after all, made up of imperfect people. Nevertheless, imperfect though they were, they had experienced the transforming grace of Christ – something Paul and others who wrote to the church continually draw them back to so that their transformation might continue.  People outside the church looking in would have noticed the following characteristics of the church as it is described at the end of Acts 2:   * These Christians were transformed by the gospel message. * They wanted to spend time with each other. * They were dependent on God in prayer. * They shared God’s concern for the poor and needy. |

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| **Questions on the Bible passage**   1. Briefly discuss the following questions, and give examples of what can be seen in practice to confirm your answers:   (you could also do this exercise as a personal reflection as well as reflection on your congregation as a whole)   1. Would an outsider say your congregation have been, and are being, transformed by the gospel message? 2. Would an outsider say your congregation want to be with each other? 3. Would an outsider say your congregation are dependent on God in prayer? 4. Would an outsider say your congregation is concerned for the poor and needy? 5. If any of these questions were answered positively – how might you celebrate what God has done in and through your congregation? 6. If any of these questions were answered negatively – what values are needed to drive a change in your congregation and how could you lead in this by word and example? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, we know we are not a perfect church because we are not a perfect people. And yet we thank that we have been saved by your grace and we have been and are being transformed by your grace. Thank you for…  *[mention the various ways you have seen God work in your congregation perhaps by thinking back to the answers to the questions above].*  We know we are still a work in progress and so we ask that you would help us change by becoming…  *[mention the various ways you can see that transformation is still needed perhaps by thinking back to the answers to the questions above].*  We pray in the name of Jesus Christ that he might be glorified in his church, amen. |