



“*You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ’There is no other commandment greater than these.’ Then the scribe said to him, ‘You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’*”

— Mark 12:28-31

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Incarnation is a powerful word for our understanding of leadership. “To incarnate” means to embody or represent in human form; to make concrete an idea or abstract concept; to be the living embodiment of a quality or ideal.

The story of Christianity is a story of the incarnation! It is the story of a God who loves us so much, that God made the irrevocable, game-changing decision to enter directly into creation. To live as a human being, to teach and to heal. To touch and to comfort. To explain and demonstrate God’s love and to bring hope and grace and light to a dark and fearful world.

In our leadership, we are called to follow and emulate the One who is Leader of our lives. Author Michael Polanyi discusses this apprenticeship method of learning in his book *Personal Knowledge*: “To learn by example is to submit to authority. You follow your master because you trust his manner of doing things even when you cannot analyze and account in detail for its effectiveness. By watching the master and emulating his efforts in the presence of his example, the apprentice unconsciously picks up the rules of the art.”⁶

That is how we learn to drive. Even tiny children pretend to drive using their little toy wheels in the car. They watch and they imitate their parent’s movements. (And they will also imitate the language we use on the highway, so watch out!) When you reached the age where you could reach the gas and break pedals, you were not just thrown into a car, and sent out on the road. Someone

showed you how to toggle your right foot between the pedals, how to check for traffic, how to adjust the mirrors, how to safely merge onto a busy roadway.

Likewise, if you wanted to learn baseball, you probably had a parent, or an older sibling, or a coach show you how to hold the baseball, how to swing your arm to throw it, when to release it on the arc. Someone showed you how to hold the bat, where to grip it, how to swing it. They guided you over and over again, until it became muscle memory.

If you learned to sing, you first watched how others held their bodies as they sang. You were taught how to read music, how to use your diaphragm and to project. If you learned to paint, someone showed you how to hold a brush, how to mix colors and apply them to paper or canvas. If you learned to cook, you observed how the materials were collected and prepared, mixed and transformed, then you made your own attempts alongside the person who was teaching you.

The best way to learn is to first observe,
then to follow someone who knows the way.

QUESTION:

What person in your life best taught you what Christian leadership looks like?

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