

# Christian Leadership

Tomorrow is President's Day. A day set aside to buy mattresses on sale and to honor Presidents, especially George Washington who was born February 22, 1732, and Abraham Lincoln, who was born on February 12, 1809.

It made me think about leadership. As it turns out, the class I'm taking right now is on leadership.

Tom Watson Jr., CEO of IBM between 1956 and 1971, was a key figure in the information revolution. Watson repeatedly demonstrated his abilities as a leader. A young executive had made some bad decisions that cost the company several million dollars. He was summoned to Watson's office, fully expecting to be dismissed. As he entered the office, the young executive said, "I suppose after that set of mistakes you will want to fire me." Watson was said to have replied, "*Not at all, young man, we have just spent a couple of million dollars educating you.*"

## **Thomas Edison**

This story provides a strong message of support and a reminder that some of the most powerful lessons we can learn are from our so-called failures or difficult times. Remember Edison's famous saying: "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." Thomas Edison also demonstrated a great response to adversity which compliments Tom Watson Jr's actions. In 1914 Thomas Edison's factory in West Orange, New Jersey, was virtually destroyed by fire. Although the damage exceeded \$2 million, the buildings were insured for only \$238,000 because they were made of concrete and were thought to be fireproof. Much of Edison's life work went up in smoke and flames that December night. At the height of the fire, Edison's 24-year-old son, Charles, searched frantically for his father. He finally found him, calmly watching the fire, his face glowing in the reflection, his white hair blowing in the wind. "My heart ached for him," said Charles. "He was 67 — no longer a young man — and everything was going up in flames. When he saw me, he shouted, "Charles, where's your mother?" When I told him I didn't know, he said, 'Find her. Bring her here. She will never see anything like this as long as she lives.'" The next morning, Edison looked at the ruins and said, "There is great value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Thank God we can start anew." Three weeks after the fire, Edison managed to produce the first phonograph.

There are many stories of business and governmental leaders but what about Christian leadership?

## ***What is Christian leadership?***

The best example of Christian leadership is Jesus Christ. Do you realize that when we use the titles: Lord and Savior, we are saying we submit to His authority or rule over us and He is our Saviour? Jesus is our protector, our shepherd.

**John 10:11** I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

**Psalms 23:1** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

**Isaiah 40:11** He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

When Jesus referred to us as “sheep,” He was not speaking affectionately. In truth, sheep are among the dumbest animals in creation. A stray sheep, still within earshot of the herd, becomes disoriented, confused, frightened, and incapable of finding its way back to the flock. Unable to ward off hungry predators, the stray is perhaps the most helpless of all creatures. Entire herds of sheep are known to have drowned during times of flash flooding even in sight of easily accessible higher ground.

So, when Jesus called us His sheep, He was saying that without a shepherd, we are helpless.

The shepherd leads, feeds, nurtures, comforts, corrects and protects. The shepherd models godliness and righteousness in his own life and encouraging others to follow his example.

**1 Corinthians 11:1** Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

The Christian leader is one who follows Christ and inspires others to follow Him as well.

The Christian leader is also a feeder and a nourisher of the sheep. **The ultimate “sheep food” is the Word of God.** The Bible—not psychology or the world’s wisdom—is the only diet that can produce healthy Christians.

**Deuteronomy 8:3** And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

The Christian leader also comforts the sheep, binding up their wounds and applying the balm of compassion and love.

As the great Shepherd of Israel, the Lord Himself promised to bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.

**Ezekiel 34:16** I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

Just as the shepherd used his crook to pull a wandering sheep back into the fold, so the Christian leader corrects and disciplines those in his care when they go astray.

Correction or discipline is never a pleasant experience for either party, but the Christian leader who fails in this area is not exhibiting love for those in his care.

**Proverbs 3:12** For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

**Hebrews 12:6** For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

The final role of the Christian leader is that of protector. The shepherd who was lax in this area soon found that he regularly lost sheep to the predators who prowled around—and sometimes among—his flock.

The predators today are those who try to lure the sheep away with false doctrine, dismissing the Bible as quaint and old fashioned, insufficient, unclear, or unknowable. These lies are spread by those against whom Jesus warned us:

**Matthew 7:15** Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

**2 Corinthians 11:13-14** <sup>13</sup>For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

Our leaders must protect us from the false teachings of those who would lead us astray from the truth of the Scripture and the fact that Christ alone is the way of salvation:

**Ezekiel 34:12** As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

**John 10:1-15** **10** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. **2** But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. **3** To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. **4** And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. **5** And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. **6** This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. **7** Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. **8** All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. **9** I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. **10** The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they

might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. <sup>11</sup> I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. <sup>13</sup> The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. <sup>15</sup> As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.