

# Humble

## Leader Model

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Every leader assumes a style. His Royal Majesty, George III, King of England, rode from St. James's Palace to the Palace of Westminster in a twenty-four-foot royal coach. The vehicle weighed around four tons and was adorned with gilded cherubs, with a gilded crown and gilded sea gods above each wheel. It reminded the 60,000 people lining the streets in anticipation of a glimpse of the king that he and the kingdom were wealthy and powerful. His arrival on that October day in 1775 is described by historian David McCullough:

“A boom of cannon saluted His Majesty's arrival at Westminster, and with the traditional welcoming formalities performed, the King assumed his place on the throne at the head of the House of Lords, flanked by the peers in their crimson robes. The members of the Houses of Commons, for whom no seats were provided, remained standing in the rear.”<sup>1</sup>

History describes the style of another king, as recorded by an ancient writer:

“When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. And sitting down, they kept watch over

<sup>1</sup> 1776 David McCullough, Simon and Schuster, p.3,2,10

him there. Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.”

What we know about the reign of King George III suggests a significant contrast to that of Christ. It is difficult to imagine any earthly king, prime minister, or president not wanting a display of wealth and power. Any hint of weakness or humility is a formula for political disaster. The display of accumulated wealth is another mark, in our society, of a true leader. You have no power unless you have accrued assets and resources upon which to draw in order to rule. And a portion of those assets must be an adequate team of people who have the right skills and abilities to carry out the leader's agenda and mission. This is the world's fashion for a head of state.

Christ's last hours before His death show the sum of his strength in the eyes of the world. The only physical asset was His clothes, which had been taken by Roman soldiers and divided, in order to kill time. This king had no press secretary. The only form of public relations was a crude sign, a gift from the Romans, placed above His bleeding head. The sign mockingly identified him as “The King of the Jews.” His identity and rule were nothing more than a joke. His presence only earned Him persistent mocking as He was being beaten and whipped. He appeared to have nothing to offer as a defense: no military, no land to defend, no great economic power, and no human resources to come to His aid. His status in the world was demonstrated by the company He kept as He hung on the cross. At that point in His reign, the two thugs were the extent of his social circle.

For them, the relationship was not by choice. Practically, He was alone, an outcast, without hope.

The gospels do not end with the death of Christ. Each of the four writers gives details of this King of the Jews conquering what no king has, nor will. Christ triumphed over death. The Cross and grave were not the end. His position and power are not dependent upon the same dynamics as all other kings and heads of state.

The angel Gabriel, 34 years earlier, spoke of His kingship. He said that this Jesus would reign on the throne of His father, David; and that reign would be forever. Death had its purpose. But it would not hold Him.

His life does provide important insights for us today in how we are to live. It especially provides insights for those who lead in this complex world. A brief overview of the historic Scriptures provides a glimpse of the model of leadership that this king lived and taught.

## Shepherd

We are familiar with the term “public servant”; however, in reality it is not always clear who is serving whom. I could be wrong, but I wonder if King George III of England viewed his position as that of a public servant? Did he ask himself each day what he could do to make life better for the people of England? The Bible is persistent in God presenting Himself as One who serves His flock as a shepherd. First seen in Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd...,” it is put in 3-D when Christ, speaking to the crowd, refers to Himself as the “Good Shepherd.” According to His teaching, this relationship is

characterized as a one-on-one relationship. He knows those in His assembly, and they know Him. Those receiving His care know that this King is not only concerned but also capable by His power and wisdom to provide for them regardless of the circumstances. He understands their true nature and habits, which are not good. He knows their propensity to wander from Him and His care and live with the wolves and hogs. Yet His love for them is so great that even if only one has strayed, He will pursue him or her, caring unconditionally. His care and love are so great that this shepherd eventually offers the ultimate act of love by laying down His life for them. “...--and I lay down my life for the sheep.” John 10:15

How many shepherd leaders does the world know today?

## Deity

After Jesus spoke about being a (king) shepherd, there was an attempt to assassinate Him by stoning. Some of the Jews in that region wanted to take His life. It would not be the last time. Stoning was a practice prescribed in Leviticus 24, part of the Mosaic Law. In the day of Moses, anyone who was found to have cursed God, blasphemed the name of the Lord, in any manner, was to be put to death. The method was to be stoning by the assembly. There were other circumstances that would result in the same, such as worshipping other gods (Deuteronomy 17:2-5) or breaking the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-56). Stephen, in the book of Acts, was stoned to death by the Jews. The Apostle Paul was also stoned, though he did not die. In the incident recorded by John, Christ was about to be stoned for

blasphemy. “We are not stoning you for any of these (referring to the miracles He had done), “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” They understood Christ to present Himself as God.

It is interesting to note what takes place after such a heated exchange. Had it been anyone else the simplest thing to be done would be to clarify the misunderstanding. Explain that you never intended to communicate that you were claiming deity. The issue would die. Instead He said the following:

“Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” --John 10:37-38

Christ gave an explanation of what it means to believe in the Trinity. John all throughout his gospel draws attention to the deity of Christ. “In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “I and the Father are one.” After the resurrection, Thomas, who doubted the truthfulness of Christ’s having come back from the dead, was instructed by the Lord to feel the wounds. In response he made a profession of faith, 28Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God"! Never, as with the stoning Jews, did Jesus attempt to correct Thomas. Instead He agreed with him.

Why make this point? To understand properly the reign of this King, one needs to comprehend that He is truly King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Christ is God incarnate. One cannot understand

or appreciate His true humility as a king without understanding His deity.

There are no leaders today who can rightly make a claim like Christ’s, deity in the flesh. At the same time, there are leaders today who would like you to think they have a claim to deity. A leader who models himself on what is seen in the gospel will make a proper assessment of who he is and act accordingly.

## Foot Bather

It is more than enough for me to maintain my own cleanliness, much less think of others. However, this King did not hesitate to serve others unconditionally. Soon before He was to be arrested, He gathered His men around Him. Taking off His outer garment, He wrapped a towel around His waist as a means of showing them the extent of His love. He would provide a service to them with which they were familiar. Taking a bowl of water He began to wash and dry the feet of each disciple. What was it like to have dirty feet massaged with water by the One whom you greatly honored and followed? Peter was not willing, initially, to be served in this manner. He did not approve of the leader’s actions that seemed to him to be inappropriate. I think Peter had an excellent point: However, his logic was proved wrong, and his feet cleaned.

John records for us what took place next:

“When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place.”Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13"You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14Now

that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." --John 13:12-17

The question presented to them challenged their model of leadership. What would it be like if on C-Span the American people saw the leader of the administration at a House sub-committee hearing, humbly bathing the members' feet? Or having Senator Reed come to the White House, asking him to remove his shoes and socks, and then washing and drying his feet prior to dinner? How would the next day's headlines read in the Washington Post or New York Times regarding the president's action? Or what would they think if members of congress started the 110th session by washing the feet of their staff? It all sounds like nonsense. Yet, if God, the poor leader in the flesh, humbled Himself this way, what reason do we have not to follow such an example? Would this fit into what Marvin Olasky referred to as "Compassionate Conservatism"? Yet, either way, there is room, and a great need, today for foot-bathing leaders. The world needs men and women who understand what Christ taught and lived. Yet, no leader can model this King of Kings unless the King Himself enables this to happen. He invites us to come and follow. He will show the way and give the grace to accomplish His will.

He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows, and familiar with

suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces

he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities  
and carried our sorrows,  
yet we considered him stricken by God,  
smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to his own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

-- Is. 53:3-6