

Leadership 101

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7

Code: B120517

Our society often judges people by what they do, not by their character. When it comes to choosing heroes and leaders, style often outweighs substance. Sordid personal lives and all sorts of off-the-field antics are commonly overlooked—it is performance, not principle, that counts.

Sadly, that pragmatic outlook has even infiltrated the church. Pastors, for example, are too often evaluated by the outward trappings of success—the size of their congregations, their success as fund-raisers, the extent of their radio and TV ministries, how well their books sell, or their influence in the public arena.

But such external criteria (by which many false teachers and cult leaders could be judged successful) do not impress God. Unlike “man [who] looks at the outward appearance, . . . the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

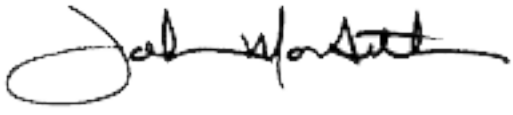
The seventeenth-century Puritan John Owen said pointedly, “A minister may fill his pews, his communion roll, the mouths of the public, but what that minister is on his knees in secret before God Almighty, that he is and no more” (cited in I.D.E. *Thomas in A Puritan Golden Treasury* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977], 192).

The noble nineteenth-century Scottish pastor Robert Murray McCheyne reminded a fellow pastor, “It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus” (Andrew A. Bonar, *Memoirs of McCheyne* [Reprint; Chicago: Moody, 1978], 95). It is not what a man *does* that makes him a noble and useful pastor, but what he *is*.

The apostle Paul had all the external marks of success. He was the greatest missionary the world has even known, used by God to initially spread the gospel and plant churches throughout the Roman world. God also inspired him to write thirteen New Testament books, nine of them to those churches.

The many congregations Paul founded held him in the highest regard as their spiritual father and teacher (1 Corinthians 4:15). He lived a life that was observably above reproach, as his conscience testified (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 2 Timothy 1:3). Yet he knew that the true measure of a man of God is not his external success or reputation but God’s evaluation of his heart. In 1 Corinthians 4:4-5 he wrote,

For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.



(Adapted from [*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 2 Corinthians*](#))

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