

What Christian Leaders Can Learn from Donald Trump

There are plenty of things followers of Jesus cannot learn from Donald Trump. That is self-evident. But there are things he can teach us, especially those of us in leadership.

First, though, let me list some things that the president cannot teach us, including: 1) how to cultivate humility; 2) developing effective tools for personal Bible study 3) treating your opponents with civility and respect; 4) how to avoid divorce; 5) keys to sexual purity; 6) how to deny yourself; 7) developing a distinctive hairstyle for TV preachers. (Wait. That one might work!)

Yet there are many things the president can teach us—again, speaking of leaders in particular—even if we don't like the specific way he has modeled some of these things.

Here's a short list.

1) Don't avoid confrontation. We often try so hard to be "nice." At all costs, we do not want to offend. But sometimes confrontation is necessary and important, and there are scores of biblical examples for this.

Nathan the prophet confronted King David (2 Sam. 12). Paul confronted Peter (Gal. 2). Proverbs even says, "Open rebuke is better than secret love" (27:5). And the New Testament calls us to "speak the truth in love" (see Eph. 4:15).

Again, I'm not implying that all of Trump's confrontational tactics are called or that the way he confronts is always right. But it's clear that he will speak up and speak out when he feels the need, no matter how uncomfortable things become. Mixed with grace and wisdom, this is something we must learn to do as well. Don't be so afraid of uncomfortable

confrontations.

2) Don't be a slave of public opinion. It's becoming increasingly clear that Trump controls the media much more than the media controls Trump. This is not to say he doesn't care about polling and negative reports. Nor is this to say that we should turn a deaf ear to the voices of others. Shepherds need to be attentive to their sheep.

But all too often, as Christian leaders, we are more concerned with human opinion than divine opinion, more wanting to please other people than to please the Lord. And all too often, we tell people what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear.

And how many pastors and leaders are slaves to congregational numbers, to budgetary constraints, to the sensitivities of the community?

"I dare not speak out on this, lest I lose long-term members. I dare not take this stand, lest our donor base evaporates. I dare not get involved in this controversy, lest the community view me negatively."

This is slavery, not freedom. Trump can teach us a lesson here too. Do what's right because it's right, not because it's convenient.

In the oft-quoted words of Dr. King, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

3) Don't be afraid to ride out the storm. Some would call this stubbornness, others conviction, others foolishness. But it's clear that Trump is not afraid to take a stand, take some hits (as in day and night media bombardment), and hold to his guns, believing that, over time, he will be proven right.

Again, he has done this at times when I wish he would not. He has appeared to be tone deaf. He has alienated people he might have won over. He has seemed to be more pigheaded than pragmatic, hence my caveats.

But he has also proven that if you stand for a particular principle, then refuse to move from that principle regardless of how much flack you receive, you can ride out almost any storm.

How many times do we waffle when the pressure builds? How often do we cave in right before the breakthrough? How frequently are we marked by cowardice rather than courage?

Proverbs states, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small" (Prov. 24:10).

President Trump sets an example of strength, whether you love him or loathe him, and that's why so many have rallied around him.

We can learn a thing or two from him in the midst of his flaws and imperfections. And if we can merge courage and forthrightness and tenacity with Christlikeness, we will be unstoppable. (The truth be told, true Christlikeness requires courage and forthrightness and tenacity, does it not?)

And perhaps, as we stand strong and tall and unashamed, we'll be able to teach our president a thing or two as well.