

LEADERSHIP SHORT



One of the biggest struggles in the heart of a leader is where they find their validation. From who are we seeking praise? No one wants to be disliked, and if leadership is influence then being seen positively by those we are leading matters. But there comes a tipping point where our desire for the praise of those around us can outweigh the desire for praise from God.

This battle in the leader's heart was a sticking point for the religious leaders in the gospel of John, and one which Jesus condemns- *"How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God."* (John 5:44). There is something in our desire for the praise of people, or for the praises of our culture, that renders belief impossible, or at least impotent. Later we read that many amongst the leadership of the people had begun to believe in Jesus, however *"because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith... for they loved praise from men more than praise from God."* (John 12:42f).

Here's the point: The seed of belief/faith is unable to grow to fruit when the soil is more concerned about the praises of people than the pleasure of God.

Too many of us are stuck in the place of 'Invisible Belief'. We know we believe, but the outward working of that belief lacks any real fruit or power. We choose to leave our belief hidden so it is unseen by the world

around us except for as an intellectual, personal faith stance. 'Belief' as recorded in the scriptures has an active and powerful transformative effect on the person's life. It calls for and results in a radical obedience to the commands of Christ and the leading of the Spirit. But how can one possibly follow this leading and these commands when we know it will put us at odds with those around us? How can one follow this Lord when following where he leads will draw the curiosity, confusion and criticism of the crowd rather than their praises? So we fall into invisible belief. Always double taking when we hear the command and call of Christ and measuring it against its social or relational cost. In a sense invisible belief leads to 'Silent Witnesses' who *'would not confess their faith for fear... because they loved praise from men...'*

Invisible belief renders us ineffective in the mission of Christ and in leadership. It means our decision-making is through the lens of how people will perceive us rather than how Jesus will be known. It means our response to what we feel God is doing in us and through us is always tapered by how people will perceive us- will they think I am strange, will they think I am too passionate, too zealous, will they understand etc.

Invisible belief leads to ineffective leaders, powerless and expectation-less following, fruitless evangelism or complete lack of evangelism, joyless worship, loss of focus and an incapacity to truly know Jesus.

As leaders we must guard our hearts against the lure of the crowd and the applause of people, and wholeheartedly desire the pleasure of Jesus. Our belief must never be hidden but must be something that results in a complete transformation of our lives. It must be a public faith- where concern for the cause of Christ outweighs the fear of public opinion. Like the disciples in Acts, we need to grow in our passion and love for Christ to the point where we proclaim, *"We must obey God rather than men... We are witnesses of these things."* (Acts 5:29ff)

Some questions to consider:

- *When and where have the opinions of people prevented you from wholeheartedly following after Jesus?*
- *How do you see the problem of 'invisible belief' affecting those you lead over? Has the leadership demonstrated 'invisible belief'?*
- *What area of your own faith needs to increase in order for you to be more concerned by the call of Jesus rather than the concerns of the crowd?*

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