

What Makes Jesus a Great Leader?

Rich Nathan

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John: The Jesus I Never Knew Series

John 10

Last year more than 2000 books on leadership were published here in the US. Amazon.com lists over 13,000 books on leadership at the website. And apparently, everyone has leadership secrets. You can read:

Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun

The Leadership Secrets of the Rogue Warrior

Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell

They have repackaged biblical leaders and their secrets. There are books titled:

Leadership Secrets of David the King

Leadership Secrets of Moses

Leadership Secrets of St. Paul

In addition to these, there are:

The Leadership Secrets of Shakespeare

The Leadership Secrets of Elizabeth I

The Leadership Secrets of Hitler and Churchill

And if you want to draw leadership lessons from animals, you can read:

The Dead Bison Theory of Leadership

The Wild Goose Theory of Leadership

There is *The Hedgehog Theory of Leadership*

But despite the vast number of books, seminars, and professional development gurus, we hear the same complaints continually from huge corporations to small churches: "We don't have enough leadership!"

A decade ago Warren Bennis, who has written some excellent books on business leadership, started a book called "Leaders" this way: "The need has never been so great, a chronic crisis of governance—that is, the pervasive incapacity of organizations to cope with the expectations of their constituents—is now an overwhelming factor in worldwide politics. If there was ever a moment in history when there was a need for revitalized leadership, not just by a few leaders in high office, but by large numbers of leaders in every job, from the factory floor to the executive suite, from a McDonald's fast food franchise to a law firm, this is certainly it."

Every organization is crying out for leaders, from the public school system to college and professional sports.

And certainly the church, especially the American church, is searching for leaders, especially the next generation of leaders. Someone recently commented that it is interesting that nearly all the spokespeople for Christianity that are interviewed on Larry King or one of the other major news shows are all over 70. Many of them are in their 80's. Where are the Christian leaders under age 50? Or under age 40?

A part of the crisis of leadership is not simply the dearth of good leaders, but also the seeming multiplication of bad leaders, abusive leaders, unsafe leaders, and unethical leaders. In the last few years, about the only thing we hear regarding the Roman Catholic Church is the revelation of another diocese that covered up the sexually abusive practices of yet another priest with another series of teenage boys. These revelations have grieved faithful Christians and faithful clergy within the Roman Catholic Church and faithful Christians and clergy outside the Roman Catholic Church.

Bad leadership, of course, is not confined to the church. Just look at the recent scandals involving college coaches. It seems that some college coaches simply do not know the difference between lying and telling the truth. Some college coaches, who are making over a million dollars a year, cannot restrain themselves from groping college coeds at fraternity parties, or getting so absolutely drunk that they could not remember sleeping with a stripper the night before.

Of course, bad leadership is not restricted to these gross abuses that make the paper. There are countless ways that leaders shred the self-esteem of their subordinates in the mundane flow of life. Someone in the church who played high school baseball told me a story. He said he was sitting in the locker room with a friend and his friend said, "I've been practicing all winter with a pitching coach. I'm trying to get better and better so that I can eventually pitch in college."

The high school coach happened to be walking through the locker room and overheard the conversation. The coach looked at the young man, who had been working all winter with a pitching coach, and he said, "Let's get one thing straight. You will never pitch in college. You're just not good enough."

You wonder, why would anyone ever say something like that to a teenage boy? What is it that compels people to snuff out other people's dreams? I further wonder, how in the world did someone like that, with that kind of meanness, ever become a high school coach?

Fortunately, not every leader is bad, malicious, or abusive. There are leaders who care, leaders who try, and leaders who serve the interests of their subordinates. There are a few great leaders.

One of the greatest leaders of the last 50 years, in my opinion, is Nelson Mandela. In the 1980's, anyone who was knowledgeable about South Africa would have said that South Africa was going to descend into a complete bloodbath. In 1985, Desmond Tutu warned the UN General Assembly that bloodshed was almost inevitable. Bishop Tutu said, "Our country is on the verge of a catastrophe. Only a miracle by God or the intervention of powerful nations in the West will avert Armageddon."

The word "miracle" has been freely used over and over again to describe South Africa's transition from white rule to multiracial government. And the person through whom the miracle was wrought was Nelson Mandela. Nelson Mandela brought a word to bear through his leadership that is almost never found in world politics. It is the word "forgiveness." Bishop Tutu said, "Had Nelson Mandela and other South Africans not been willing to forgive, we would not have reached first base."

David Akiman, in his book, *Great Souls*, credits Mandela with the reintroduction of the virtue of forgiveness into the ravaged countryside of 21st century politics. Mandela's willingness to forgive the white government and white people who put him in prison for 25 years, stole from him his whole adult life, stole from his family and others their land, their wealth, their dignity, their health, and their lives – Mandela's leadership of his countrymen in the practice of forgiveness made him a great leader.

Today, as we continue our study from the book of John, I'd like us together to consider the question: what makes Jesus a great leader? This series from the book of John is titled, "The Jesus I Never Knew." Let's pray.

We read in John 10:11 Jesus' statement, *I am the Good Shepherd*. We Americans have very little contact with shepherds these days unless we're talking about German Shepherd dogs or Shepherd Collies. About the only time we even think about shepherds is during Christmas pageants. And about the only time we think about sheep is when we go to the grocery store and check out the meat section for a leg of lamb at Easter.

So when Jesus calls himself "The Good Shepherd" here, we don't really grasp what Jesus is talking about. This whole section of scripture has been romanticized since the 19th century - little children in Sunday School see pictures of Jesus holding the little lambs. We think that when Jesus tells us that he's a Good Shepherd, he's primarily speaking about his gentleness and his tenderness.

In the Bible, God uses the metaphor of shepherd to speak about leadership. It is not a metaphor for cuddling a little lamb and feeding it with a baby bottle full of milk. It is a metaphor of strong leadership. For example, Moses and David were

said to be shepherds of God's people. When the Bible speaks of political leadership, or religious leadership, it uses the metaphor of shepherd and sheep.

Now, I've pointed out on a number of occasions that John is a very Jewish book. He organizes his material from chapter 5-10 around the Jewish holidays so that the teachings or the miracles that are done in these chapters all emerge from the context of the Jewish holiday that is being celebrated. John 5 we saw was founded on the Jewish Sabbath. John 6 was on the Passover. John chapters 7-8 were on the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles.

And here in John 10 we read in verse 22, *Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter.* The Feast of Dedication is more commonly known as Hanukkah. This was one of my favorite holidays when I was a child growing up in my Jewish family because Hanukkah lasts for eight days, and every day for eight days (at least for Jewish families in America) children receive a gift. It is like Christmas for eight days.

Now, we don't read about Hanukkah in the Old Testament. Rather, we need to turn to the Catholic Bible, specifically the apocryphal books, generally in First and Second Maccabees. These two books of Maccabees tell us about a time in Jewish history, about 175 years before the birth of Christ, in which the Jewish priesthood had become completely corrupt. So corrupt, in fact, that the priests cooperated with the Greek kings who were ruling Israel at the time. They cooperated to the point of allowing the Greeks to plunder the Jewish Temple. The Greeks set up idols in the Jewish Temple and a Greek king actually slaughtered a pig as an offering in the Jewish Temple.

The holiday of Hanukkah tells us about compromising leaders, accommodating leaders, leaders who simply drift with the culture. Opposed to them were zealous leaders, fiery leaders, who decided to revolt against the corrupt Jewish priesthood. Leaders led by a man named Judas Maccabeus, Judas the Hammer. They threw the Greeks out of the Temple, threw them out of the country, cleansed the Temple and rededicated it for the Lord's use. That's why Hanukkah is called the Feast of Dedication. The Temple was rededicated unto the worship of the Lord God of Israel.

During the week of Hanukkah, Jews in the synagogues used to read different texts including Ezekiel 34 where the Lord commands Ezekiel to prophesy against the false shepherds, the wicked shepherds, the shepherds who fleece the sheep. Hanukkah is all about leadership – bad leaders and good leaders.

And it was out of the context of talking about leadership and shepherds that Jesus stands up in the Temple and says, "I am the Good Shepherd."

You see Jesus' teachings didn't emerge from a vacuum. They weren't just some stream of consciousness, a collection of religious sayings that Jesus wanted to

talk about. Everyone in the culture was talking about leadership – bad leadership, accommodating leadership, compromising leadership, zealous leadership, fiery leadership, courageous leadership. They did so under the metaphor of shepherd. And Jesus stands up and he says, “I am the Good Shepherd. If you want to follow a good leader, follow me.”

What makes Jesus such a great leader? Let’s read John 10:1-5.

I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all of his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.

I have read that in the Middle East to this day, observers have witnessed the most extraordinary sight. Sheep from lots of different flocks will be herded together. And then a shepherd will stand on one edge of the flock and begin to call his sheep by name. Sometimes he will play a little tune on a flute. Observers have said that first one sheep puts his head up, then another, and another. They hear their shepherd calling. They hear the shepherd’s music and they separate themselves from the larger flock and begin to follow him.

Jesus says in John 10:3, *The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.*

Questions you should ask before you follow a leader are “Will I be respected by this person? Will I be appreciated?”

You see, with bad leadership you are just a cog in the machine of someone else’s grand plan. We don’t care about you, who you are, how you are shaped, what your talents are. We just need a warm body to fit into our grand plans.

But Jesus’ leadership is so different. He is so personal. To use contemporary business language, Jesus is so high touch. We read in verses 14-15, *I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.* Jesus is a great leader because there is an intimacy, a relationship, life-on-life between Jesus and those who follow him.

Now, I can't be that kind of leader with 60 people, much less 6000 people. But Jesus can be that kind of leader with as many people as give their lives to him. Great leadership is intimate.

Great leaders know the characteristics of those who are following them and they shape their leadership according to the needs and personalities of the person they are leading. See, it is not "one-size fits all." Great leaders respect individuality. They appreciate each follower.

Here's the secret, by the way, of great parenting. Don't treat all your kids the same. Treat all your kids fairly, but don't treat them the same. Parent your children according to your child's needs, according to your child's temperament, according to your child's strengths and weaknesses. Parents, do you know your children intimately? Do you know what motivates and what demotivates them? Would you be able to accurately fill out a personality test for your child?

This is the secret of great coaching. Becoming intimately aware of your players. *My sheep know me and I know them.* I was just reading in a sports magazine that professional teams – baseball teams, football teams, basketball teams – pay a management guru millions of dollars to do personality studies of major league players. Coaches are convinced that what this consultant offers really works. This guy has analyzed the NBA playoffs and he says, "Some players, you scream at them and it just rolls off their backs. But you look at the face of a guy like Tony Parker playing for the San Antonio Spurs. When the coach yells at him for making a dumb play, he just hangs his head and he will not forget it. His play will suffer."

Knowing each other is the secret to loving in marriage. There is a very popular book written by Gary Chapman called *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*. This book has sold over 2 million copies. Some marriage partners need words of affection spoken all the time, words of affirmation. Some spouses need quality time. Some spouses need to receive gifts. Some are just looking for practical service – help me out around the house. Some need physical touch. Wise spouses learn the love language of their mates and they have happy mates. Married couples, are you certain that you know the love language of your mate?

Leadership is all about an intimate knowledge of the person that you are dealing with – a personalized touch, shaping your communication, your actions and your approaches in a way that will be most understandable and appreciated by the person you are trying to lead. Small group leaders, managers, teachers, employers, is your leadership style personalized to the people are you are leading?

Jesus relates to me differently than he relates to you. He says different things to me than he says to you; I need different things.

Then we read in verse 7, *Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."*

In ancient Israel shepherds would often build the sheep pen at the end of a canyon, or at the edge of a cliff. The sheep would be herded into that sheep pen. There would only be one way in, through the gate. Often there was no door at the entranceway. Instead, the shepherd would lie down in the entrance way and himself be the gate. He would keep the sheep in by his own body and keep the wolves at bay.

Now, one of the issues for you in evaluating a leader is to ask yourself is, "Am I safe in following this leader? Is this person a safe person?" One of the reasons why Jesus is a great leader is because you are safe in following him.

Look at this. He says in verse 8, *All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.* Remember, the context of this is Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication. And I told you that during the Maccabean Revolt there were two groups who fought tooth and nail with each other. There were the accommodationists, the people who said, "Let's just adopt all the Greek customs. Let's bring the Greek idols into the Temple. Let's worship Zeus and mix the worship of Zeus with the worship of Yahweh, the Lord. What's so bad about us eating Greek food and wearing Greek dress?" And then there were the Zealots who were violently opposed to the accommodationists. These were the folks saying, "Let's kill the accommodationists."

Do you know that leaders who are accommodationists and leaders who are zealots are both unsafe? One of the hot-button issues in the church today is what the church is going to say and do regarding homosexuality and the legitimization of homosexual marriages. The accommodationists in the church, like the recently appointed Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire, who himself is openly gay, say "We've got to welcome this societal trend in the church." Accommodationists are go-along, get-along people. Let's all just be friends. Let's not make any waves. Let's not offend anyone.

The zealots, on the other hand, come out with both barrels blazing. They're marching up and down next to gay pride parades with hate-filled signs. Their rhetoric is shrill and angry. They are burning the rainbow flags downtown at the state house, believing they're doing the work of God.

Accommodationists and zealots are both unsafe. They aren't going to keep you away from the wolves. Only Jesus, who embodies in himself both truth and love, who welcomes sinners to himself from whatever background they're coming

from, but doesn't affirm us in our sins, only Jesus, who welcomes sinners and then tells the truth to sinners, is safe.

Let me just pause and ask, What is your tendency? Are you an accommodator – easy going, live and let live? Or are you a zealot?

This analogy of shepherd and sheep and the need for a sheep pen, an enclosure, and the shepherd as the gate, is so helpful because it communicates to us that apart from being brought into the sheep pen, and protected by the shepherd, sheep are vulnerable. You see, in Israel, the areas where sheep are led by a shepherd are filled with lots of hostile forces. There are wild animals, wolves, and lions. There are steep ravines that sheep could go over. There are thorn bushes and holes.

And this tells us that the environment we live in is hostile to Christian faith and it is hostile to a Christian way of life and Christian integrity. If you think that you can just wander out in the world or send your kids out in the world and say, "Run along and play" apart from the protection of the Good Shepherd, and apart from the sheep enclosure, the church; if you think that you are going to make any forward progress as a Christian, while you walk out from underneath the protection of the Lord and the protection of the church, you are being badly deceived by the enemy.

A Christian counselor in another city was counseling a client. She said during one of their counseling sessions, "If you really cared for me, you would hold me." The counselor said, "Since caring is the essence of pastoral care, we held each other. And then we decided that we would enjoy a lot more caring together. So we went beyond holding."

There are wolves that have been let loose in American culture – the wolf of individualism, that each of us sees ourselves as this little protected island disconnected from other people. Our choices are defended simply "my own business. What I do in my private life is my business and no one else's." There is a wolf of individualism. Have you encountered that even when confronting other Christians? Back off. You have no right to challenge me about my finances, or my speech patterns.

There is the wolf of narcissism. Fewer and fewer people care about how their action is going to affect someone else. More and more Christian couples are willing to divorce without biblical grounds. It doesn't matter to them that they are sowing into their children the idea that if God says something you don't like to hear, you don't need to obey it. Children, you can pick and choose what you obey in God's Word. "I'm unhappy. I don't want to live this way any longer. This marriage is not emotionally satisfying to me. I need to be true to me, authentic." There is the wolf of narcissism. Do you see a rising tide of utter selfishness, almost a ruthlessness in our culture?

And there is the wolf of living in a totally values-free culture. Anyone who has strong convictions and states them is a threat. We have so many different interest groups and competing perspectives. The only way we believe in America any longer that we can get along is to not believe anything very strongly. Don't speak up. Don't challenge.

Parents, do you think your child is really safe when you send them off to a college out of state? Men and women, are you safe as you hold a job that requires you to travel many days a month, staying in motel rooms, having lots of totally unaccountable time? Are you safe if you have lots of unaccounted for cash? Are you safe as you surf the Internet alone?

Jesus is telling us that our position in this world is terribly unsafe apart from him as our Shepherd and apart from us running into the protection of the sheepfold, which is the church. There are simply too many devouring wolves destroying Christian integrity. We simply cannot do this thing called Christian faith without real, genuine, accountable, deep relationships with other brothers and sisters. That's why I regularly invite you into small group life here. And we cannot do this thing called the Christian faith without regularly bringing ourselves under the authority and protection of the Lord when we wake up in the morning, as we go through our day, and before we fall asleep at night.

Is this leader safe? Jesus is safe.

Here's another question in evaluating leadership, are you interested in my well being, or just yours? Jesus says, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.* Abusive leaders do steal and kill and destroy. Abusive leaders steal your money, fleece the sheep. Abusive leaders in church manipulate you with false promises about future wealth in order to get you to give.

Abusive political leaders literally will kill. Abusive teachers, abusive coaches, abusive priests will kill and destroy children's innocence, kill and destroy dreams, kill and destroy potential.

Have you ever been around an abusive leader?

Jesus say, *But I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.* Do you understand what Jesus is saying? He is saying "I am not a thief." You know, some of you are so afraid to totally turn your life over to Jesus because you are afraid he will rip you off. How many of you, if you are honest with yourself and before God, would have to say, "I am afraid of praying, 'Lord, do whatever it takes to make me a fully devoted follower of yours.'" How many of you are afraid of saying, "God, have at me. Have at my relationship with this other man or woman. Have at my career. Have at my impatience. Have at my anger. Have at my plans regarding decorating my home. Have at my ministry. Have at what

runs through my mind. Have at my entertainment.” Lord, do whatever it takes to have my whole heart.

You are afraid of being ripped off.

I love something I read in one of Bill Hybels’ books years ago. I’ve quoted it to you before. I’ll paraphrase it for you because I don’t remember where I read it. But Hybels said, “When Jesus breaks into your life, it is like knowing that your house has been broken into. You come home and say, ‘Someone’s been here.’ But instead of having things stolen, Jesus leaves gifts behind. You say, ‘someone’s been here. We didn’t have that expensive clock on the mantel. And look over there in the drawer. That’s brand new silver left behind. Look at this in the refrigerator – there’s a chocolate cake in here. And in the front hall closet, a new set of golf clubs. Are those Callaways or Pings?’”

You are afraid of completely turning your life over to Jesus Christ because you think somehow you are going to be ripped off. That he is going to take away from you the things that really give you joy in life. He’ll take the fun out of your life. Listen to the words of Jesus. He says, *The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy. But I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

Listen to me now. Everything that you have going in your life that you know is sin is stealing and killing and destroying your joy. Sin only works for a little while. It works long enough to hook you. But Jesus Christ has so much more for you. Those of you who are keeping yourself from full devotion to Christ, from saying, “Lord, have at me, all of me. Full surrender, full submission” because you are afraid of being ripped off of joy or being ripped off of pleasure, you are keeping yourself from joy and pleasure. The Bible says, *In the Lord’s presence in fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.* It is in your own self-interest to surrender your life to Christ.

The text goes on in verse 11 and says, *I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.* Down in verse 19, *At these words the Jews were again divided.* I’ll remind you, everyone in the story is Jewish, including Jesus. *Many of them said, “He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?”*

What makes Jesus a great leader? The question you ought to ask of leaders is, “Have you been willing to pay a price to lead?” I trust leaders who have paid a price. Five times in this text Jesus says that he lays down his life for his sheep. Verse 11, *The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.* Verse 15, *Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.* Verse 17, *The reason the Father loves me is I lay down my life.* Verse 18, *No*

one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.

Leaders worthy of following are leaders who pay a price to lead. They've given something up. They've traded in their careers or their house or their security or reputation.

My first pastor was a man named Warren Campbell. He was a Pentecostal pastor, not very well educated. He worked in the steel mills of Cleveland for about 30 years. And then on the weekends he had a little church that he preached at. Warren led dozens of men to Christ at the steel mills. He never had a church that fully supported him until he was in his late 50's. That's when I met Warren. He worked 30 years in the steel mills, faithfully serving the Lord. He paid a price to lead. Out of a little church that had maybe 20 young adults, half of us are in full-time ministry. Some are missionaries. There are many pastors. Because of the one thing we saw in the life of Warren Campbell, and that was to be a Christian meant to give your entire life to Jesus.

If Christian service is a way of success for someone, watch out! That is dangerous. But if you see someone get on the down escalator when everyone else is going up, that may be a man or woman that you will want to follow. Jesus lived his life on the down escalator. Coming down from the Father; being born of the Virgin Mary; suffering rejection and unjust criticism. "He has a demon." We've seen this over and over again in the book of John. "You have a demon."

Any leader worth anything has been the subject of unjust criticism. He or she has been a lightning rod for unfair attacks. Our greatest president, Abe Lincoln, was called just about every name imaginable in the press. He was called a baboon, a third-rate country lawyer, who once split rails and now splits the union. He was called a dictator, an ape, and a buffoon. The Illinois State Register labeled him the craftiest and most dishonest politician that ever disgraced an office in America. He was slandered, libeled and hated more intensely than any man who ever served in the office of President.

Jesus got on the down escalator and it wasn't enough for him simply to be rejected and criticized. The Bible tells us that he humbled himself to death, even death on the cross. He paid a price to lead.

Why should I follow the leadership of Jesus? Verse 16, *I have other sheep that are not of the sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.*

Jesus is a great leader because he is inclusive. One of the questions that people ask is, "Am I wanted here? Will I be included?" The Judaism of Jesus' day was exclusive. The walls were a hundred feet thick. There was a sign posted on the gates, "Gentiles not wanted." Jesus said, "I have other sheep that are not of this

sheep pen. I want to gather a worldwide community, not just of Jews, but of people leaving Buddhism and Hinduism and Islam and Animism; and secularism and hedonism and materialism.

Long-time members of this church, new people are coming to this church every weekend and one of the questions they're asking is "Is there room for me? Will you include me? Do you go out of your way to be friendly and to greet folks who raise their hands for a CD? People want to know, "Will you welcome me? Or is everything locked up because I came too late? All the leadership positions are taken. All the worship positions are taken. Everyone hangs out in his or her own little cliques. Or will you open up the circle and include me?"

People are asking, "Will you include me even though I'm of a different race than you? Will you welcome me into your heart, into your friendship, into your church if I'm African-American? Or Asian? Or Hispanic? Do you want me here?"

This verse communicates the heart of Jesus. It communicates worldwide mission. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. Great leaders have huge hearts for diversity.

Finally, a great leader provides their followers with great futures. Jesus says beginning in verse 27, *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.*

Whenever people sign up for a job, one of their first questions is, "What is my future going to be like at this job? What's my career track likely to be? Am I going to be hired here and then laid off in three months? Are they just going to use me up and then throw me aside when someone more attractive or younger or with different skills comes along? What's my future like?"

Do you hear what Jesus is saying? He is saying, "Christian, if you are truly a Christian, if the life of God has entered your soul, if the miracle of regeneration has really happened to you, if you are not just a professor of religion, but you are a possessor of Christ, if you really have been born again by the Spirit of God, then you have a glorious future. Not because you are holding onto Jesus with your weak grip, but because Christ is holding onto you with a grip of steel.

And if you need any more assurance that you are going to make it, if you are truly born again, and you fear Jesus is too weak to hold onto you. Listen to this. Then he says, *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.* One not just in purpose; one not just in will; but one in substance, one is essence, one in being. Here is your position – in the hand of Jesus; in the hand of your Father. Nothing ever can come between you.

Let me ask you a few closing questions. Is Jesus your leader, or are you being led by thieves and robbers? What are you led by? Are you led just by popular opinion, by whoever you happen to be with? What are you led by? Who leads you? Are you led by the message of the media, or some marketing executive who is determined that you have to buy the product they're selling? What are you led by? Are you led by your own lusts, your own neediness?

Friend, what would it be like for you to be led by Jesus? Have you considered what it would be like to fully follow the leadership of Jesus? To say, "Jesus, have all of me in the undisciplined areas of my life."

Let me tell you what it would be like. You would be respected. You would be appreciated. You will be safe. You will have someone who is completely interested in your well being. You will be following the leadership of someone who has paid a price to lead you. You will be included in his worldwide family. And your future will be brighter than you can imagine. Let's pray.

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John 10

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II. A Great Leader

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