

Sometimes when we are in a position of leadership, some people think that we think that we are on a higher spiritual 'plane' than our brothers and sisters in Christ, that we have a 'holier than thou' attitude. Now to varying degrees, this may or may not be actually true. But because of this, our effectiveness can be drastically reduced. What we might call the 'high and mighty' syndrome when it exists to any degree in our lives can discourage greatly those who are weak, and it is something that I think we should really watch out for.

Perhaps it begins with ideas that God gives us, but we begin to think that they are ours. We begin to think that our message is really something great; that we are capable of more powerful thoughts than others. We must remember that it is God's word, and not ours after all.

Giving a message somehow seems to blind us to it. When we hear someone else give an idea that we have considered, we may think, 'Oh, I have no need of this, for I have already thought this through; I have taken care of it in my life.' Taking care of something once in our lives is usually not enough. We need to constantly refresh and re-examine ourselves. We cannot again have the 'AHA!' of discovery when listening to an idea that we have already thought through, but we can still think about it in light of applying it to our present lives.

Pride is in all of us, I guess, in some measure. It causes us to condemn others, and hinders our efforts to love one another. Pride is the reason that each of us gets our feelings hurt. Pride in leadership is doubly dangerous. Match's maxim states that a fool in a high station is like a man on the top of a high mountain: everything appears small to him, and he appears small to everybody. Henry van Dyke once said that there is a loftier ambition than merely to stand high in the world, and that is to stoop down and lift mankind a little higher.

As leaders we must be very gentle and loving with our knowledge to those who are truly seeking the truth. I appreciate the scripture 1 Cor, 'Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up'. Things that are puffed up are usually easy to 'pop'. But things that are built up are strong. Knowledge may expand our realm of influence, but love for our listeners is what shores up the borders of that realm to make it strong.

We must learn to become a leader without having to beat our chest like Tarzan. There seems to always be a certain competition for leadership. We may become jealous when someone else gets a little of the limelight. But we must relax, sit back, and wait for our chance to contribute. When that chance comes, we must make our words and our actions count.

We must be willing to take second place. Jesus said in Mt. 19.30, 'But many that are first shall be last, and the last first'. We must be willing, if necessary, to take our part in the background. Someone once said that a true leader must submerge himself in the fountain of the people. We may do the most good by motivating others into positions of leadership, and we can do that, for example, by giving them opportunities to speak.

Leadership must be baptized in humility. C.S. Lewis wrote that humility is not when you think too much of yourself, or when you think too little of yourself, it is when you forget yourself entirely. Luther made the comment that it is God's nature to make something out of nothing, and this is why God will not make anything out of him who has not yet himself nothing. We can realize our God-given capabilities, and yet remain humble, if we willingly seek to always give God all the glory (1 Cor 10.31).

In conclusion let us remember the successful preacher who began to take pride in himself and his gifts. But an angel told him that his success was due primarily to a poor widow who sat regularly at the foot of his pulpit and never ceased to pray for him. Let us forever be on our guard against our pride so that we can lead others to the life majestic which exists only in Christ.