

**The Forgotten Root**  
**Making Leadership a priority**

By Josephine Thomas

John C. Maxwell, author of *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, coined the phrase: "Leadership is influence - nothing more, nothing less". Yet leadership can be easily mistaken for some kind of power struggle between those who think they have it and those who think they don't. This idea of influence may come as a shock to those who have always perceived leadership to be an assumed position where authority can be exercised. As J. Oswald Sanders explains, "Leadership is not dependent on titles or positions but rather on someone catching a vision from God, and mobilizing others to join them in its fulfillment". Christ has told us that in order to become great we must become a servant. Is that a conflicting notion for us to even consider? Why is there a need for us to become anyone's servant when we become great? Let's look to our ultimate model. Jesus said, "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..." (Matthew 20: 28). When we serve, we influence – and when we influence, we lead.

God is raising up a generation to lead His Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Are we ready to lead? The command given to the Christian Church by Christ is, "Go make disciples of all nations, teaching them the things I have taught you" (Matthew 28:19-20). This is a direct decree to provide leadership for nations, directing them to live according to the principles of the kingdom of God.

Churches spend much time talking about the Great Commission and, as a result, forgetting to raise leaders for the occasion. This paired with the increasing number of converts to Christ has created a "leadership gap" that must be addressed. It is of paramount importance that we treat leadership as a priority in the Church. Leadership must be effective to accomplish this command, for the Church would still suffer if the appointed leaders have no vision or character. But a Church that is Christ-like, one with vision, a burden, a servant-heart and humility, should be ready to **embrace leadership as the root that supports everything else**. For what use can a vision provide if there is no

one willing to lead? And a servant-heart will remain lonely if they do not have anyone to serve in the way Christ commanded; after all, the greatest display of leadership is service.

A popular opinion that leadership is all about dominion might be the number one reason why many shun away from such roles, while others grab any opportunity to take the lead. Our command as a Christian is to lead, and lead the way Christ would have led. For that, we have to start by following not men, but Christ. By this we will not mistake authority for leadership, but rather shepherd others through service and influence. The seed you plant in your followers will grow to reflect the character of Christ in the next generation and generations to come.

The shaping and the molding of a leader begin when he recognizes his potential; he gains confidence when he finds opportunities to lead and influence others. World War I and the Great Depression paved the way for young Adolf Hitler to rise up and make people believe in his ideas, even though his intentions were far from virtuous or commendable. Joan of Arc, a splitting contrast to Hitler, was born at a time when a shaky truce was in effect between France and England. She led and influenced when she overcame the veteran commanders and lifted a siege in just nine days. And all before her sudden death at the early age of nineteen. Joan of Arc led and was willing to pay the price of leading *as a youth*. Both of these historical leaders were influenced at a young age and both left a mark on history. So what made the difference?

It is important to influence youth and raise them as leaders while they are young. Their daily life, as a youth, sets the stage for their beliefs to grow into something bigger, whether it is for construction or destruction. The right kind of leadership values should be fed to youths, and we must be able to feel confident when we pass the baton on to the next generation. This can only be achieved by equipping youths with the seed of leadership sown on their hearts. *Have you planted yours?*

