

## **Jesus as “Adult” Leader**

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Merry Christmas! It's that time of year when we celebrate the coming of Emmanuel, the Messiah, our Lord. We pause to appreciate that the God of the universe would come for a brief period to live among us, teaching us His ways.

For the past three weeks, I've written about the transactional analysis model presented by Eric Berne in his 1964 book "Games People Play." My friend, John Waters, who served as pastor for Rehoboth Baptist Church in Perry from 1992 to 1998, and who is now a Vice-President for Brewton-Parker College, and I have been talking about this model and how it applies to Jesus.

First, a brief description of the model. Within each of us resides three "ego states," any one of which might interact, in a given situation, with any of the three "ego states" in another person.

The Child role represents our emotional, self-centered, and irresponsible selves. The Parent role can be nurturing and supportive or critical and judgmental. The Adult role is rational and analytical, solving and preventing problems based on cause-and-effect logic.

John Waters and I believe that Jesus functioned predominantly in the Adult state, and that's why He is such a good role model for leaders. Though creative and nurturing (Child and Parent states, respectively), Jesus was without sin, so He never demonstrated the self-serving sides of these states. We never see condemnation or a power play for control (Parent), nor do we see the emotions of stubbornness, selfishness, or defensiveness (Child).

**Jesus focused on each individual's potential, even amid his or her failures.** Peter miserably failed the Lord, denying Him three times. Yet Jesus still validated Peter's leadership and worth. The disciples could not stay awake with Jesus as He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, but He did not reject them. Shouldn't we, as leaders, be looking at the potential that exists in the members of our organizations? Do you use every opportunity to build the capabilities of your people, stretching them to use the talents they've been given?

**Jesus gave each individual freedom to choose and experience the consequences of his or her choice.** Jesus did not stop Peter from denying Him, though He knew it would occur. Jesus did not prevent Judas from leaving the Passover meal to betray Him to the Roman authorities. Each experienced immense grief from his choice. Peter worked through his sorrow in a redemptive way. Judas chose suicide.

Jesus never intervened to manipulate the natural outcomes of poor choices. How many times do we as leaders try to bail folks out of their self-made dilemmas? Does the father really help his son by paying for his speeding tickets? Does the office manager really help the employee relative to his peers by covering for his repetitive late arrival at the customer service desk?

**Jesus led by example.** One of our major roles as a leader is to teach appropriate problem-solving and problem-preventing behaviors. Jesus did this so well—the washing of His disciples' feet, His refusal to respond with frustration to His detractors' frequent attacks, His gentle encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well, and His frequent education through parables. His disciples observed all this and learned from the powerful example Jesus lived.

Each year at this time, we tell the Christmas story. John Waters and I encourage leaders everywhere to ponder the miracle of "God with us" as a role model of Adult behavior. You have the potential to serve those under your authority in the model of Jesus Christ. Christ designed you for this mission, and He guides you through His Holy Spirit.