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3rd Place Essay: Leadership

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Leadership

The art of strong leadership is one that has been mastered time and again throughout history. There is a certain level of apprehension that arises when a leader comes to power; for, we know that with the power to lead also comes the power to destroy. There is also a sense of hope that also arises, because that same leader may lead to prosperity. As Christians, we hope to change the negative perception of leadership in our society by setting an example for people to follow, living out our beliefs consistently, and maintaining a heart of humility in leadership.

Leading by example is the best way to express our beliefs. When thinking of a strong leader, however, most think of a dominant smooth-talker. These types of leaders use the power of persuasion, and people follow. In contrast to this method, God shows us that a true leader does not seek to persuade others to follow them with words but, rather, seeks to live the example. To find insight into godly leadership, we must look to the prime example, Jesus Christ. Jesus tells people to love and serve others. How does He gain followers for something that is in blatant contradiction to human nature? He sets the example. Jesus gains followers by providing a tangible example for them to evaluate. While other leaders need a large group of followers to validate what they say, Jesus knows His way is truth and merely lives His life as an example. We should live our lives in a way that leads,

rather leading with powerful words. When we provide a visible example, people can decide for themselves if they want to follow.

We will only gain the devotion of followers if we prove ourselves consistent in our example. We must not just perform an example for them to see; we must live a life that exemplifies it. In every arena of influence, people look to their leaders to see if their words are supported by their actions. If they see that a leader is flippant in his beliefs and unpredictable in his actions, they do not follow. When people see a leader who is certain in his beliefs and consistent in his actions, they are inclined to follow. To be effective leaders, our lives should be consistent, so others see the validity of what we say. As Christians, we should live lives that reflect God's character. God is unchanging and dependable; therefore, our lives and our leadership should be aligned with God's Word. If we live according to His moral code, we will earn credibility among those around us. People will devote themselves to our leadership if they know we are trustworthy and dependable. It is after we earn this trust that we face the task of leading them in the right direction.

As a leader, it can be a challenge to maintain the right course without letting selfish ambitions interfere. In human examples of leadership, we often see power-hungry individuals who become prideful and change their course to build themselves up. We may begin a leadership position with the right intentions, but if we stop serving God, we begin to serve ourselves. In order to prevent this change of direction, we need to seek humility in our leadership positions. Our identification should not be found in our accomplishments as leaders. Effective leadership is found

when we identify ourselves as servants of God, regardless of the power or positions we might have. By submitting our rights of recognition to God, we humble ourselves before God and others. We want to be leaders with both confidence in our decisions and humility in our actions. We can be assured that we will lead others on the right path when we submit our direction to God.

Though human experiences have propelled people to embrace a negative view of leadership, we are given the unique opportunity to change this perspective. Leadership is a gift that can be squandered selfishly or exercised carefully. In every leadership position we are granted, we must continually evaluate ourselves to be sure we are a living example of what we say. We will be tempted to give into a life pride, but we must stay the course. For, when we choose humility in positions of power, we finally embody the art of true leadership.