

“LADS TO LEADERS/LEADERETTES”

Matthew Johnson

The Lads to Leaders/Leaderettes (L2L) annual convention was in Atlanta in the Spring of 2016 and over a three day period many young people got an opportunity to practice public speaking or song leading roles, compete for trophies based on their comparative ability, learn more about God’s word, create lasting memories for families, and have an opportunity to come together and learn from one another –at least it seemed from all the Facebook posts. I don’t know all there is to know about L2L and while it generates great enthusiasm, I’m not convinced it’s a biblically authorized way to teach biblical leadership skills.

According to their mission statement, L2L says “...It is a tool churches of Christ can use to help prepare their youth and adults for service in the Kingdom of God and help develop their overall leadership potential.” In their answer to the question, ‘Why choose L2L?’, one of the reasons they give for the competition is it “allows participants to learn how to deal with competition in a Christian manner. Competition is a real part of the real world. NOT learning how to deal with competition can be harmful as they deal with a competitive world and society. Selections are made in the church, as well (Acts 1:23-26)”

Jesus defined biblical leadership from godly wisdom and his chosen path: *“And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth”* (Luke 22:25-27). Godly leadership has never been defined as those who were able to stand in polished presence in front of large groups of people. It certainly is a way to serve, and something that many are not comfortable with, but neither were Moses (Exod 4:10), Jeremiah (Jer 1:6), or Paul (2 Cor 10:10).

Learning to be a good competitor comes with having the heart of Christ. He left His glory, but not to compete for a worldly kingship (John

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18:36). Paul counted his earthly success as dung so that he could win Christ (Phil 3:89). As Christians we're admonished, "*For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise*" (2 Cor 10:12). To whom much is given, much will be required (Luke 12:48), and in their haste to recognize and honor those they thought were the best, many had erred when Jesus pronounced judgement with a view from the heart (Matt 23:16,24, Luke 21:3, 16:15). And, ironically, in the passage in Acts referenced by L2L, they cast lots to make the selection rather than hold a competitive worship activity.

Whatever we do, we are to "*...do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ*" (Col 3:23b-24). When the lights go out and the trophies are gone, my prayer is the winners' enthusiasm isn't sustained by the praise of men and prideful glances at those they beat, and the child that didn't place first is not discouraged believing they are not a good leader. I hope they and we understand those on the stage in the assemblies are not defined by God as leaders merely by a public role in the assembly. And some of the parents I know could help their children much more if they became as faithful and diligent to take them to Bible class as they do to L2L.

You may have correctly guessed we don't participate in L2L. And you won't see any posts or prizes for the hospital visits our kids make, or the cards they send, or the food they help prepare, or the prayers they pray for others, or the small crafts they make to lift someone's spirit, or the Bible verses they read and sometimes memorize, or the songs they lead at home, or the way they help when work is to be done. And if all goes well you won't hear about it until we can all rejoice together without regard to the order of the prize and be recognized by Jesus (Matt 25:34-40) for being as He was, a servant.