

"ME TOO!" – "REALLY?"

TEXT: John 21:1-7

THESIS: To reveal the principles of leadership and spirituality, and that they are often not the same.

INTRO.: A. In this passage we find the **strongest leader** and the **best Christian**. Peter was the strongest leader and John was the best Christian. The passage proves that the strongest leader is not always the best, or sometimes not even a good, Christian. Peter was the leader, but he often led in the wrong direction, as he did here. John had the closest walk with the Lord, but when he walked too close to Peter, he drifted in his walk with the Lord.

B. Now Peter, as the leader, sometimes was the most outspoken and his spirit was stronger than his flesh. When Jesus asked who men said that He was, the others answered "*John the Baptist...Elijah...Jeremiah...one of the prophets.*" He then asked directly "*But whom say ye that I am?*" Peter blurted out "*...Thou are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" It was that same Peter who brashly and rashly drew his sword in the Garden of Gethsemane to protect Jesus and cut off the High Priests servant's ear, and a few hours later denied him three times with cursing.

C. It was John "*the beloved disciple*" and the "*disciple whom Jesus loved*" who leaned his head on Jesus' breast the night He was betrayed and it was John, the only disciple who stood at the foot of Jesus cross providing comfort to Jesus' mother and didn't go into hiding.

TRANS.: Now Peter and John are together, along with five other disciples, *after the resurrection* (!), and Peter, the leader, turned preacher, decides to go back to his old job of fishing! Knowing what we know of the two men above, Peter & John, we would have expected this of Peter, but John and the others say "**ME TOO!**" – I am sure that Peter may have been somewhat surprised that John was ready to join him. Peter probably said: "**REALLY?!**"

I. LEADERSHIP DOESN'T PRODUCE SPIRITUALITY:

A. Peter Was the Strongest Leader:

1. But it was Peter who denied the Lord.
2. Here it is Peter who suggests going back to his old lifestyle.

ILLUS.: One of Peter's big mistakes was that he didn't burn all his bridges behind him. He apparently still owned a boat and some nets from his former life. And even though he had seen and done some remarkable things, e.g. walking on water, and even seeing the resurrected Savior, he was very quick to go back to his old lifestyle.

Many of us try to serve the Lord, but we don't burn all our bridges either. Then we wonder why we get backslidden. We refuse, like Peter, to walk by faith, so we hold onto our old friends, our old job, our old habits, our old lifestyle, etc. – "just in case."

B. Peter Was a Fence Straddler:

1. He loved Jesus, but not enough to deny his former status or to stand alone.
2. Peter was a great leader, often making wise choices and good decisions and strong statements when among his friends, but couldn't stand alone.

ILLUS.: Someone has defined character as who we are when we are completely alone or when we are with a different crowd than those we ordinarily identify with. We are Christians and at church we can stand strong, but when with the world we deny the Lord and adopt the world's ways and fall back into our former language, and lifestyle.

I had a friend, whose name was George Friend, who was the only black boy in my 7th grade class. We were close. We were together most of the time when not in class. Then one day I met him downtown with some of his black friends and yelled to him to say "Hi"– and he totally ignored me. I was crushed! He didn't want to let his old buddies think he was friendly with the white boy.

II. LEADERSHIP SHOULD BE SPIRITUAL:

NOTE: You are a leader in some facet of your life, so you have a responsibility to develop spiritually. You may be a student that others look up to, a brother, sister, mom, dad, S.S. teacher, employee, employer, etc. Because someone is following you, you must try to develop spiritual guidelines and principles to provide spiritual leadership.

A. You Must Set the Example:

1. There is no believer strong enough to resist another's leadership when that leader is strong.
2. John was the most spiritual, but Peter was a strong and assertive leader, so he said: "ME TOO!"
 - a. You are never a good enough Christian to allow yourself to be exposed to wrong, strong or unspiritual leadership.

Psalms 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

- b. You cannot expose yourself to wrong music, personalities or entertainment and expect to be the best Christian.

ILLUS.: With Peter and John we are not talking about a bad man and a good man, just a good man running with a strong leader and following him to do the wrong thing. The good Christian has a stronger personality than the best Christian.

Maybe you are a great Christian, but some rebel with a strong personality comes into the church and you make friends with him or her. The rebel causes trouble and leaves, and because of his strong influence, you leave with him. It is not about your love for the Lord it is about the weakness of the flesh. You are going to follow someone. There are strong personalities in the music industry, the entertainment industry, or in the church. You have to decide to follow the Lord and not place yourself under the leadership of a carnal leader.

B. You Must Work on Your Spirituality:

1. Preachers are strong personalities – if they are going to be good preachers/pastors – so we have to work at being spiritual so we lead well.

- a. Dogmatism is not spirituality – beware!
- b. Peter was dogmatic, but not the best Christian.

2. Moms and dads, kids at school, men at work, you must work at being spiritual so you will provide proper leadership.

NOTE: You may have a strong leadership potential, but that cannot guarantee spirituality, that takes work. You have to **work** at reading and studying the Bible, prayer, soul-winning, being a good father, mother, son or daughter, employee, employer, etc.

You are a good Christian young person, but decide to go to a secular college. A sharp, knowledgeable, strong-personality professor begins to influence you against the Bible and the things of the Lord. The strong personality leader will always influence the weaker Christian in the wrong way.

A good Christian girl dates a carnal boy. She thinks she will straighten him out. Her intentions are commendable. If he wasn't a strong personality he wouldn't have gotten her to date him in the first place. That fact makes him dangerous. His strong personality will pull her down. She has already shown by her choice that she is the weaker of the two.

III. LEADERSHIP AND SPIRITUALITY ARE THE BEST COMBINATION:

A. Negative Examples:

1. Samson was a strong leader, but Delilah was the strongest personality.
 - a. Beware, anyone who really loves you doesn't want to bring you down!
 - b. Delilah was stronger than Samson! Samson had leadership ability, but no spirituality.
2. Jehoshaphat was a godly king but he yoked up with Ahab (who had yoked up with Jezebel!)
 - a. Both the Northern & Southern Kingdoms got in a mess and Jehoshaphat's son ended up married to Ahab's daughter!
 - b. One of the nation's best kings and his kingdom fell because of a stronger personality.

B. Positive Examples:

1. **Moses** was both a strong personality and a great and spiritual leader who led several million people and set a godly example for them; and while meek was never weak.
2. **David** was the strongest leader in Israel and a forceful personality who wrote most of the Psalms describing his intimacy and walk with the Lord.
3. **Elijah** was Israel's great prophet and man-of-God everyone admires as he set an example of both leadership and spirituality.
4. **Paul** was the Church's greatest spiritual leader and continues to influence millions! Paul said: ***"Follow me as I follow Christ!"***

CONCL.: God has set boundaries for being the best Christian you can be. If you go out of those boundaries you will fail and cause others who look to you to fail. We are not commanded to be great leaders, but we are commanded to be great Christians.

I am sure I often preach to greater Christians than I, but that makes me want to be a better Christian as well as a better leader.

Question: If someone tries to lead you in the wrong direction will you say **"ME TOO!" – REALLY?**