

CRIBBS NOTES – July 1, 2007

There are a lot of bad leaders running nations and corporations. As a result, the world is suffering. Many of us don't want to think about it. We would rather not talk about it. Still many more just settle for the way things are without any consideration given to make changes. Bad leadership makes for disaster. These are dangerous days even if we don't realize it.

It is easy to point away from ourselves and accuse others of making mistakes. Recently, three nations were labeled "the axis of evil," and Iran, Iraq, and North Korea were tossed into a pool of untouchable societies. Within months after President George W. Bush issued those assignments, the United States rushed into war against Iraq. North Korea fortified its defenses and escalated its development of nuclear weapons with a threat to use them. Iran announced it was stepping up its nuclear program and began to spew insulting remarks against Israel and America.

Flawed leadership creates an environment of fear and self-deception. It fosters harm and ignores wise counsel. That is what the world is facing today. From politics to Hollywood; from halls of justice to sacred sites of sanctuaries: mosques, temples, cathedrals, churches and shrines, the impact of bad leadership is felt deeply.

It is not a matter of incompetence, rather an inability to listen, see, or feel the living realities of people who suffer. Bad leadership dismisses or trivializes the harsh conditions under which too many people exist. The absence of compassion and sensitivity toward the poor and vulnerable results in callous treatment and perpetuates denied hope and opportunities.

There is no escape from the reach and influence of bad judgment in positions of authority. We are in the midst of crime, corruption, and barbaric acts against humanity for reasons that only verify the unfortunate fact of failed leadership. Instead of negotiating and seeking diplomatic alternatives, we are beset with an administration in this nation that bullies and employs weapons of mass destruction against those who disagree with its policies.

What are we to do? How can people of faith act responsibly?

First, we must realize what is taking place and determine where we will stand. We must make an honest and prayerful assessment of our capacity to provide a voice and perspective that is aligned with God's intention for us. We must take seriously Jesus' teachings and apply his ministry to our lives. Then, we must place ourselves where we can listen attentively to those persons most directly affected by decisions, policies, and activities done in our name.

How can we tell if leadership is good or bad? Take a close look at the historical personalities who made significant contributions to advance human history in a way that was consistent with God's Commandments. Compare the outcomes of behaviors that healed, improved, and respected life against actions that destroyed, weakened, and discarded cultures.

The prophets Elijah and Elisha faced these problems just as we live with remarkably bad situations now. They provide a good place to begin our process of comparing and deciding what we will do. We can and we must do something. We are able to do better. The world is crying for good leadership.