

Wisdom of the Bible ~ Acceptance & Rejection ~ Leader's Guide

1. It is important to see that each of us can be in any of these roles. Perhaps there is a disruptive or dominating person in your Bible study and you feel that as the leader the only way to get through to him is to humiliate him in front of the group.

Maybe you're attending a study group where the leader does just this. You've been irritated with the guy who has been dominating the discussion and you're happy to see him put down. You don't say anything and you're certainly not going to criticize the leader.

Or maybe you're the guy who has been talking too much but you feel it's justified because you've studied the subject material more than the others and you have something to offer that they don't.

[Thanks to Gary Hrynoveski of Inverse, Inc. for this true story.]

2. So often we Christians are unwilling to speak out because 1) our view is different from the crowd and we want to be accepted, 2) our view is different from the leader and he, after all, has the position of authority or 3) the person we are speaking out against is "doing his best" or "has a good heart" and we don't want to discourage him or criticize him.

3. In the story of the beheading of John the Baptist by Herod, John was willing to criticize Herod for marrying his brother's wife (Mark 6:18) but Herod, who apparently liked John, was unwilling to change his mind in front of his daughter, wife, and dinner guests, and say, "your request is wrong, I'm not going to do it."

4. I've been on missions trips like this several times. In one case, a person from the local ministry stepped forward and politely but firmly took over thus saving the trip. In another case, the final event of the trip in which a concert hall was rented for an "expected" audience of 600. Planning was non-existent and the leader had us hand out tickets on the streets the day of the event. Attendance was about 40 and the whole thing was an unmitigated disaster.

Are we willing to accept a poor leader because he is a Christian and has a heart for God? Is this a good thing to do? How do you deal with such a situation—you don't want to discourage the person (and maybe he or she outranks you anyway; perhaps it's an elder in your church) but you also don't want to see the project end as a disaster or not as good as it might have been had you had a good leader.

5. Mark 6:1-6 - ¹ Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! ³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters

here with us?” And they took offense at him.

⁴ Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.” ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

7. John 12:37-50 - ³⁷ Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet:

“Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: ⁴⁰ “He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn—and I would heal them.” ⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.

⁴² Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

⁴⁴ Then Jesus cried out, “When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. ⁴⁵ When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

⁴⁷ “As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. ⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. ⁵⁰ I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

8. Depending upon the makeup of your group, you may have a number of new believers (or even seekers) who do not have a well-grounded Christian faith and would be susceptible to others with strong views such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, or even Muslims. This discussion question can lead in a lot of interesting directions depending upon the members of your group. Let it run.