

Popular Thinking and Shared Thinking

"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant."
Matthew 23:11

Question the Acceptance of _____ Thinking

A leading economist once said, *"The difficulty lays not so much in developing new ideas as in escaping the old ones."* He was right. Going against popular thinking can be difficult. It is much easier to float downstream than to swim against the current. If you refuse to follow the crowd and insist on making decisions based upon what is right rather than what is popular, you will be quite unpopular at times. Why should you question popular thinking? Consider these observations:

1. Popular thinking is too average to understand _____.
2. Popular thinking is too inflexible to embrace _____.
3. Popular thinking is too small to see the _____.
4. Popular thinking is too traditional to be _____.
5. Popular thinking is too undisciplined to be _____.
6. Popular thinking sometimes means _____.
7. Popular thinking offers _____.

Popular thinking has often proven to be wrong. Popular thinking said the earth was flat. Popular thinking said the earth was the center of the universe. Popular thinking approved of human slavery. Popular thinking argued that a man would never walk on the moon. Yes, popular thinking is often wrong. It assumes that because a thing has not been done before, it can never be done.

Steps to Follow in Questioning Popular Thinking:

1. Think _____ you follow.
2. Keep people around you whose thinking is _____ from yours.
3. Continually _____ your own thinking.
4. Try new things in _____.
5. Commit yourself to finding new _____.

When John Maxwell was growing up, most leadership experts concluded that leadership could not be taught. They argued that leaders are born, not trained and developed. John rejected that thinking and wrote *Developing the Leader Within You*. Because he rejected popular thinking, thousands of men and women have become effective leaders as they learned and applied the principles taught in that book and many of his other leadership volumes.

Discussion:

- Do you have people around you who think differently?
- How can you create an environment where they feel they can express their different ideas to you?
- Can you encourage them further by implementing any of their ideas?

Biblical Case Study: A Mother's Request (Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10: 35-45)

The disciples of Jesus seemed to have a very difficult time understanding His mission on planet earth. They seemed to believe that Jesus would soon overthrow the Roman governor in Jerusalem and set up His own political kingdom. Each of them desired to be second-in-command and have a place of high honor at the right hand of Jesus when He assumed control of the nation. The mother of James and John came with them to Jesus to ask a special favor. Note how this family followed popular thinking in their request:

1. Self-promotion was the _____ to success.
2. They _____ the highest position.
3. Self-interests were _____ number one.
4. Thought that if they did not take care of _____, no one else would.
5. Always fought for the _____, whatever it took to get there.
6. The end _____ the means.
7. Winning was _____.

Jesus was never one for popular thinking. In fact, His teachings regularly challenged the commonly accepted thinking of His day. His response to James and John and their mom is a classic example of His refusal to go with the trend of popular thinking. Look at His words as recorded in Matthew 20:25-27. *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Jesus taught us that leadership is servanthood. He insisted that we lead by serving, and the higher we go in leadership the more we serve. His servant-leader thinking ran contrary to the popular thinking of His day...and it remains unpopular in our day!

Let's take a moment to contrast the world's leadership model with Jesus' ideal for servant leadership:

Secular Leadership Says:

Leverage power

Compete and win

Claim your rights

Demand people's allegiance

Expect rewards now

Depend on yourself

Servant Leadership Says:

Love people

Serve others

Give up your rights

Develop people's integrity

Expect eternal rewards

Depend on God

Jesus, the Savior of the world, proved Himself to be the greatest Servant of all time. When the disciples arranged an upper room for supper, they failed to book a servant to wash the men's dirty feet at the door. None of the disciples volunteered for the job. Instead, they argued over which of them was the greatest. But Jesus took a basin and a towel and began washing the feet of His followers. What does He teach us about servant leaders?

Christ-like Servant Leaders...

1. Are motivated by _____ to serve others.
2. Possess a _____ that allows them to serve others.
3. _____ servant ministry to others.
4. Accept servant ministry _____ others.
5. Teach servanthood by their _____.

Discussion: What are some examples of when Jesus acted contrary to popular thinking? Write them down and keep this list where you can be reminded of Christ-like servant leadership.

Biblical Case Study: Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27: 11-31)

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Israel, stands in stark contrast to Jesus who took a basin and towel and washed the feet of His disciples. Pilate took a towel and basin and tried to wash away his responsibility for bowing to the court of public opinion. Pilate went with the popular thinking of the moment as the mob begged for Barabbas to be released, but screamed for Jesus to be crucified. Why did Pilate go with popular thinking?

1. He lacked any personal _____.
2. He lacked _____.
3. He lacked _____.
4. He wanted to hold onto _____.
5. He thought it was the _____ way.
6. He thought it was in his best _____.
7. He wanted to be _____ more than he wanted to do what was right.
8. He thought he could escape _____ for his decision.

Discussion:

- What other Biblical characters rejected popular thinking and went on to do great exploits for God?
- What is one decision you have struggled with or are currently struggling with that is going against popular thinking? What do you think God wants you to do in this situation?

Encourage the Participation of _____ Thinking

Good leaders understand the power of shared thinking. They agree with leadership authority Ken Blanchard who said, “*None of us is as smart as all of us.*” They know that when they value the thoughts and ideas of others, they receive compound thinking and accomplish more than they ever could have on their own.

Observations about shared thinking:

1. Shared thinking is _____ than solo thinking.
2. Shared thinking is more _____ than solo thinking.
3. Shared thinking brings more _____ than solo thinking.
4. Shared thinking is more _____ than solo thinking.
5. Shared thinking produces greater _____ than solo thinking.
6. Shared thinking is the only way to have _____ thinking.

Steps to Help You Participate in Shared Thinking:

1. Value the _____ of others.
2. Move from competition to _____.
3. Learn to be a good _____.
4. Meet regularly with people who have good _____.

Discussion:

- How well do you practice shared thinking?
- When you last faced a big problem or challenge, did you take time to listen to the ideas of others? Why or why not?

Biblical Case Study: Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

The book of Acts describes Apollos as a very educated man and a gifted teacher. What is most impressive about Apollos is his willingness to learn from others. Here are several observations about this man who valued shared thinking.

1. He did not assume that he knew _____.
2. He _____ the ideas and opinions of others.
3. He was willing to _____.
4. He was a _____ leader.
5. He was eager to _____.

6. He was not content with the _____.

7. He wanted to become more _____ in his ministry.

8. He listened to people with better _____.

Discussion: What is your response to the following statement? “The most important thing you will ever learn is what you learn after you know it all.” How will you keep learning?

Assessment and Application

Assessment:

Do your co-workers know that you value their ideas and are eager to hear them?

Application:

What is one major challenge or problem you are facing? List 2-3 specific steps you will take to practice shared thinking in solving this problem.