

2. Understanding Principles, Patterns and Practices

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We occasionally hear the term “Principled Leadership”. A person who practices “principled leadership” bases their leadership patterns & practices entirely on upright principles, rather than flipping around & acting randomly according to circumstances or their personal preferences.

A man of principles is quite predictable in his patterns and practices – you can trust him, and safely expect him to do what’s right in every situation. After all, he is a man of principles!

Not so with a man of preferences. A man of preferences is unpredictable in his actions – he will flip around and act randomly according to what’s best for him in the moment.

Definitions of Terms:

1. Principle – from Latin “*principium*”, meaning “beginning”
2. Pattern – a repetitive way of speaking or acting
3. Practice – to carry out a certain action, doing things, etc.

All of our patterns and practices should be based on fundamental principles.

Quote by Edwin Louis Cole

“You become successful and prosper when you base your life on principles and find the patterns that work for you. The more you build your life on principle, the higher your highs, the straighter your path, and the greater your life.”

- Ed Cole was a discipler of men (a discipler = a coach or a trainer)
- A good principle to consider is:
 - Men should be disciplined by their pastor
 - If men are being disciplined themselves, they are in a better position to disciple their own wife and their children

Psalm 37:23 (NKJV) *The steps of a **good man** are ordered by the Lord, and **He delights in his way**.*

- Way – a manner or course of life (patterns based on principles)

Proverbs 12:2 (NKJV) *A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of wicked intentions He will condemn.*

1. What makes a good man?

- A good man is a man who only speaks truth & keeps his word
- A man is only as good as his word
- If his word is good, He is good
- If his word is no good, he is no good

Psalm 15:1-2,4 (NLT) *Who may worship in your sanctuary, Lord? Who may enter your presence on your holy hill? 2 Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right, **speaking the truth from sincere hearts.** 4 Those who despise flagrant sinners, and honor the faithful followers of the Lord, and **keep their promises even when it hurts.***

(KJV) Vs. 4... *he who swears to his own hurt and does not change ...*

- A man of principles will stick to his word even if it hurts him
- A man of preferences will weave in and out of his commitments as it suits him best

2. Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'

Jesus teaches principles, patterns and practices:

Matthew 5:33–37 (NKJV) *Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' 34 But I say to you, **do not swear at all:** neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But **let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.'** For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*

- Jesus taught: Don't be flippant with your words and your commitments
- Say what you mean, and don't underscore your word with "I promise"
- (of course, there are occasions such as a wedding when the couple exchange vows)

3. Jesus contrasts between a good man and an evil man

Matthew 12:35 (NKJV) *A **good man** out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and **an evil man** out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.*

- A good man has good treasure (deposit) in his heart, and he brings forth good things
- An evil man has evil treasure (deposit) in his heart, and he brings forth evil things
- It all starts in our heart!
- (Vs. 34 ... *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*)

Proverbs 12:2 (NKJV) *A **good man** obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of **wicked intentions** He will condemn.*

- A man of wicked intentions is a wicked man
- His wicked intentions make him a wicked man
- A good man has good intentions
- His good intentions, followed by good actions, make him a good man
- It is sometimes assumed that all the good men are inside the church, and all the wicked man are outside the church
- I have met many good men outside the church
- I have also met some very wicked men inside the church

4. Exposing the thoughts & intents (intentions) of our heart

Hebrews 4:12–13 (NKJV) *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and **is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

- One day we must all give an account of our life to God
- God's Word is a living Word that is full of God's power
- It has the ability to pierce to the very core of our being (our heart)
- It shines a light on the thoughts and intentions of our heart

- The Word of God judges all wrong thoughts and intentions in our heart, and the Holy Spirit brings these to our attention
- It is much better to repent of wrong thoughts & intentions in our heart before they turn into wrong words and wrong actions

Good questions to ask ourselves, or prayers to pray:

- Lord, what is my motivation here concerning this area
- Are my motives pure, or have I slipped into:
 - attention seeking or looking for the approval of men, etc.
- Am I operating out of God's love in me, or has pride become my driving force

Psalm 51:10 (ESV) *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

- A person receives a clean and pure heart at the point of their salvation
- But to keep our heart clean is an ongoing challenge, because of:
 - Wrong attitudes
 - Offenses
 - Judging others
 - Etc. etc.

2 Timothy 2:21–22 (AMP) *So whoever cleanses himself [from what is ignoble and unclean, who separates himself from contact with **contaminating and corrupting influences**] will [then himself] be a vessel set apart and useful for honorable and noble purposes, consecrated and profitable to the Master, fit and ready for any good work. 22 Shun youthful lusts and flee from them, and aim at and pursue righteousness (all that is virtuous and good, right living, conformity to the will of God in thought, word, and deed); [and aim at and pursue] faith, love, [and] peace (harmony and concord with others) in fellowship with all [Christians], **who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.***

God is looking for people with a clean and pure heart, who have separated themselves from the world, and are ready to be used by Him in these last days.