

DO AS I SAY, AS I DO AS I SAY

By Robert J. Tamasy

Did you ever work for someone that had the disconcerting tendency of instructing you to do something one way, and then proceeding to act in a manner contrary to what you were told? I remember an oft-repeated saying, "Do as I say, not as I do." This applied to work practices, personal habits, even values. The problem is, when people say one thing and then do the opposite, something gets lost in translation. Perhaps it might be better to be able to tell others, "Do as I say, as I do as I say."

In their book, *Leadership Lessons of Jesus*, Bob Briner and Ray Pritchard state, "Leaders are always teachers...you must teach with authority. You must be prepared. You must know what you are talking about." But then they add, "A leader's words, as vitally important as they are, will only go so far and impact so many unless they truly represent the reality of his or her life.... Effective, enduring leadership calls for both precept and example."

The intersection of teaching and action also was the subject of a poem by English-born poet Edgar Guest. Here's a portion of "I'd Rather See a Sermon:"

*I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day:
I'd rather one would walk with me than merely tell the way.
The eye's a better pupil, and more willing than the ear,
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear....
And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true,
But I'd rather get my lesson by observing what you do.
For I may misunderstand you in the high advice you give,
But there is no misunderstanding how you act and how you live....
And all travelers can witness that the best of guides today,
Is not the one that tells them, but the one that shows the way.*

Aligning belief and action is a recurring theme in the Bible, which some regard as the greatest book ever compiled for the business and professional world. Here are some passages about this:

Living out what we believe. Expressing high-minded principles and values without practicing them ourselves is hypocritical. "*What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?... Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead*" (James 2:14-18).

Applying the principles. We not only teach and demonstrate, but also expect those who follow us as leaders to put what they learn into use themselves. "*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice*" (Philippians 4:9).

Passing on truths of value. We should not only back up what we say by our actions, but also pass them along for others to apply in their lives. "*And the things you have heard me say*

in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever worked with someone who seemed to embody the attitude, “Do as I say and not as I do”? If so, what was that experience like for you?
2. How has it affected you when you have worked for, or with, a person that truly lived out the principles and values they advocated? Did seeing that motivate you in a positive way? Why or why not?
3. What do the excerpts from the poem by Edgar Guest say to you?
4. Which of the principles communicated by the passages from the Bible, if any of them, seem most meaningful for you? Explain your answer.

If you would like to look at or discuss other portions from the Bible that relate to this topic, consider the following brief sampling of passages:

Proverbs 18:24, 20:14, 20:25, 25:13,19, 28:2; Matthew 5:17-20, 33-37; James 4:17, 5:12