

DBU leadership conference challenged to lead like Jesus

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(DALLAS)—To lead like Jesus, we must look like Jesus—see and perceive people and situations the way Jesus sees them; smell like sheep—be close enough to the people we work with to know their needs; and serve like the Savior—submitting to the Holy Spirit and serving until it hurts, Brent Thomason, dean of the Dallas Baptist University Graduate School of Ministry, told attendees of DBU’s Nexus Ministry Leadership Conference Feb. 26.

There is a “dearth of godly leadership in church today,” Thomason said. From scandals to sexual abuse cases to narcissistic pastors, “the church is simply hurting from bad leadership and hungry for godly leadership.”

Leading with Jesus’ heart

Starting from the unexpected point of benediction, “May you always be covered by the dust of your rabbi,” David Coffey, past president of Baptist World Alliance and conference keynote speaker, said, taking his cue from Luke 4:14-30.

Ancient rabbis were followed through dirt streets. Their followers, eager to hear what the rabbis had to say, kept so close the dust stirred up by the rabbi’s sandals covered their clothes, Coffey said.

Noting Jesus is our rabbi, Coffey’s prayer was that “the dust of his teachings would fall on” and cover conference attendees.

Coffey called on the church to face the world, because God had good news

in Jesus for all the “hopeless cases” during his ministry and to all the hopeless cases still around today.

“Jesus is the cure for spiritual blindness. In a world of conspiracy theories, Jesus said, ‘I am the way,’” Coffey said.

Referring to Jesus’ quote of Isaiah 61, Coffey said the congregation listening to Jesus would have loved a verse on vengeance Jesus chose to leave out.

Instead of vengeance for Zion, Jesus spoke of Elijah saving one Gentile woman and Elisha cleansing one Gentile leper, making the crowd so angry they sought to throw Jesus off a cliff.

“Do you really share God’s heart?” Coffey asked.

Coffey said the church should display godly courage. “If you can find a place where Jesus played it safe in Scripture,” let me know, he said.

“If God asks you to take courage, don’t worry about the consequences. The greatest advances in the church are always carried out by a few,” Coffey said.

Luke’s story of Jesus’ reception in Nazareth doesn’t end when he’s chased out of town, but rather “at the contrast of his reception in Capernaum and what happens when he got to where people did receive him,” Coffey said.

In his second keynote, Coffey considered the story of Lazarus’ death in John 11.

When Jesus got to Bethany, he did not run past Mary and Martha but gave each time, Coffey noted. Pastors should follow Jesus’ lead, and give God time, not running into a crisis too quickly, he added.

Models of leadership



Blake Killingsworth, dean of DBU's Gary Cook School of Leadership, moderates panel discussion of Baptist leaders (Calli Keener photo)

A moderated panel discussion followed the keynote.

Panel members included: Adam Wright, DBU president; Randall Everett, past executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and 21Wilberforce founding president; Raquel Contreras, director of Editorial Mundo Hispano (Baptist Spanish Publishing House) and past president of Baptist Union of Churches in Chile; Oscar Epps, founding pastor of Community Missionary Baptist Church in DeSoto and BGCT past president; and Gary Cook, DBU chancellor.

"If we don't trust God in all the little things and big things, then we are just a company, [versus a ministry]," Contreras said.

DBU faculty and staff and other denominational leaders led breakout session during the conference. These sessions included crisis leadership, leading diverse generations, leadership and mentoring, leading change, and leading in transitional times.

DBU will host a Christian Leadership Summit, April 18-19, geared toward corporate leadership as well as ministry.