

Defining Christian Leadership

Brainstorming:

What is Leadership?

What makes you say about someone that he/she is a leader?

Where is the best place to define leadership?

Where is the best place to define **Christian** leadership?

Why do we talk about Christian Leadership? Is it different from the conventional leadership?

Why leadership sessions for Christians while their role in the Church life **is limited**?

How would you describe a leadership face in the Bible?

Name some prominent faces of people you consider leaders in both testaments of the Bible.

Abraham –

Moses –

John the Baptist –

Peter –

Paul –

etc.

What common characteristics do they have?

Jesus Leader

- Every time we think about Leadership, the exemplary conduct of Jesus Christ comes to the forefront. The ways He conducted himself, He walked among men, He cured people, He poured compassion on sinners, He interacted with others, He influenced others and made them follow Him regardless of the price they had to pay, etc. . .
- Egalitarianism has attempted to deny leadership by making everyone his or her own leader. But the reality of leadership remains. **The simple fact is that the leader is the one who influence others to follow him/her.** Some might point out that leaders can never be absolutely sure if they are being followed or chased. But the real leaders do not spend a lot of time trying to decide which is true, they are looking ahead. Leadership is courage in action. To say, "courage in leadership," is to say courage twice. **Leadership is not the holding of position or office, but the pursuit of purpose.** It is a battle to win hearts and minds for a cause. Leadership starts in the heart and targets the hearts before the minds.
- Leaders are *examples* of achievement, not mere *advocates* of achievement. They are risk takers and road makers. Such were the great figures of the Old and New Testament. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, etc. are all figures of accomplished and achieving leaders.
- Christian leadership must have the presence of God as its point of reference and must follow him into dangerous situations, in order to achieve his ultimate goal for the church. **The courage to lead, and to continue to lead, God's people is born of a profound reliance on Christ in us and a mind that is set on his Spirit.**
- **Jesus himself personified leadership.** He directed thinking, guided people, aimed them toward truth, and showed the way to love, forgiveness, and eternal life. The best place to start in defining leadership is with Jesus. Let's observe Him in some scenes of His life on earth:
 - ✓ Preparation for the mission: the desert experience. . .
 - ✓ Building a Team: calling of Apostles
 - ✓ Creating an organization: distributing roles and positions
 - ✓ Having a clear vision: He knew where He was heading.

There are at least two different approaches to Christian leadership. The most common is the idea of leading by dictate and power. The other, **the example of Christ, is to lead by serving.** One emphasizes measurable results. The other emphasizes people. One says "only the strong survive" the other says, "the strong have the most to give, yet all have to survive." One spotlights personal rights, the other emphasizes personal responsibility. One resorts to intimidation and power plays, the other works through love. Tell me, which approach will you adopt for your life?

This is not just about leadership . . . it' about life. Every day we are asked to make decisions. Every day we must decide how to handle the various situations that come our way. In each decision we choose one of these two approaches. Each of us decides a dozen or more times a day to do it God's way . . . or the world's.

Personal Qualities of a Christian Leader

In his fable, “The Frogs and Their King,” Aesop (Before Christ) tells how the frogs in the pond wanted a leader. Again and again they came to Jupiter with their request till finally in reply he tossed a log into that pond. For a while the frogs were happy with their new leader but gradually they discovered they could jump on him, run all over him and receive no resistance or response from him. Besides, that log didn’t give any direction, but just floated back and forth on the pond.

Exasperated at this lack of leadership, the frogs went back to Jupiter with the request for something stronger. This time Jupiter, weary of their complaints, gave them a stork (a type of wading bird with long beak, neck and legs). That stork stood tall above the frogs and looked like a leader. For a time the frogs were happy as the stork strutted around the pond, making much noise and attracting much attention. But when this leader began to hassle and even devour his subordinates, the frogs realized they had another problem.

Does either one of these extremes describe Christian leadership? Is this what the church should look for in its leaders, logs who let people do whatever they want or storks who tell people everything they must do?

Or are there other qualities desired in Christian leaders, qualities which lead to more desirable styles of Christian leadership?

From a brief study of what Scripture says about “Personal Qualities of a Christian Leader”, hopefully we’ll also glean something about what a leader is and what leadership entails.

1. *A leader follows THE Leader.*

In the early days of the New Testament Church, when help was needed in leading God’s people, we find: “Brothers, choose seven men from among you **who are known to be full of the Spirit**,” the Twelve advised the church (Acts 6:3).

Christian leaders are to be *consecrated* leaders, **leaders who follow the Leader**. What a basic quality this is for anyone who would lead in the Church. **Leadership begins with being and then leads to doing**. Only those who follow the Leader can really serve Him. For they will serve out of love for Him, even as they recognize that their best service is but a faint echo to His unfailing love (2 Corinthians 5:14). They also will serve with the goal of His glory in mind and with the question constantly before them, “Will what I am doing praise Him?”

2. *A leader serves like THE Leader.*

If we were to pick one word in describing Jesus’ leadership, might it not be the word **“servant”**? The Old Testament evangelist described Christ’s servant style 700 years before its full disclosure on Calvary (Isaiah 53). The Servant Himself, summarized, “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). And His great apostle urged, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:5-7).

What does this quality of “servanthood” say about the stealthy virus of pride which can infect both leaders and followers? About the temptation for those who lead and are looked up to by others to savor their “homage”? About those who desire but don’t have an office, consequently criticizing those who do? About a leader’s attitude toward or talk about his accomplishments?

What does this quality of “servanthood” say about the exercise of authority by those in office? About

infusing into the church methods of the business world - where power is related to position and the ultimate power is in the hands of the C.E.O.? About what a legitimized use of power is for a leader? About the temptation for leaders in a church body where doctrine is set to become set also in making decisions in other areas?

What does this quality of “servanthood” say about **letting the office seek the man**? About the types of students we recruit and the types of training we give them? About the role model function of professors, bishops, priests, and servants in congregations, parishes, dioceses, and institutions of the Church? About the ways we screen in our congregations, circuits, conferences, districts for maturity?

A Christian leader, **like the Leader**, has power, but is not a power wielder. He leads through humble service, not heavy-handed control. The Leader once said it and a Christian leader still hears it, “The greatest among you shall be like the youngest; and the one who rules like the one who serves” (Luke 22:26).

3. *A leader sets a good example like THE Leader.*

Though we’ve already touched on this quality in the previous parts, we want to amplify. One of the words used in Scripture for the serving gift of leadership is *proi/sthmi* (Romans 12:8). The verb means to stand in front of, not miles ahead, but in sight so that you can be followed and copied. “Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity,” Paul urged his student and fellow servant, Timothy (1 Timothy 4:12). “In everything set them an example by doing good,” the great mission counselor advised Missionary Titus (Titus 2:7). And in 1 Corinthians 11:1 he brought it into focus when he told Christians in the problem-plagued congregation in Corinth, “Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.” The example of THE Leader shows a Christian leader much. His death on the cross was the key, of course. But there was also His concern for people, commitment to the cause, and His spotless character.

Christ made people follow Him by showing them what He was doing for them. He won their following with His example instead of demanding it from them. Leadership experts like Peter Drucker in the secular world also stress the power of example. In his book, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization* he wrote, “Leadership is not characterized by stars on your shoulder; an executive leads by example” (p. 193)

4. *A leader shares the vision of THE Leader.*

Jesus had a clear vision. He knew what His mission was and put His all into it. In the temple as a twelve-year-old He told His parents, “Didn’t you know I had to be in My Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49) By the well in Samaria the first year of His ministry He told His disciples, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work” (John 4:34). On the cross in that mid-day darkness He told the world, “It is finished” (John 19:30). The Leader knew His mission and went about it.

The Good Shepherd spoke of “other sheep” whom He must bring (John 10:16). **The caring Shepherd** saw the crowds “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” and “had compassion on them” (Matthew 9:36). **Did the Leader go about His mission alone?** Already that Easter Eve the risen Shepherd told His followers, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). On that mountain top in Galilee He commanded them, “Go make disciples of all nations baptizing them teaching them” (Matthew 28:19). He had the vision and carried out His mission of salvation. **He recruited His team** for this mission of outreach and nurture and promised to go with them. Talk about vision!

Peter Drucker, from whose book we quoted earlier, also writes, “We hear a great deal these days about leadership and it’s high time we did. **But, actually, mission comes first.** Non-profit institutions exist for the sake of their mission. They exist to make a difference in society and in the life of the individual.

They exist for the sake of their mission, and this must never be forgotten. The first task of the leader is to make sure **that everybody sees the mission, hears it, and lives it**. If you lose sight of your mission, you begin to stumble and it shows very, very fast” (p. 45).

An effective leader **grasps Christ’s vision**, shares His mission and helps others to do the same. His concern is to help them become co-workers and fellow-soldiers, not bleacher, sitters and sideline-spectators.

What does this quality of “sharing the vision” say about narrow-mindedness in the church? About special interest groups in the church, how they help and how they can hurt? About getting grass roots to become more aware of the church’s mission and having input into it? About enlisting more of our people in the work on the local and universal level?

The church’s mission is clear. Needed always are Christian leaders who can fill others with a fuller vision of the mission and a quickening enthusiasm for Christ, His church and His work.

5. A leader feels for people like THE Leader.

What an example the Leader gives us of concern for people. Cloistered with Nicodemus by night or crowded by 5,000 by day; blessing the babies or baring His cheek for a traitor’s kiss, summoning Zacchaeus down from his sycamore tree or seeking in vain to reach the Pharisees; we sense our Savior’s feel for people. Paul caught that feeling and tried to imitate it. He told the Philippians, “God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus” (1:8). Concerned about people’s well-being, listening to their needs, sensitive to their hurts, sharing their sorrows; compassionate, congenial, companionable, Paul cared for people. He even told the Thessalonians, “We were gentle among you like a mother caring for her little children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7). The word “mother” indicates a nursing mother, not a hired baby sitter.

What a picture this is of feeling for people.

We might be tempted to think of leadership as handling people. **Scripture describes it as nurturing them.**

We can slip into viewing the task of leadership as managing and maintaining an institution. **Scripture reminds us it’s gently nurturing each member of the group.**

What does this quality of “feeling for people” say about the leader being a professional with office hours or a shepherd with an open door? About using people as a means to an end in the church or helping people grow?

God give us leaders who are among their people, not up on some plateau, who give bountifully and unselfishly of themselves, who when sins alarm, lead us to Calvary; who when lives falter, strengthen us through Word and Sacrament, who when sights fall, raise them again to the coming glory. God give us leaders who share THE Leader’s feel for people.

6. A leader trusts people like THE Leader.

Surely it took trust on the Master’s part to put His mission into the hands of those first disciples. Jesus made no other plans, prepared no back-up proposal. He trusted His gospel to work in the disciples’ hearts and them, then, to work with His gospel in the world. And it worked! **He even trusts us and each of us knows how untrustworthy we can be.**

In the Book of Acts a somewhat laid-back character, Barnabas, gives us a model of the Leader’s trust in people. Barnabas had faith in his fellow believers. When the rest were skeptical of Saul, the new convert, Barnabas sponsored him (Acts 9:26-28). When his nephew, John Mark, was unreliable on that first missionary journey, Barnabas was willing to give him a second chance though that action split Paul and him

(Acts 15:36-40); later though, it was Mark for whom Paul asked from that cell in Rome (2 Timothy 4:11). Here was a leader who shows us something about trusting people like the Leader.

What does this say about trusting those who lead and those who are led?

God does His work through people. People lead and people follow. As His people we need to trust each other even as we reexamine our sights and rededicate our efforts.

7. A leader prays like THE Leader.

What a Man of prayer the Savior was. Frequently during His ministry He spent hours alone in prayer (Mark 1:35, 6:46; Luke 5:16, 6:12). In His prayers He prayed for others. At Lazarus' grave He prayed that the Father hear Him for the benefit of the people (John 11:42). In the upper room He prayed that His Father care for His followers, keep them faithful, and consecrate them for service (John 17). On the cross He prayed that His Father forgive those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). Our Savior also prayed for Himself: in Gethsemane He asked for strength to do His Father's will (Matthew 26:36-46). On Calvary He pillowed His soul in His Father's hands (Luke 23:46). **What an example the Leader gives us of prayer.**

Is it any wonder that Paul was such a great missionary? He prayed like the Leader. He called down God's blessings on people and congregations (1 Thessalonians 3:9-10). He asked them to pray for him and the spread of the gospel (2 Thessalonians 3:1). He lived in daily contact with God, expected and received answers from Him. Ephesians 1:15-20 and Colossians 1:9-14 show how fervently Paul prayed for the spiritual welfare of those he served. Knowing that nothing could be done without God, Paul urged, "Pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Ever wonder how much more could be accomplished if leaders used prayer more like the Leader? What about our prayer life? **Where's our mountain top?** How wide is the scope of our requests? How often do we pray for the spread of the gospel? Let it not be said of those who lead, "You do not have because you do not ask God" (James 4:4).

"What's a leader? What's leadership?" we asked at the beginning of this presentation. Hopefully our brief glance at the personal qualities of a spiritual leader has given us some answers. **Though differing in personality and varying in gifts, Christian leaders have this in common.** They follow the Leader and oversee His work in such a way that by **their example and influence they inspire others to follow Him, too.**

BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

- How would you describe being the "salt of the earth," and "light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14)?
- How would you describe the concept of "servant leadership" (Matthew 20:25-28)?
- Read 1 Thessalonians chapters one and two, and list all the elements of Christian leadership that you can. Focus on tasks, character, and relationships.
- Read Matthew 28:18-20, and identify all the leadership factors that you can.
- Read John 15:16-27, and explain in your own words the features of Christian leadership and work.
- Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and describe the qualities and tasks of Christian leadership.
- Explain in your own words how Peter describes the nature and exercise of Christian leadership and work (1 Peter 5:1-4).
- List the features of Christian leadership in the following verses: Acts 13:2; 15:36; 6:1-7.
- What stand out to you the most in this study on the nature of Christian leadership?
- What areas of Christian leadership can you improve on in your own life?

- What areas of Christian leadership would you like to research further?

Principles of Effective Christian Leadership

(Text interpretation)

In Colossians 1:24–29, the Apostle Paul reveals his principles of effective Christian Leadership. They are principles that govern his life. But these are principles not just for the Pastor, teacher or Board Member . . . they are principles valuable **to every Christian because they point us to true discipleship**. These are not the same principles you will find in contemporary books on management. These are uniquely Christian principles.

1. Effective Christian Leaders Are Willing to Pay the Price

Paul begins "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of the Church." (1:24). Paul rejoices in what "was suffered for you." What is he referring to here? Look at the preceding verses and you realize that Paul is referring to the sacrifice of Christ for our sin. Paul is grateful for Christ's work in their life.

Where do we stand vis-à-vis what Paul is saying? Are we willing to pay the price from our time, health, potential, means, etc. for the sake of the Lord's kingdom? Are we willing to bear the responsibility bestowed upon by the Church to carry out specific tasks for the benefit of all?

2. Effective Christian Leaders Have a Servant Mentality

Paul states "I have become its (the church's) servant by the commission God gave me..." Paul viewed himself not as a professional or an executive, but a servant.

The Servant Leadership is a principle that emerged directly from what Jesus himself had practiced while on earth... the washing of the feet remains the best example for this concept. Running a quick check on our own performance as Christians, we can't but ask ourselves: are we truly serving the Divine Word? Are we serving one another? Have we been able to serve horizontally and avoid being condescending in our service?

3. Effective Christian Leaders See the Big Picture

Paul writes, "We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone- with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ." Paul sees the big picture. He is not seeking to build organizations . . . he is seeking to develop PEOPLE. His goal is to present everyone perfect in Christ.

Jesus did not seek to build an organization, he sought to build the Kingdom of God through men and women He chose to continue from He left. He laid the first foundation when He chose Peter to be head... This was the beginning of the Church as organization. Come to think of it now, the Catholic Church is one of the largest organizations, if not the largest, in the world according to lay terminology; but how do we

rate its performance? Who's responsible of its successes and/or failures? Where does the Church authority stand in that respect? And what about the faithful, do they have a say in the Church's up building?

4. **Effective Christian Leaders Know the Source of Their Strength**

Paul concludes this section with these words, "To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." The word "struggling" in Greek is the word agonizomai, from which we get our word agonize, and conveys the idea of an athlete straining to win the race.

We are invited to conduct ourselves on this path with a renewed energy and an unbreakable stamina, so we could continue the race till reaching the ultimate goal of our commitment as Christians called to carry out Jesus mission in this world.