

Four Key Characteristics of Godly Leadership

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of leadership is a concern in the church today. Many study the principles of leadership with a view of becoming better leaders. Dr. Lee Robertson said, “Everything rises or falls on leadership.” While understanding this from the human point of view, we are still mindful that only God can give the increase. Yet the increase seems to come through godly leaders for “[Paul] planted, Apollos watered.” (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Just what is a leader? There are many definitions. However, all of them have at least one characteristic in common. A true leader is able to influence and relate to other people. He is able to persuade others to follow.

A godly leader shares his leadership with his people, through shared decision-making, shared problem-solving, and shared goal-setting. He does not abuse his power nor abdicate his power. Since power is always located in God and communicated through His Word, leadership is about properly using power.

Much can be said about leadership and what makes a leader. We will only consider a few main characteristics.

1A. Leaders Are Servants

Success in the ministry is first and foremost determined by one’s heart and motivation for the ministry. Jesus succinctly states this in Mark 10:42-44.

“Ye know that they who are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you; but whosoever would be great among you shall be your minister, and whosoever of you would be the chiefest shall be servant of all”

Jesus declares that success originates with possessing the heart of a servant! How does one achieve the heart of a servant? There are three main considerations.

1B. Leaders Understand the Model

The Old Testament identifies model servants as those who are properly related to God with the title “servant.” There are many examples.

- *“Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”* (Deut. 9:27).
- *“As the Lord commanded Moses, his servant”* (Joshua 11:15).
- *“Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth”* (1 Sam. 3:10).
- *“Go and tell my servant David”* (2 Sam. 7:5)
- *“Thou art my servant, O Israel”* (Isa. 49:3)
- *“The Lord spake by his servants the prophets”* (2 Kings 21:10)

The New Testament continues the theme:

- *“Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ”* (2 Peter 1:1)
- *“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”* (James 1:1)
- *“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ”* (Jude 1:1)
- *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ”* (Romans 1:1)

Our greatest model is Jesus Christ. Matthew 20:28 says, "... *just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve*". The example of this is seen in Philippians 2:7. Christ "*made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.*" All that is known of greatness, of success, of first place in the kingdom is seen in Jesus Christ. It is seen in His serving rather than being served.

We can define a **servant-leader** as one who selflessly serves others by influencing, equipping, and empowering them to accomplish God's goals. "The leader should be like a servant." (Luke 22:26 NLT)

2B. Leaders Understand the Motive

If Jesus is the model for servanthood, what was his motive? The answer is found in Matthew 20:28, "*to give his life as a ransom for many.*" The motive is self-sacrifice.

Just as Jesus was the ransom for us, even so we are to give our lives for the flock of God. Peter speaks of this in 1 Peter 4:19-5:1.

"So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good. To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed."

Ministry, suffering, and glory are seen as companion principles. Leaders in the church are to continue to do good understanding the relationship between suffering and sacrifice, and the glory and reward of serving our Lord.

3B. Leaders Understand the Mandate

The mandate for servanthood is found in Philippians 2:5, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" The context is referring to the servanthood of Jesus (v.7). The assumption of servanthood is found in 2 Timothy 2:24-26 where it speaks of the "*servant of the Lord*" and his actions. Couple this with the words of Jesus in Mark 10:44, "*And whosoever of you would be the chiefest, shall be servant of all,*" we find that godly leaders will be servants!

2A. Leaders Are Spiritual

The character and effectiveness of any church is directly related to the quality of its leadership. That's why the Bible stresses the importance of qualified church leaders and gives specific standards for evaluating those who would serve in that position.

Paul focused on the character rather than the function of a leader. A man is qualified because of what he *is*, not because of what he *does*. The standards for leadership are high because whatever the leaders are, the people become. Hosea said, "*Like people, like priest*" (Hosea 4:9). Jesus said, "*Everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher*" (Luke 6:40, NASB). Biblical history demonstrates that people will seldom rise above the spiritual level of their leadership.

1B. The Leader's Prayer Life (1 Timothy 2:1-8)

Charles R. Sindoll in his book, *Hand Me Another Brick*, said, "God sets the pace in helping us understand that men and women are not moved by clever persuasion, psychological manipulation, or fleshly flattery. A leader is not one with the loudest voice, largest club, or keenest mind. He is a person devoted to prayer and genuinely dedicated to God."

Even before listing the qualifications of an elder in 1 Timothy 3, Paul exhorts "*that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands*" (v.8) "*for all men*" (v1). The priority of prayer is the first order for spiritual leadership as seen in the first eight verses of chapter 2.

2B. The Leader's Personal Life (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

Leadership begins by having the desire for it (3:1). However, the desire alone does not qualify one for leadership. Only God can call a person and make him fit for the ministry and those whom God calls will meet the qualifications.

The qualifications of the personal life of a leader are:

- A Leader is "Blameless" (v.2) - He is a man of unquestionable character.
- A Leader is "The Husband of One Wife" (v.2) - He is sexually pure.
- A Leader is "Temperate" (v.2) - He is not given to excess.
- A Leader is "Sober Minded" (v.2) - He is self disciplined.
- A Leader is "Of Good Behavior" (v.2) - He is well organized.
- A Leader is "Given to Hospitality" (v.2) - He is hospitable.
- A Leader is "Apt to Teach" (v.2) - His is skilled in teaching.
- A Leader is "Not Given to Wine" (v.3) - He is not a drinker.
- A Leader is "Not Violent" (v.3) - He is not a fighter.
- A Leader is "Patient" (v.3) - He easily pardons human failure.
- A Leader is "Not a Brawler" (v.3) - He is not quarrelsome.
- A Leader is "Not Covetous" (v.3) - He is free from the love of money.
- A Leader is "One That Ruleth Well" (v.4) - He maintains a godly family.
- A Leader is "Not a Novice" (v.6) - He is a mature Christian. He is more spiritually mature than those he leads.
- A Leader has "A Good Report of Them Who Are Outside" (v.7) - He is well respected by Non-Christians.

3A. Leaders Are Shepherds

There are no leaders without followers and there are no followers unless leaders establish relationships. This brings us to the shepherd - flock relationship. This is seen in Acts 20:28 where leaders are told "*take heed... to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers....*"

The shepherd leader is one who provides full and complete care for all of his sheep. Sheep are likely to wander and stray (Isaiah 53:6 - "*All we like sheep have gone astray*"), be helpless (Isaiah 53:7 - "*brought as a lamb to the slaughter*"), and are followers (John 10:3-5 - "*leadeth them out*").

One of the clearest passages of the shepherd - flock relationship is the Twenty-third Psalm. In it we find several characteristics of a shepherd leader.

1B. Leaders Develop Personal Relationships

- *“The Lord is my Shepherd.”* There is concern for each individual sheep. The Good Shepherd *“calls them by name”* (John 10:3), he *“knows them”* (John 10:27), and goes out to seek the *“one which is lost”* (Luke 15:4).

2B. Leaders Provide Rest

“he makes me to lie down.” He know our frame, how much we can handle and what is too much for us and treats us accordingly.

3B. Leaders Provide Refreshment

“green pastures... still waters” He gives the nourishment and resources needed for living.

4B. Leaders Work at Restoration

“he restores my soul” He rescues lives that are in peril and restores them to the place of safety.

5B. Leaders Provide Regulations

“he leads [not drives] me in the paths of righteousness.” He guides in a proper way giving instruction, training, and discipline (2 Tim. 3:16).

6B. Leaders Provide Reliability

“thou art with me.” He is always available.

7B. Leaders Provide Refuge

“thy rod and staff they comfort me.” His protection and care are a constant source of satisfaction.

4A. Leaders Are Stewards

A steward is one entrusted with the management of property, finances, or other affairs not his own — an administrator. Jesus spoke of *“that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household”* (Luke 12:42). A faithful and wise steward will exercise at least eight aspects of leadership.

1B. He Will Communicate Dreams

A leader gives vision or shares dreams to his followers. People follow a leader who directs them to a desirable objective.

2B. He Will Share Dividends

A leader gives rewards to his followers. People follow a leader who provides them rewards from their self-chosen goals.

3B. He Will Be Dependable

A leader is credible and gives confidence to his followers. People follow a leader when they have confidence in his plans.

4B. He Will Give Direction

A leader give clear direction to his followers. People follow a leader who effectively communicates his plan to reach the objective.

5B. He Will Make Disciples

A leader involves his followers in the dream. People follow a leader who gives them responsibility to help reach the objective.

6B. He Will Be Determined

A leader gives compelling reasons to follow him. People follow a leader who gives them compelling reasons to reach the objective.

7B. He Will Be Disclosing

A leader gives solutions to his follower's problems. People follow a leader who gives solutions to problems that hinder them from reaching the objective.

8B. He Will Be Decisive

A leader gives decisive answers to his followers. People follow a leader who gives answers to the decisions involving their objectives.

CONCLUSION

Just as Paul admonished the Ephesian elders to "*Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves...*" (Acts 20:28), the church today needs to examine its leaders. The future of the church depends on the quality of today's leaders.

Godly leaders are spiritual servants shepherding a flock as good stewards.