

The Heart and Relationships of a Leader

Andrea Buczynski

Global Leadership Development

When we begin to talk about leadership, there are many opinions about what it means.

- Dr. Howard Hendricks says, “A leader is someone who has followers.”
- John Maxwell says, “Leadership is influencing people.”
- Dr. Robert Clinton defines leadership as “influencing God’s people in God’s direction over a period of time.”
- Dr. Alice Matthews defines leadership as “helping a community face their problems, and then mobilizing and acquiring resources to help them solve their problems.”
- Warren Bennis says, “A true leader is the one who examines what practices are no longer moving the organization in the direction of its vision and mission, and who is willing to create a set of new practices to accomplish it.”

Most of us would agree that leadership is influencing others in a certain direction over time. It may involve position and title, but often does not. For us in ministry, we know that our influence, our leadership, our service is governed by what God values. He describes **what** we should pursue as well as **how** we should pursue it.

What is most fundamental about a spiritual leader then is the person’s **heart** – his/her **relationship with God**, and the fruit of it, in his/her **character**.

I. Relationship with God

Heart - the first characteristic of the heart of a leader is humility.

The Scripture says in **1 Samuel 16:7** that “the Lord doesn’t look at the things that man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

2 Chronicles 16:9 that “the eyes of the Lord search throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.”

Isaiah 66:2 “This is the one I esteem, one who is humble and contrite and who trembles at My word.”

The LORD is looking for those with hearts of **humility**, who are willing to do whatever He shows them to do. So, a person’s heart for God is the foundation for his or her leadership.

We see this in Romans 11:28 through Romans 12:8. The greatness and goodness of God is unsearchable. There is no one like Him, who is worthy of our worship, our love, and our service. So it follows as a natural response to who God is that we offer ourselves to Him as living sacrifices, being willing to be completely transformed as He renews our minds. When we are acknowledging all of who He is in our lives, we have the freedom to recognize that we are insufficient in and of ourselves. This humility involves the ability to see ourselves in right perspective before God and others. The verses that follow describe the work of the Body, how God has given gifts to different ones, and how we are to serve wholeheartedly in the way He

has created us. None of us is sufficient in and of ourselves. This category addresses my willingness as a leader to come under the Lordship of Christ.

John 1:14 Jesus was full of **grace** and **truth**. Am I growing in grace? Am I becoming more aware of how much God loves me? Am I able to extend that to others? Do people experience that I am ‘for them’? Am I growing in truth? Knowing truth, speaking truth, receiving truth... Dela Adadevoh, Vice President for AFRICAME, has said, “Truth is not just speaking truthfully; truth is a person- Jesus Christ. Am I becoming truth? Is there a consistency to my life? Does the inside match the outside? Does the outside match the inside?”

Walking in the power of the Spirit is a given, increasingly characterized by...

1. Experiencing the Lord as my Source of life, of strength.
 - a. Eph. 5:18 - Filled with the Spirit
 - b. Prov. 3:5, 6
 - c. “Most Christians make their mistake trying to find in themselves what can only be found in Christ.” Arthur Pink
2. Walking by faith, not by sight.
 - a. 2 Cor. 5:7 (I don’t know the outcome)
 - b. Mt. 14 - Peter stepping out of the boat trusting that God will work
3. Yielding control
 - a. Luke 22:41
 - b. Gal 2:20
 - c. 2 Cor. 5:14, 15
4. Godly sorrow – repentance
 - a. 2 Cor. 7
 - b. Is. 57:11
5. Walking in the light
 - a. 1 John 1: 5-9

II. Character and personal qualities

As we are walking with the Lord, as we are abiding in Christ, the fruit of our relationship with God shows up in our **character**.

- Am I becoming more like Him?
- Am I both loving and truthful?
- Am I demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in increasing measure? (2 Peter 1:5-8; Gal. 5:22-23) J. Oswald Sanders, author of Spiritual Leadership, at age 90, was regularly asking himself, “Sanders, are you more loving today than you were three months ago? More peaceful? More patient?”
- We can look at six fundamental building blocks of character:
 - ☐ **Love**- connect and empathize with others; give without looking for return. A loving person is able to relate to people emotionally and to give sacrificially. He or she is not in a relationship only to get. (1 Corinthians 13; Romans 12:9,13,15)
 - ☐ **Work** - produce fruit. There is a harvest from his efforts. He would be dissatisfied with nothing to show for his labor. (2 Thessalonians 3:6-13; Colossians 3:23-24; John 15:16; Romans 1:13)
 - ☐ **Relate to the truth**- look at the truth, speak the truth and hear the truth about herself and her work. She lives in reality and doesn’t need to sugarcoat her view of herself. She also doesn’t use the truth as a club over someone else. (Ephesians 4:15,25;

Hebrews 5:14; Matthew 7:1-4)

“Truth is so obscured nowadays and lies so well-established that unless we love the truth we shall never recognize it.”

– Pascal, *Pensees* 739

- ❑ **Deal with problems**- face and solve problems as they come up. This person understands sowing and reaping. Nehemiah and Moses are two of many leaders in Scripture who faced the problems they saw by coming to the Lord and then taking action (also see Proverbs).
- ❑ **Continue to grow**- take responsibility for his growth. He will make sure the ingredients for growth are in his life. A growing person also contributes to the growth of others and the movement. (2 Peter 1:3-11)
- ❑ **Worship** - adapt to God rather than insisting that God adapt to him. He recognizes there is Someone much greater than he who is in control, and he submits to His sovereign rule. (John 14:21; Romans 12:1-2; Deuteronomy 5; Matthew 22)

George MacDonald - “A man can never be more than his character makes him. Nothing valuable can come out of a man that is not first in him. Character must stand behind and back up everything - the sermon, the poem, the picture, the book. None of them is worth a straw without it.”

These realities in my heart and character flow over into other areas:

- **Passion** for what God wants me to do shows up as **determination**- willingness to do whatever is necessary
- **Intellectual flexibility**- the ability and willingness to see things from a different perspective requires humility. It means that I’m willing to admit what I don’t know, or that there may be another approach better than mine. It also means that I am able to make sense out of different kinds of information. It means I’m willing to learn from all sorts of people, not just experts.
- **Emotional stability**- the ability to bear up under distress, to be content in all different kinds of situations. One only has to look at the words of Jesus (in this world you will have trouble) or the apostle Paul’s life to see that bringing the gospel to those who haven’t heard will bring a lot of stresses. Serving people as a leader will put you in touch with a lot of problems, a lot of hurts. See Moses in Exodus 17. This is to be expected.

III. Biblical metaphors

The Bible uses three different word pictures to describe the heart of a leader. Each metaphor highlights an attitude of the heart:

- **servant/bond-slave**: our basic posture before the Lord and others. Jesus talks about this with the disciples. (Mk 9:33-37; 10:35-45; John 13:1-17; 2 Tim 2:24; Matt 20:20-28). In the Old Testament, to be called a servant of God was a tremendous commendation of the kind of relationship that the person had with God. Moses, Joshua, David, Samuel, Job and the prophets are some who were commended in this way. Paul identifies himself as a bondservant. And this is one of the historic decisions recorded by our founder, Dr. Bright, in surrendering his life and all his resources to be a slave of Jesus Christ.
- **shepherd**: the one entrusted with people, describes what my heart should be like toward them. (John 10, I Peter 5:1-4)
- **steward**: the one who is entrusted with a task of investing the Master’s resources in a

way that creates more. (1 Cor. 4:2, Matt 25- the parable of the talents; Luke 16:10)
All three require this heart of humility and obedience before the Lord. He will test us in these areas before He entrusts us with more.

IV. Relationships with Others

Because a leader's work is largely influencing others, a person's ability to relate to and to work **with others** is very important. Our development in character and emotional well-being defines the limits/scope of our ability to relate to others well over time. Leaders **must** have the ability to flex between the worlds of peers, supervisors and subordinates with a minimum of personal baggage due to identity and authority-related issues.

Interpersonal skills are dependent on the health of our character and emotional well-being. Creating partnerships with people requires us to seek mutually beneficial solutions. In other words, both of us win. If a leader's need to compete or win is out of control, people working with him or her will always feel as though they lost. **Who we are** in our being determines how we'll relate to others over time and how effective we'll be in getting work done.

"Often, leaders wrongly believe that they must compete with the people close to them instead of working with them. Great leaders have a different mindset. In Profiles in Courage, President John F. Kennedy wrote, 'The best way to go along is to get along with others.' This kind of positive interaction can happen only if the leader has an attitude of interdependency with others and is committed to win-win relationships."

- Maxwell, Developing the Leader within You, p.6

Here are some things to consider important to the kind of relationships that a leader must maintain:

- Am I trustworthy? Keep confidences? Say yes when I mean yes?
- Am I respectful?
- Can others count on me?
- Am I easy to work with?
- Can I represent the needs of the ministry I'm in, while also hearing the needs of others?
- Am I able to communicate my thoughts well, so that others understand what I'm asking or reporting?
- Am I able to participate in discussions- neither dominating nor withdrawing from the discussion?
- What kind of environment do I create for those who work with me? Is it safe—can people approach me with problems, struggles or failures?
- Can I maintain relationship with others in the midst of their failures?

Range of Relationships

We have regular contact with many groups and types of people.

. Creating Partnership

"Leaders of the past often erected walls. Now they must destroy those walls and replace

them with bridges.” Leader of the Future, p. 91

Suffice it to say the leader must relate in such a way as to create partnership, looking for ways to work with others to fulfill the vision. He or she must:

- ☐ Involve others appropriately
- ☐ Treat others with respect
- ☐ Allow others to make decisions when appropriate
- ☐ Create an atmosphere of trust
- ☐ Get others to own the work
- ☐ Relate well with peers, supervisors and those whom they supervise

Others will see you as credible as you demonstrate your integrity over time.

“Partnership is the cooperative effort to accomplish a task or goal where responsibility is in the hands of more than one person or group. It is different from networking (sharing information), different from individual effort, and different from a merger. It is a proactive approach seeking common goals, complementary resources and compatible spirit. Relating to your partners requires three things: love –1 Cor. 13:4-8; unselfishness – Phil. 2:1-9; and walking with God with them - John 17:20-23 and 1 John 1:39.”
- Steve Douglass to the US Campus Regional Directors, April 1998

A leader is someone to whom God has entrusted His agenda in a certain area—it may come in the form of a vision for something yet to be created, a passion, or a burden for something that isn’t working well. A leader is in fact a steward.