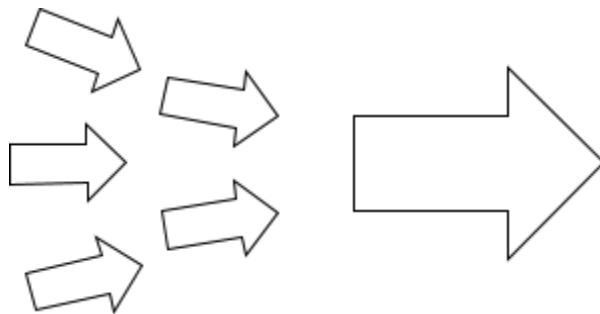


Spiritual Leadership



The expression “Everything rises and falls on leadership” is commonly and loudly proclaimed today, and rightly so. Leadership, especially within the context of the church, is essential. A great crisis in leadership within some segments of the church is painfully evident today. Yet few within the body of the church have a good understanding of what the Bible has to say about spiritual leadership. This course is designed to help church members understand biblical leadership and to encourage them to pursue leadership positions within the church when appropriate.

Contents:

Lesson 1: Definitions of Leadership

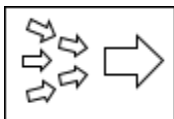
Lesson 2: Qualifications for Leadership

Lesson 3: Essential Qualities for All Leaders

Lesson 4: Servant Leadership

Lesson 5: Exercising Spiritual Leadership

Lesson 6: Pitfalls and Challenges of Leadership



Lesson 1: Definitions of Leadership

The definition of terms is always a good place to begin a study of a subject. And just like with other subjects, when it comes to defining leadership, there is no lack of available definitions.

I. What is leadership?

A. Published definitions:

Lord Montgomery: Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose, and the character which inspires confidence.

John R. Mott: A leader is a man who knows the road, who can keep ahead, and who can pull others after him.

Harry Truman: A leader is a person who has the ability to get others to do what they don't want to do, and to like it.

Howard Hendricks: A leader is a person with a magnet in his heart and a compass in his head.

Peter Drucker: A leader is someone who has followers.

John C. Maxwell: Leadership is influence - nothing more, nothing less.

Warren Bennis: Leadership is a function of knowing yourself, having a vision that is well communicated, building trust among colleagues, and taking effective action to realize your own leadership potential.

Leith Anderson: Leadership is figuring out what needs to be done and then doing it.

J. Oswald Sanders: Leadership is influence, the ability of one person to influence others.

B. Basic definition: leadership is influence.

You'll notice that one common factor in all of the above published definitions is the idea of influence. Leaders influence others in some way. The influence may be positive or negative, formal or informal, imposed from above or rising from below. All leaders have influence of some sort.

II. What is spiritual leadership?

A. As you might imagine, spiritual leadership is influence in the spiritual realm. In this material, we're talking about influence within the church. Spiritual leaders influence others toward a godly, biblical goal. At least, that is the way it should be. Unfortunately, a few "bad apples" who somehow attain positions of spiritual leadership within the church abuse their position and influence their followers in a negative, even sinful, way. There is much evidence of negative spiritual influence circulating within churches today. Fortunately, abusive spiritual leadership is the exception rather than the rule in most churches.

B. Both pastoral and lay leadership is critical within the church. The pastor has to exercise leadership, and he needs individuals within the church to exercise leadership as well. This influence is not simply the ability to get people to do things, but to move people toward proper spiritual goals.

C. Spiritual leadership within the church is a certain type or style of leadership. Only those who fit the pattern of the biblical spiritual person can exercise genuine spiritual leadership. What does the Bible say about a "spiritual person"?

Rom 8:5-9: *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

1 Corinthians 2:15 *But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.*

1 Corinthians 3:1 *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.*

Galatians 6:1 *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

1. A spiritual person is a mature, godly believer. The Greek word for “spiritual” is *pneumatikos*. It’s the word for *spirit (pneuma)* and a suffix, *ikos*, which denotes “pertaining to.” Thus, *pneumatikos / spiritual* means *pertaining to the Spirit*.

The word conveys the sense of belonging to the realm of the Holy Spirit or being under the control of the Holy Spirit. One who is led by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, and displaying the fruit of the Spirit could be called spiritual. Spiritual leadership requires Spirit-filled people.

2. A spiritual person is mature, not carnal, and not a “babe” in Christ.
 - a) The word “carnal” is literally “fleshly,” and refers to one who is controlled by his sinful nature rather than by the Holy Spirit. Carnality is often common with new believers, but should not be characteristic of those who have been saved for any significant length of time.
 - b) A “babe in Christ” is one who is, or acts like he is, a brand new convert. No one expects new Christians to think or behave like seasoned, mature believers. But when someone who has been saved for several years still acts like a new convert, there’s a problem.
 - c) Those who continue in spiritual immaturity should have little or no influence in the church. They obviously should not be given any kind of leadership responsibilities. In fact, open displays of carnality bring one’s profession of faith into question.
3. A spiritual person is not habitually “overtaken in a fault.” That is, he has progressed in his sanctification to the point where he can help others deal with their sins. He may still be tempted, and he still wrestles with sin; but he’s mature in the faith and righteous in behavior.
4. Thus, only those who fit the biblical description of “spiritual” should be exercising spiritual leadership. Unspiritual, immature people may have influence, but they should not be leaders in the church.

III. Potential styles of spiritual leadership

- A. Autocratic: leadership is centralized in one person. In this situation, all power flows from the top down. At the top is a single individual who typically makes all the major decisions and imposes his will on everyone down the chain of command. No resistance against the leader's will is tolerated.

Although this style of church leadership has become far less popular and common than it once was, there are still churches that centralize virtually all power in one person, and what he says goes. Normally the pastor is the one with the power, but not always. In some churches, a powerful layman or a former pastor may possess the "keys to the kingdom"; and the pastor is expected to preach and pray, but not exercise oversight. Some churches elect a church chairman or president, and with him resides the ultimate power within the church.

There are some potential positive benefits from autocratic church leadership. Bureaucratic "red tape" is cut down to a minimum because virtually all decisions come from the top. Little or no discussion of options is allowed, so there's no disagreement about what is to be done. If the top person is a wise, godly and skillful decision-maker, his direction may produce positive results. If not, the leader can do great damage. The potential negatives associated with an autocratic leadership style are self-evident—when the blind follow the blind, they both fall into a ditch.

1 Pet 5: 2-3 *Shepherd the flock of God ... [not] as being lords over those entrusted to you, ...*

- B. Indecisive (laissez-faire): a philosophy or practice characterized by a usually deliberate abstention from direction or interference especially with individual freedom of choice and action (Webster).

An indecisive leader refuses to lead. He simply lets everyone do whatever he wants. This type of person may have no skills as a leader, or he may think that releasing the congregation to make their own decisions is the most democratic route. He may make suggestions, but never imposes his own will or demands that anyone follow his lead. All major decisions would be made by a committee or even by a vote of the entire church. Consensus is the highest value, not the vision of one person.

Ministries that fit this style typically take a long time to decide to do anything. Leadership by committee tends to be very lethargic and hard to direct. Nature hates a vacuum, so if the pastor or those who should lead refuse to do so, someone will usually step in and provide leadership.

1 Pet 5:2 *Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers ...*

- C. Pastoral: leaders oversee, guide and protect the ministry. Somewhere between the two extremes of the autocrat and the non-leader is pastoral leadership. The word "pastor" literally means "shepherd," and that image quite accurately describes appropriate spiritual leadership. A shepherd's primary concern is the welfare of the sheep. He feeds, guards and guides them in such a way that provides clear

leadership yet avoids abuse. Anyone who aspires to a position of influence within the church must adopt this pastoral attitude.

IV. Recognized leadership offices within the church

The Bible recognizes only two offices within the church—pastor and deacon. In most churches, the pastor and the deacons are the primary leaders within the church. Other non-official leaders also exert influence. Let's take a look at these leadership positions more closely.

A. Pastoral leadership: The primary leader and authority within the church is to be the pastor. Why is this the case?

1. Pastoral titles signify authority. Acts 20:17, 28

- a) *presbuteros*, the elder: The literal or basic meaning of this term signifies a person of extended age, that is, "older," perhaps in contrast to younger people. It emphasizes the maturity and wisdom which are associated with age. The chief idea of elder both in the Hebrew and Christian sense is that of presiding or ruling; he is the president of the ecclesiastical assembly.
- b) *episkopos*, the overseer (or bishop): An overseer is a man charged with the duty of seeing that the things done by others are done right. The terms "superintendent" and "guardian" are further legitimate meanings for the term. The verb form means "to take care of, to oversee, to care for."
- c) *poimen*, the shepherd: Shepherds feed and lead. They lead in such a way that no individual member of the flock is able to disregard the shepherd. This requires a delicate balance between kindness and patience on one hand and authority on the other. An important aspect of the shepherding role is protection. False doctrine and false teachers abound. The pastor has to protect his people from their influence.

Each of these titles for the pastor assumes a degree of responsibility, leadership, and authority. The pastor is the president, the overseer, and the leader. Each term is descriptive of an aspect of the pastoral office: *elder* speaks of the dignity of the office, *overseer* refers to the duties of the office, and *shepherd* relates to the ministry of feeding and protecting.

Note: These three words are synonymous. See Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1-2; Ephesians 4:11; Titus 1:5 and 7.

2. Pastoral responsibilities signify authority.

- a) Leading/Ruling the Flock: 1 Tim 5:17 says "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching." The word for "rule" here means "be at the head (of), rule, direct" or "manage, conduct." See also 1 Thes 5:12; Heb 13:7.
- b) Stewardship/Management: Titus 1:7 states that the "overseer must be above reproach as God's steward." A steward is one who

manages his master's property. Implicit in the concept of stewardship is control. Further, the overseer is "*God's* steward." God has entrusted the pastor with authority to manage his "goods." One cannot manage something without controlling it. The pastor, as steward, must exercise control or management of the church. This responsibility requires authority.

- c) Oversight: Peter writes that an elder is to "shepherd the flock of God, exercising oversight" (1 Pet 5:2). The main verb here, "shepherd," is modified by "overseeing," a participle describing the means or manner in which one is to shepherd. Thus, one functions as shepherd by means of exercising oversight.
- d) Preaching and Teaching: Paul instructs Timothy, "Preach the word." Three strong imperatives accompany the preaching function: "reprove, rebuke, exhort." Implicit in each of them is authority. Paul virtually repeats the command in Titus 2:15: "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority." The pastor must be an *authoritative* messenger of God. Pastors gain absolute authority because of the absolute character of what they stand for. In preaching and teaching, because of the nature of the message, pastoral authority is necessary.

Note: Pastors are ordained and called by the congregation. This is a formal recognition of the pastor's gifts and an extension of authority to him to exercise them. Hence, in ordination and/or calling, the church gives the man authority to be pastor. If a church is unwilling to let the pastor lead the church, they should not call a pastor.

- 3. Responsibilities of church members to the pastor signify authority.
 - a) Obey: Heb 13:17 says, "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive." This passage is especially strong because of the combination of the two imperatives "obey" and "be submissive."
 - b) Esteem/Honor: 1 Thes 5:12-13 says, "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work."
- 4. Biblical limitations on pastoral authority

The authority of the pastor is not unlimited. Strong and commanding leadership in matters of doctrine and conduct does not require dictatorial behavior. The pastor must be characterized by the following:

 - a) Humble service (Mt 20:25-28). Rather than lording over their followers and seeking to be served, Christian leaders should follow the example of Christ in serving and in giving of themselves for others. Jesus came "to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Christian leaders should display the same spirit of Christ-like humility, service and sacrifice rather than a self-promoting attitude (see John 13:1-16).

- b) Not lording over the flock (1 Pet 5:2-3). Pastors should “shepherd the flock of God, exercising oversight not under compulsion, . . . not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.” The idea of “lording over” suggests a high-handed, autocratic rule over one who is weak. Pastoral authority is strong, but not tyrannical.

The pastor must lead, manage, oversee, and preach and teach the Word, all of which depend upon and extend his authority. The pastor’s authority must be limited by a liberal dose of humility and sacrificial service. The word “shepherd” most accurately describes the pastor: a strong leader who cares strongly for his flock.

- B. “Lay” (from the Greek word *laos*, people) leadership: Lay leadership arises from among the people of the church. The pastor is not the only one within the church who exercises influence. In fact, individuals within the congregation often have more “pull” than the pastor does, especially when a pastor is just beginning his ministry. A ministry functions best when pastoral leaders and lay leaders are pulling in the same direction.

- 1. Deacons: A deacon’s primary function is to serve the church, and this service generally concerns the physical welfare of the congregation and the church building. The word “deacon” literally means “servant.” According to Acts 6, the first deacons were chosen to oversee the distribution of food to needy widows. Thus it seems that the main task for deacons is to take care of the physical needs of the church.

The Bible does not grant governing authority to deacons. However, because of the deacons’ qualifications and responsibilities, they normally are influential members of the church. Pastors typically meet regularly with the deacons to discuss the business of the church. Together the pastor and deacons take care of church business and make recommendations to the congregation.

Some churches are run by the deacon board, and in such cases the authority within the church resides with the deacons, not the pastor. This is unbiblical. The descriptions, qualifications and responsibilities of deacons do not allow them to run the church. Deacons do typically have influence and authority, but the Bible nowhere grants them the responsibility of running a church.

- 2. Others: Various other people in the church are influential. Sunday school teachers, youth workers, long-term members, former pastors or missionaries, and other folks may exercise influence within a church. It’s not just those who occupy an official role within the church who have influence and authority. Nearly everyone exercises some influence as an example, if nothing else.

Anyone who exercises leadership within the church should seek to do so in biblical, godly, appropriate ways. The church should recognize the influence and authority of those within the membership who display genuine Christian attitudes and behaviors. In

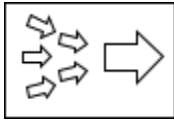
other words, only the “cream of the crop” should rise to positions of leadership and authority within the church.

One’s influence should not be based on intimidation, humiliation, wealth, political power or other similar factors. In fact, church members should refuse to be “buffaloed” by those who display ungodly attitudes and behaviors. In some cases, the most vocal and stubborn people in the church become leaders by default, simply because nobody is willing or able to stand against them. This should never be the case. Spiritually mature, godly people should retain the influence in a church, not ungodly, immature people. Those who have the rights to leadership should never abdicate them to those who have no such rights. Spiritual leadership is only for those who give clear evidence that they are spiritually mature people.

Church members should recognize and submit to those who fill the official positions of leadership (pastor(s) and deacons) to the degree that those leaders fulfill their biblical roles. Submission to leaders is not based on personal power (i.e., education, wealth, family connections, etc.), but on their offices and responsibilities as given in Scripture. Failure to follow legitimate spiritual leadership and authority is sin.

Conclusion:

- ⇒ Leadership is essentially the ability to influence others.
- ⇒ Spiritual leadership is critical to the proper functioning of a church. A church needs a godly and biblical pastor(s), deacons and others to carry out the work of the ministry.
- ⇒ Spiritual leaders should consider themselves to be shepherds, those who guard and guide the flock.
- ⇒ The Bible recognizes two official leadership positions within the church: pastor(s) and deacons. The primary seat of authority in a local church resides with the pastor, who is responsible to oversee and administrate the work. The deacons also have authority by virtue of their office and duties. Other godly, mature church members may also exercise influence.



Lesson 2: Qualifications for Leadership

We mentioned in the previous lesson that spiritual leadership is by definition spiritual. That is, those who desire to exercise leadership within the church must meet the biblical qualifications of “he that is spiritual” (1 Cor 2:15, cf. Gal 6:1). Since we’ve already looked at what it means to be spiritual, we’ll now go on to look specifically at the qualifications for the two official leadership positions in the church—pastor and deacon.

Caveat emptor—buyer beware! Leadership is not for sissies. Rewards for church leadership often include hardship, contempt and rejection. Leaders are often the first to draw fire and the first to suffer. Only a deep love for Christ and for his church should motivate people to fulfill leadership positions. (See more on the pitfalls and challenges of leadership in Lesson Six.)

Personal ambition should play no role in seeking church leadership. As Jeremiah told Baruch, “Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not” (Jer 45:5). Selfish motivation makes ambition wrong. All Christians are called to develop God-given talents, to make the most of their lives, to develop to the fullest their powers and capacities. But Jesus taught that ambition that centers on the self is wrong. The true spiritual leader will never campaign for promotion. On the other hand, ambition that centers on the glory of God and the welfare of the church is a mighty force for good.¹

I. Pastoral qualifications (1 Tim 3:2-7)²

Pastors are often judged by their charismatic personalities, their flamboyant preaching styles, and even their looks. The Bible gives us far more objective standards by which to judge a pastor’s qualifications. The Bible emphasizes the character of the man much more than his skills in preaching or administrating.

- A. Irreproachable – “blameless,” literally nothing to take hold on; no legitimate accusation; unchargeable, without indictment; blameless regarding doctrinal and moral/ethical issues. The word does not require sinless perfection, but irreproachable observable conduct.

Blamelessness once forfeited can be rebuilt only over an extended period of time. Restoration to fellowship may be immediate; restoration to leadership, if possible, must follow a slow rebuilding process. The first is a matter of grace. The second is postponed until integrity and credibility in the area of weakness are evident. Test first; task second.

- B. Moral – “the husband of one wife,” literally, a “one-woman man.” “Loyal to his marriage vows” accurately captures the sense of the expression. This implies discrete behavior regarding women. He does not flirt with or seek the company of other women; he is faithful to his wife. Fundamentally it means a loyal husband, preserving marriage in all its purity. Paul is seeking to exclude from ministry those who are guilty of married unfaithfulness. A “one-woman man” is

¹ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), pp. 14-15.

² Some of this material is based on class notes from Douglas McLachlan, *Authentic Pastoral Ministry for the 21st Century*. Central Baptist Theological Seminary, D.Min seminar, June 2004.

faithful to his marriage vows and blameless in his moral reputation. Note several associated issues:

1. Marriage in God's mind is heterosexual monogamy—one man and one woman for life.
2. The requirement that the pastor be a “one-woman man” does not mean that he must be married. Paul himself was unmarried (1 Cor 7:7). If a pastor is married, he must be a faithful, loyal husband.
3. In our sexually-charged culture, leaders must be able to resist the “flattery of the tongue of a strange woman” (Prov 6:24-26). Some women find powerful men attractive, even homely, overweight, bald ones. Men who display certain attractive qualities, like compassion and understanding, may find themselves the target of unwanted attention.
4. Some strongly assert that this text prohibits divorce or remarriage for pastors. However, that conclusion probably goes beyond the intent of the phrase “a one-woman man.”

C. Sensible

1. “Vigilant” – literally “unmixed with wine.” The word suggests clarity and self-control; i.e., fully rational, fully in possession of one's faculties.
Theologically, the pastor should have a clear perspective on life and a correct spiritual and theological orientation. Pastors must “have their heads on straight.” They should not follow the latest fads or be easily confused or swayed.
2. “Sober” describes what is sane in judgment and behavior; i.e., discreet, prudent, self-controlled.
Leaders must be able to see through flattery and deceit. It's not uncommon for people to attempt to influence power brokers for their own benefit. Leaders must have the capacity for good judgment, thoughtfulness and careful analysis of people and situations.

D. Respectable – “of good behavior,” i.e., well-ordered, well-mannered, honorable, modest in outward behavior. Pastors must be respectable and orderly in every area of life—church, family, finances, physical health, etc.

E. Charitable – “given to hospitality,” literally “lovers of strangers.” Thus, friendly, welcoming.

F. Intellectual – “apt to teach,” i.e., able to teach, skillful in teaching. The pastor must be able to articulate truth clearly and understandably. He must be a student of the Word and the world. He must have the capacity for rigorous, in-depth study and be able to accurately communicate his findings. The untaught cannot teach. The pastor must be an expert in his field. He must know what he's talking about.

G. Governable

1. Not addicted to wine. The word “given to wine” describes one who sits long at his wine, who is a slave to drink. Today we would call such a person a drunk or an alcoholic. Fermented wine was a common drink in NT times, but wine was normally mixed with water, which made the alcoholic content very low. It’s best for pastors to remain abstinent from alcohol as to avoid all the problems associated with drinking.
2. “no striker,” i.e., not quick tempered, explosive or easily provoked; one who is patient and slow-fused.
3. “not greedy for filthy lucre,” i.e., not materialistic, not working just for a pay check. The “hireling” (John 10:11-14) is only in it for the money. Such a person is unreliable, cowardly, and liable to run when things get tough.
4. “patient,” i.e., gentle mercifulness, patient forgiveness, “sweet reasonableness.”
5. “not a brawler,” i.e., disinclined to fight; not a warmonger, not looking for a fight; peaceable.
6. “not covetous,” i.e., not a lover of money, not seeking wealth.

H. Capable – “ruling his own house well” is an indication that he can take care of the church. One’s capacity to manage his own affairs is a reflection of his pastoral ability.

I. Dependable – “not a novice,” i.e., not a recent convert. Early promotion may give rise to pride.

J. Reputable – “having a good report...” Pastors must have a good reputation in the community, even among lost people.

It’s one thing for a man to “desire the office of a bishop” (1 Tim 3:1); it’s another thing entirely for him to possess the personal and professional qualifications for the office. Nobody’s perfect, and a church should not insist upon or expect their pastor(s) to be perfectly sinless, inerrant or infallible. They should demand, however, that those occupying pastoral leadership positions meet the biblical criteria, at least in a general sense.

Churches do themselves a great favor by insisting that a pastoral candidate be ordained before or soon after assuming the office. The ordination process is essential in determining a candidate’s fitness for the position. If a council of peers determines that an individual has the qualifications to fulfill the pastorate, that should be a great encouragement and affirmation to both the candidate and the church. On the other hand, if the ordination council finds that the candidate is remiss in some significant area, that should serve as a warning to both the individual and the church. Of course, ordination or lack thereof does not guarantee anything, either positive or negative. But it does add a level of security to the process of choosing a pastor.

II. Deacon qualifications (1 Tim 3:8-13)

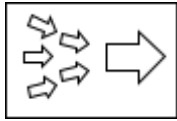
Several of the same qualifications are listed for pastor and for deacon. We'll examine the ones not listed under pastor.

- A. "grave," i.e., dignified. This refers not only to their necessary decorum or propriety of manner and conduct, but also to their inner thoughts and attitudes. They must be men of Spirit-wrought gravity and respectability.
- B. "not double-tongued." He does not say one thing to one person and something different to another. He does not "talk out of both sides of his mouth." He's truthful, honest and sincere.
- C. "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience," i.e., he is conscientious and sincere. His faith is not just an act. He's not a hypocrite.
- D. "...first be proved." Only tested men should serve in this capacity. This does not mean that a prospective deacon must first serve a trial-period, but rather that by means of a consecrated life he must furnish a testimonial of character. He must be able to sustain the test of having the eyes of the whole church (plus the outsiders) focused upon him. If he succeeds, he is then blameless (literally, "not to be called to account").³
- E. "used the office of a deacon well." Deacons are expected to "serve well." The primary task for deacons is service, and this service should be "well" done, i.e., positive, beneficial and helpful. Those who don't have a servant's heart don't make good deacons.

Churches must give serious thought to whom they elect as deacons. The qualifications are not as stringent as those for pastor, but they still present a high standard. Deacons, of course, do not undergo ordination; but they should be proven, reliable men that the congregation can trust.

Conclusion: The Bible gives objective standards that pastors and deacons must fulfill. Only those who display such qualities should be allowed to occupy the offices of pastor and deacon.

³Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). Vol. 4: *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.



Lesson 3: Essential Qualities for All Leaders⁴

We've already examined what the Bible says about the qualifications for pastoral and deaconal leadership positions. We'll now take a look at some general qualities that all leaders, whether official or unofficial, should display. Obviously, no one is going to perfectly embody these qualities, but they should be at least somewhat evident in the life of every leader.

I. Discipline

- A. Gifts and talents grow in the fertile soil of discipline. Before we can conquer the world, we must subdue ourselves. A leader is one who has learned to obey discipline imposed from outside and then learns to impose discipline from within. Those who rebel against authority, who scorn self-discipline, and who shirk sacrifice are not qualified to lead. Lazy and disorganized people rarely rise to positions of leadership.

1Co 9:25, 27 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.... But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

1Co 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

- B. The spiritual life requires self-discipline. Reading the Bible, spending time in prayer, church participation, and evangelism all demand discipline. Spiritual leadership requires spiritual maturity, and maturity is attained only through the practice of spiritual disciplines. Undisciplined people rarely rise to spiritual leadership roles.

II. Vision

- A. Those who have most powerfully influenced their generation have been “seers,” people who see what could be done and somehow motivate people to do it. A leader must be able to envision the results of policies or methods that he advocates. Responsible leaders always look ahead to see how today's decisions will affect the future.
- B. Vision is largely based on faith. Visionaries trust that “with God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26) and that they can do all things through Christ's strength (Ph 4:13). Visionaries are an optimistic, hopeful lot. They see opportunity where others see difficulty. Vision leads to venture. Visionaries “attempt great things for God and expect great things from God” (to paraphrase William Carey).
- C. Vision is essentially a set of goals. A leader must know where he is going and how he wants to get there. Church leaders must understand biblical goals and seek to fulfill them through the ministry of the church. Good leaders are able to

⁴ Most of this material taken from Sanders *Spiritual Leadership*, pp. 52f.

communicate their goals to the congregation so that everyone understands the goals and all are pursuing them in unity and cooperation.

III. Wisdom

- A. Wisdom is the correct use of knowledge, a combination of discernment and right judgment. It is the right application of knowledge in moral and spiritual matters, in handling dilemmas, in negotiating complex relationships.
- B. The early church chose leaders who were “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). Paul’s prayer was that God would fill believers “with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col 1:9).
- C. A church expects its leaders to make wise, thoughtful, prudent decisions. Unfortunately, history is full of the stories of churches that experienced one embarrassing debacle after another because of unwise leaders.

IV. Decision

- A. Leaders are decision-makers. When all the facts are in, swift and clear decision is the mark of a true leader. An impulsive person may be quick to choose a course of action, but patient leadership requires thoughtful evaluation and analysis. Once sure of the proper course, a leader pursues it without worrying about the potential political fallout. A good leader never casts blame for failure on subordinates but accepts it for himself.
- B. A spiritual leader will not procrastinate when faced with a decision, nor vacillate after making it. A sincere but faulty decision is often better than a weak-willed “trial balloon” or indecisive suggestion.

V. Courage

- A. Courage is that quality of mind which enables people to encounter danger or difficulty firmly, without fear or discouragement. Fear must never stop one from persevering in the Lord’s work. Paul confesses his “fear and trembling” (1 Cor 2:3) and “conflicts and fears” (2 Cor 7:5), but he pressed on with his ministry anyway.
- B. God calls leaders to be of good courage and not to capitulate to fear. Courageous leaders face unpleasant circumstances with composure and bring good from trouble, even if their action is unpopular. Leaders must rely upon the power and promises of God to overcome fears. God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of “power” (2 Tim 1:7). Church members expect their leaders to be calm and courageous during a crisis. When others are falling apart, spiritual leaders must show themselves strong and stable.

VI. Humility

- A. Jesus told his disciples to reject the pompous attitudes so common among the political and religious leaders of the time and become like servants. In the Christian economy, those who exalt themselves will be abased (Mt 23:12). The

spiritual leader will choose the path of sacrificial service and approval of the Lord over the self-centeredness so common in the world.

- B. Leaders would do well to emulate John the Baptist's attitude when he said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Paul considered himself to be "less than the least of all saints" (Eph 3:8) and the "chief of sinners" (1 Tim 1:15). Those who aspire to leadership positions must begin at the bottom rung of the ladder with humble service to others.
- C. Many who aspire to leadership fail because they never learned to follow. Like the disciples, leaders begin by following.

VII. Integrity

- A. It almost goes without saying that spiritual leaders must be upright, honest and trustworthy in all aspects of their lives. Recent scandals in the church world show that Christian leaders do not always personify Christian virtues. When leaders fall, it brings reproach upon the entire Christian community.
- B. Those who aspire to positions of responsibility must give evidence that they are trustworthy and faithful stewards. Those who are not faithful in small things will likely not be capable of handling larger responsibilities (Lk 16:10). Leaders must earn respect.

1Ti 3:10 And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

1Ti 5:17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

VIII. Patience

- A. The early Christian leader Chrysostom called patience the queen of virtues. Patience suggests endurance and consistency under pressure. It's not just passive acceptance, but steadfastness and courage in the face of trials. A patient person bears up under difficulties. He bends but does not break.
- B. Since leaders are often the target of criticism and complaint, they must develop the ability to bear up without breaking. Impatience is a defect of character. Hot-tempered people have no business in church leadership (1 Tim 3:3). Patient endurance is a virtue leaders must develop.

IX. Tact and Diplomacy

- A. Tact is the ability to deal with people sensitively, to avoid giving offense, to have a feel for the proper words or responses in a delicate situation. Diplomacy is the ability to manage complex situations, especially those involving people of differing opinions.
- B. Leaders need to be able to reconcile opposing viewpoints without giving offense or compromising principle. Leaders are commonly asked to referee situations that may have nothing to do with them directly, and they must be sensitive to all parties involved.

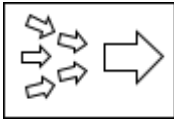
X. Other Good Qualities

- A. Optimism – looking for the good in people and situations; being positive and upbeat; having a strong faith that God is able to overcome obstacles
- B. Zeal – excited about one's ministry; pursuing it with passion
- C. Focus – able to concentrate on the task at hand

We might summarize the above qualities with one word: credibility. A credible leader displays most of the above qualities. People trust him because of his character and his good track record. He's believable. The key to a leader's ability to influence people is his credibility. The degree to which the individual grants the leader credibility is the degree to which that leader can influence him.⁵

Conclusion: Anyone who aspires to leadership within a church must evidence these qualities, at least to some degree. In fact, all mature Christians should strive to embody these qualities.

⁵ Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), p. 21.



Lesson 4: Servant Leadership

Christian leaders are servants. True greatness is found in giving yourself in service to others, not in coaxing or inducing others to serve you. True spiritual leaders focus on the service they can render to God and to other people, not on the residuals and perks of high office or title.⁶

Jesus is the primary example of servant leadership. Perhaps the most informative teaching Jesus gave on servant leadership occurred when the disciples were arguing over who among them would be the greatest. Notice Jesus' response:

Mark 10:42-45 *But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which 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 will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Based on this text and others, let's examine what the Bible says about servant leadership.

I. Leaders are servants of the Lord.

- A. The Bible doesn't use the word "leader" very often, but it does use the word "servant" to describe leaders. God often described Moses as "my servant" or as "the servant of the LORD." Joshua, before he became the leader of Israel, was Moses' servant (Num 11:28). Only after faithfully serving Moses did he become "the servant of the LORD" (Jud 2:8). David is called "the servant of the LORD" in Psalms. Paul tells about how he was "serving the Lord" in his missionary efforts (Acts 20:19). If Moses, Joshua, David and Paul, great leaders that they were, thought of themselves as no more than servants of the Lord, anyone who aspires to spiritual leadership should think of himself in the same way.
- B. All leadership should be directed toward the Lord. That is, the goal of one's leadership should be to serve God. One should never pursue leadership within the church for selfish reasons. The only biblical reason to exercise leadership is as a means of serving God and others.

II. Leaders are servants of the church.

- A. Church leaders should not be like political officials "lording" over their domain. The government officials the disciples knew about were heavy-handed rulers who exercised dictatorial authority and power over their constituents. During NT times, the Roman Empire ruled Israel, and the Roman authorities were ruthless and demanding administrators. Jesus expressly forbids an authoritarian, top-down, self-serving, power-hungry style of leadership. Secular leaders were known for their accumulation of personal power. Christian leaders should be known for their humble service.
- B. Those who desire to be "great" and "chief" must be servants. In the context of Mark 10, James and John had asked for the prime seats in Jesus' coming

⁶ Sanders, 15.

kingdom, which offended the other disciples. Jesus informs them that in his work, those who desire positions of leadership must assume attitudes of service. Leadership amounts to serving others.

The terms Jesus uses here are informative. Whoever wants to lead (be great or be first) must be a servant (vs. 43) and a slave (vs. 44). These roughly synonymous terms speak of lowliness and humility. That greatness is found in service was a revolutionary idea that the disciples had never considered.

Notice that Jesus does not say that there is anything inherently wrong with desiring a position of leadership. Paul says that those who aspire to pastoral leadership desire a “good work” (1 Tim 3:1). But the requirement for success in Christian leadership is servanthood. The way of exaltation is humiliation.

Philippians 2:5-9 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

C. Jesus is the primary example of servant leadership.

1. Leadership is not for those who want to be served; it is for those who want to serve others. Jesus came “not to be served, but to serve.” Today’s leaders often aspire to high office thinking that it will be a position of honor, respect and special attention. In the Christian economy, leadership is not for those who want special treatment but for those who want to serve others. Ask not what others can do for you; ask what you can do for others.
2. Leadership often requires self-sacrifice. Jesus came “to give his life a ransom for many.” There are costs associated with serving in the church. Jesus asked James and John, “Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They answered affirmatively, and they did suffer greatly for the cause of Christ. All church leaders should recognize that suffering and sacrifice go hand in hand with leadership.
3. In John 13, Jesus washed his disciples’ feet and then encouraged them to follow his example of humble, sacrificial service. If their Lord and Master could humble himself by doing a slave’s task, surely they can do the same to one another. Those who want to follow the Lord’s example will find great joy in serving others. The basis of service is love—love for God and for fellow believers. Leadership is all about others, not self.

John 13:13-15 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

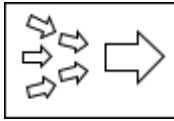
D. Other NT passages require servant leadership.

1. Many scholars believe that Acts 6:1-6 describes the selection of the first deacons. The office of deacon came about as a response to a physical need in the church—some widows were being overlooked in the daily food distribution. The apostles directed the church to select “seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (6:3). The primary task of these men was to “serve tables” (6:2). Deacons are servants whose primary goal is to look after the physical needs of the church. Deacons are often looked up to as spiritual leaders in the church, and rightly so, but their primary task is simple service.
2. 1 Corinthians 3:5 *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?*
In this text, Paul calls himself and Apollos “ministers.” He uses another word, “subordinate assistant” or “servant,” to describe himself in 1 Corinthians 4:1. Although Paul was an apostle and had the right to exercise authority over the churches, and although he did exercise strong leadership authority occasionally, he still considered himself to be no more than a servant. Paul even calls himself a “slave” in Christ’s service (Rom 1:1; Titus 1:1). Surely those occupying places of leadership should think of themselves in the same way—servants, assistants and even slaves.
3. 1 Peter 5:3 *Shepherd the flock of God ... not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*
Peter clearly asserts that pastors must both avoid authoritarian rule over the flock and provide a good example for them.
The first few verses of 1 Peter is a significant passage because the inspired author gives the pastor the right to “shepherd the flock of God ... serving as overseers” (1 Pet 5:2). Peter earlier combined the two ideas of shepherding and oversight when he described Jesus as the “shepherd and bishop (overseer) of your souls” (1 Pet 2:25). The shepherding role (leading, feeding, and guarding) requires oversight, that is, watchful care and management. Thus, the pastor’s oversight of the church must achieve a balance between authority on the one hand and compassion on the other. He has the responsibility to oversee and manage, but he must do so in a certain way—not under compulsion, not for money, not as a “lord,” but as an example. Peter goes on to say that everyone should be “clothed with humility,” (5:5) which reinforces the idea that the pastor is not to lord his position and authority over the flock.

Although many of the above passages refer directly to the pastoral office, they have implications for anyone exercising leadership in a church context. Anyone in charge of a task or program should see himself as nothing more than a humble servant of the Lord and of the church.

Conclusion: The essence of leadership is service, not status. It's the kind of service that involves the giving of self, not taking for oneself. It's *selfless*, not *selfish*.⁷ Those who desire the rewards of rank and title should not seek them in the context of a local church. Church leadership is for servants, those interested in serving God by serving others. Jesus came not to be served but to serve, and all those who aspire to leadership will have to adopt the same attitude of humble service.

⁷Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), p. 20.



Lesson 5: Exercising Spiritual Leadership

We're now ready to talk about some of the nuts-and-bolts aspects of being a leader. It's hard to exercise leadership if you don't know how. So in this lesson we'll discuss some of the issues regarding the practice of spiritual leadership.

I. What constitutes a call to spiritual leadership?

Are leaders born or made? Both. Some rise to leadership as if they had been born to it. Some indeed *were* born to it, e.g., Samuel, David, Jeremiah, Jesus. Others rise to leadership because of a particular experience or situation, e.g., Moses, Joshua, Deborah, Gideon, Paul, Timothy. How can one tell if he is cut out to be a spiritual leader? Consider the following elements of a "call":

- A. Character: We've already discussed the personal and spiritual requirements of church leaders, so we won't cover that ground again. Suffice it to say that church leaders must exemplify spiritual maturity and godliness.
- B. Desire: Leadership positions are for those who seek them for the right reasons—to serve God and God's people. As we've already seen, one should not be motivated by money, pride or personal fulfillment. A desire to play a role in church leadership should be natural for mature believers. In fact, every genuine believer should desire some place of service in the church.
- C. Opportunity: Sometimes a person finds that he is suited for leadership when he accepts an offer to serve. Or he may see a need that motivates him to begin a new ministry. Either way, opportunities may help move people into leadership positions.
- D. Recognition: If no one is following you, you are not a leader, no matter how hard you are trying to be one. Leadership is influence. If the congregation refuses to recognize your leadership, it's usually best to set aside such aspirations, at least temporarily. On the other hand, if the congregation seems to follow your lead and appreciate your abilities, that is a good sign that you have leadership skills.
- E. What kind of a "call" is required?
 1. For most leadership positions in a church, if the above four elements apply to you, you can feel confident in exercising leadership of some kind. You shouldn't worry much about whether the Lord has specifically "called" you into leadership. Just volunteer and see what happens.
 2. For pastoral leadership, the above elements (character, desire, opportunity and recognition) should be very clearly and obviously displayed in the person's life. Since pastors are to exemplify mature Christianity, it is essential that they meet the biblical character standards. The pastoral call does not require some divine, mystical "zap" or "still small voice," but it does require the confidence that one meets the qualifications to fulfill the role.

Positions of church leadership are not necessarily right for everyone. We might think that all mature, zealous Christians should aspire to leadership, but the truth is that some people are simply not cut out to be leaders. The presence of gifts and abilities should not automatically flag one for leadership.⁸ If a non-leader is placed in a leadership position, the outcome could be disastrous. Many people function well as team players but not as team leaders. If a person feels called to leadership, yet displays few or none of the qualities that should accompany that call, he should re-evaluate his feeling.

II. How does one exercise spiritual leadership?

Let's say that you volunteer for a position of spiritual leadership in the church (e.g., Sunday school teacher, deacon, women's ministries, etc), and you find yourself in that role. Now what? How do you exercise leadership? Here are some tips:

A. Dedicate yourself to service.

Remember that Jesus came to serve and to give, not to be served and get, and that true greatness is found in serving others (Mt 20:25-28). With this in mind, seek a place of service. Most church leaders start by faithfully serving in some minor position within a church program—Sunday school, children's church, music, ushering, nursery, etc. Those who prove to be faithful, reliable servants will often be entrusted with increasing levels of responsibility and authority.

B. Determine your place within the church authority structure.

1. Christ is the head of the church; he is the Chief Shepherd and Bishop. Pastors are under-shepherds and managers. Deacons help the pastor and serve the church. Church members select their own leaders. All other church roles fit into this chain of command. Authority is delegated from Christ to the pastor and the people.
2. The pastor is over the flock, yet he's one of the flock. He serves at the will of the congregation, yet as long as they recognize him as pastor he has an authoritative role over them. The pastor has authority because of his office and responsibilities, but all final authority rests with Christ.
3. It's important that leaders within the church not overstep the limits of their authority. If one wants to exercise leadership, he must find out where he fits in the church authority structure. Who does he report to? Who has the right to give him directions? Who is he trying to lead? Proper spiritual leadership always respects the official authority of the church. Even if one's leadership is informal/non-official, spiritual leaders will not lead in ways that contradict pastoral leadership.
4. If one finds that the direction he desires to go conflicts with the direction that the official leaders of the church want to go, he has several options:
 - a) He can submit to official leadership and adopt their goals.
 - b) He can be quiet and not cause division.
 - c) He can attempt to influence the official leaders toward his direction.

⁸Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), p. 193.

- d) He can quit the church and join another church more agreeable to his ideas.
- e) He can find others within the church who agree with him and seek to impose his views through lobbying, complaint, criticism and division. The results of such activities would likely be catastrophic—the church might split, the pastor or deacons resign, members be disciplined out, etc. Obviously, this is not a desirable option. Unfortunately, it is quite common.

C. Exemplify what you want. John 13:15; 1 Thes 1:7; 1 Pet 5:3

Philippians 4:9 *Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*

1 Timothy 4:12 *Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

The most influential thing about a leader is his ability to set an example for others to follow. Leaders are models. Jesus did this with the disciples, and Paul did it with his colleagues. Virtually everyone sets an example of some kind, either good or bad. Those who desire to influence others for Christ must first insure that they are good examples of what believers ought to be.

1. Exemplary in character: We've already seen that pastors and deacons must strive to be "blameless" in their Christian walk. This does not require sinless perfection or infallibility, but it does imply that spiritual leaders display the kind of character traits the Bible demands from mature believers. Anyone who seeks to exercise leadership in the context of the church must first insure that his own attitudes exemplify mature Christianity. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26) ought to be evident within the life of every spiritual leader.
2. Exemplary in conduct: Since leaders exert influence, they must be doubly sure that what they allow in their own lives is appropriate for other less mature believers to follow. Recognize that what is expected of leaders is generally higher than what is expected of the rest of the crowd. Those who rise to influential positions may have to limit their freedoms somewhat to "avoid the appearance of evil" (1 Thes 5:22). Churches commonly demand higher behavioral standards from pastors and deacons than from the rest of the church. Anyone exercising spiritual leadership must insure that his example is a positive one.

D. Be a good follower.

1. Very few people in Christian ministry experience the kind of transformation Paul did—one moment a violent, murderous enemy of Christ and the next a zealous defender and preacher of the truth. It might seem as if Paul ascended to apostolic leadership virtually overnight. But that is not the case. After his conversion, Paul spent three years in the Arabian desert (Gal 1:17) before coming back to Damascus and preaching the gospel (Acts 9:27). He briefly visited Jerusalem and then returned to Tarsus, his hometown (Gal 1:21). After several more years, Paul accepted Barnabas's invitation to help with the work at Antioch

(Acts 11:25-26) and later traveled throughout the empire starting and strengthening churches. Paul became increasingly influential over the course of many years. He had many opportunities to work with and help others before he rose to a position of leadership himself.

2. Most leaders move up through the ranks of influence and authority. They often start out in relatively unimportant, behind-the-scenes positions. Authority, influence and trust grow slowly and are easily lost. But those who prove faithful over small things will generally move on to more significant responsibilities and spheres of influence.
3. If one is unable to be a good follower, his style of leadership will likely be authoritarian and absolute. Those who can thrive under the leadership of others are much more likely to be understanding, compassionate leaders themselves.

E. Be a team player.

1. Leaders rarely ascend to positions of authority all by themselves without anyone else's aid. As noted above, leaders typically start at the bottom and move steadily up the chain of command. Those leaders who work well with others will find more open doors than those "lone wolves" who can't.
2. When you are loyal, faithful and helpful to others, they will be the same to you. Church is no place for a person who can't get along with others or who refuses to cooperate. Team players are seeking the good of the whole church, not just themselves or their part of the "ball game."
3. The ability to work well with others is an important virtue to develop. If you can't work within a team, it is unlikely you'll succeed as the head of a team.
4. One's relationship with his teammates may help or hinder his further leadership opportunities. If those who know you refuse to recommend or support you, it is unlikely that other positions will be offered to you.

F. Communicate.

1. Communicate content: The ability to effectively communicate is a skill that most leaders seek to develop. Leadership is influence, and much influence comes through the spoken or written word. A leader has to be able to teach or give directions understandably.
2. Communicate quality: Leaders must exemplify a proper style of speech. He must speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15), not allow any unwholesome words to come out of his mouth (Eph 4:29), and not start any fires with his tongue (James 3:5-6).

G. Delegate. (see Ex 18:25-26)

1. Jesus was a master at the art of delegation. He selected the disciples, trained them, sent them out, corrected them, and eventually left the ministry in their hands. Every leader will find it necessary to delegate.
2. Once you find yourself in charge of something, you may discover that you can't do the job all by yourself. If others have agreed to help, you'll

have to delegate some responsibility to them. A common leadership error is taking on more jobs than you can reasonably handle. There is no virtue in doing many jobs poorly. It's better to pour most of your energy into a few things that you do well and get others to help with the rest. The "getting others to help" part is called delegation.

3. One of the highest forms of leadership is the ability to get things done through other people. Some leaders find this very difficult. They have the attitude, "If you want something done right, do it yourself." In a very small organization, sometimes the leader does have to do it all himself (i.e., "micro-manage"). Leaders may not feel comfortable allowing others to take the reins of power, and they may even feel threatened by more skilled or popular subordinates. But even in a small church, leaders must have the ability to "farm out" tasks to others. In fact, the pastor's primary task is to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry" (Eph 4:12). If the pastor does all the work of the ministry himself, he is not equipping the saints, and thus failing in his main objective.
4. Leaders must delegate both the task and the authority to do the task. Micro-managers will often ask someone to do a job, but then not give the person the freedom to do it. They may hover over a shoulder, continually give directions, or even take over the whole task. If you ask someone to do a job, let him do it, even if he doesn't do it quite the way you would. Subordinates perform better when they feel sure of the leader's support and trust. Provide the necessary resources to do the job—funds, facilities, helpers, time, etc. Then let them go to work.
5. Supervision is often necessary, especially with someone new to the task. Clearly define exactly what you want done; discuss all the parameters of the task (who? what? when? where? how?). Follow this process: watch me, help me, I'll help you, I'll watch you, do it by yourself. Once the person has been trained to do the job, release him to do it. No doubt the person will make mistakes and maybe even fail, but that is part of the learning process.
6. Accountability is part of the delegation process. Once the job is done, it's time for evaluation. If the task was not done right, the leader must be able to make necessary changes. Perhaps some instructions were not communicated effectively. Failure may be the leader's fault as much as anything else.
7. Deciding what to delegate and what to do yourself is often a difficult choice. If someone else can do part of the job better than you, delegate it. Retain the "big picture" jobs and get others to help with the legwork.
8. The potential downside of delegation:
 - a) Others may not have your skills, experience or dedication to the task, so quality may suffer, at least temporarily.
 - b) Training someone else to do the job in the proper way may take a lot of extra time and effort. It may be easier in the short term to do it yourself.

- c) Giving responsibility to the wrong person can have catastrophic results—disloyalty, betrayal, crime, etc.

H. Make good decisions

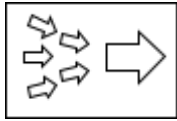
One of the major tasks leaders have to handle is decision-making. Most of these are quite insignificant, but every so often a major decision is called for and the results of the decision will have vast repercussions. A mark of a good leader, like a good umpire or referee, is that he normally makes the right “call.” He may miss a few here or there, but for the most part he gets it right. Consider the following hints for good decision making:

1. Pray: Spiritual leaders must bathe their decisions in prayer. Ask God for wisdom and insight.
2. Seek counsel: “In the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov 11:14, 24:6). Those directly involved in or affected by the decision should have some input.
3. Evaluate: Use your common sense and intelligence to analyze the situation. Collect all pertinent information before making a final call.
4. Anticipate: Try to perceive what the potential outcomes might be.
5. Decide: Failure to decide may be worse than a bad decision. Once you’ve made the decision, stick with it. Don’t waffle. Be strong and defend your decision unless it proves to be disastrously wrong. If you make a bad decision, be humble enough to admit it and take the steps necessary to reverse the decision.

I. Other task skills for leaders:

1. Teaching: Since teaching the Bible and theology is one of the main tasks of the church, many church leadership positions require the ability to teach.
2. Time management: Wise use of time is essential for leaders.
3. Use of technology: Electronic devices are infiltrating many areas of ministry. Leaders should have some capacity to use them.
4. Writing: Leaders often have to compose various documents. They must be able to communicate in writing without embarrassing themselves.
5. Planning and organization: Those in charge of events have to be able to plan and carry out the program.
6. Speaking in front of groups: Leadership frequently demands public speaking abilities.
7. Budgeting: Leaders may handle money as part of their job, so they have to be careful and honest in their stewardship.

Conclusion: Those considering their capacity for church leadership should consider whether they are personally suited for the task. Those who have the above skills would likely make good leaders.



Lesson 6: Pitfalls and Challenges of Leadership

Leadership may seem like a lot of fun until you experience the “dark side” of being a leader. Who do people blame when programs fail? Who has to bear final responsibility for a task? Who is the first person to be criticized or blamed when things fall apart? Leaders must learn to endure a whole host of burdens associated with leadership.

I. The burden of an exemplary life

We’ve previously explored at length the biblical character qualifications for leadership, both official church offices and other leadership positions. By now it should be obvious that spiritual leadership demands a high level of spiritual maturity. Being an exemplary believer is difficult. Living a mature, dedicated, exemplary Christian life perhaps should not be thought of as a “burden,” but it certainly is difficult. Knowing that others are watching your life and looking to you for guidance in word and deed can be a daunting thought. Church members may overlook and ignore their own weaknesses, foibles and sins, but seldom do they tolerate the same in their leaders. Church leaders should be held to a higher standard than the rest of the members; achieving and holding a high level of spirituality is not an easy task.

II. The burden of responsibility

The Bible gives spiritual leaders significant responsibilities. Perhaps the most significant are to teach the Bible accurately and to model the Christian life faithfully. Spiritual leaders have an influence on people’s spiritual health and well being. They also typically advise people regarding a whole host of practical matters—family, finances, careers, plans, etc. This part of the leadership role is an enormous responsibility. People act on the teaching and advice they hear from their leaders. Those who knowingly lead others astray through their teaching will suffer great judgment (Mt 5:19, 18:6). Those who do well, on the other hand, are worthy of “double honor” (1 Tim 5:17). Church members expect their leaders to carry out their responsibilities successfully. Taking care of all the details of church life is a major weight for leaders to shoulder. Those who can’t handle the stress don’t make good leaders.

III. The burden of criticism and blame

- A. Even godly, mature, wise leaders occasionally make mistakes. No one is perfect. But when programs fail, sermons flop, controversies arise or people leave, the blame usually falls on the leaders. Blame and criticism may be warranted, and in such cases wise leaders will confess their errors and not try to shift the guilt. However, in many cases, the leaders are doing the best they can; but problems happen anyway. Church members are often are very slow with praise but quick with criticism.
- B. Leaders have to develop a thick skin. They can’t wilt under the pressure of criticism or complaint. They have to be able to defend their positions when they

are right and apologize when they are wrong. Leaders must learn to respond to criticism and sinful attitudes with humility and self-control.

- C. Those who persevere in church leadership for very long will find out first hand how vicious, disloyal and fickle the human heart can be. Even seemingly stable, mature church members may display certain surprisingly sinful attitudes given the right circumstances. Cheerleaders and supporters can become critics and complainers very quickly. Those leaders who are serving merely for personal gain will quit when the criticism gets heavy. But those who are serving God by serving others will be able to bear up under even the most withering criticism and complaint.

IV. The burden of temptations

- A. Pride—Paul says that novice Christians should not be elevated to positions of leadership because they may be prone to pride, the snare and condemnation of the devil (1 Tim 3:6). Unfortunately, even mature, experienced leaders can allow pride to arise in their hearts. When others show you respect, defer to you, listen to your advice and treat you like someone special, it's easy to think more highly of yourself than you ought to. Of course, pride goes before destruction, and those leaders who allow themselves to feel or act proudly are just a step away from a fall.
- B. Power—Those in positions of leadership can begin to enjoy telling others what to do. Church members often want to please and support their leaders, and some leaders take advantage of that submissive attitude. When you have the power to make things happen or to prevent things from happening, it can be a rather heady experience. Leaders are often privy to very personal information, and abusive leaders can use such knowledge inappropriately. Some people become pushy and domineering when they forget that leaders are essentially servants. Abuse of power is not unheard of among church leaders.

Further, most churches contain at least a couple of people who seek to influence those in power by lobbying for their own agenda. Perhaps a wealthy member or the head of a large family clan pressures a leader to make a decision, adopt a program or endorse a position. Such “suggestions” are often hard to ignore, especially for a leader who is already under fire. Political maneuvering, influence peddling and lobbying can bring no end of grief to church leaders. Leaders must chart the course that they believe is biblical and right in spite of efforts to divert them.
- C. Immorality—It's unfortunately common these days to hear of spiritual leaders who have ruined their ministries and torn apart their families because they have given in to sexual temptation. Leaders often deal with people on a deeply personal basis, and this can engender strong ties of affection, appreciation, and dependence. Some people are attracted to those in powerful positions. Leaders who don't carefully avoid temptation in this area may find themselves in serious trouble. Other forms of immoral conduct are also possible for leaders—financial misdeeds, gossip, deception, etc.

Lord Acton, the British historian, famously said: “All power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Church leaders, especially authoritarian pastors, can allow the power they exercise to corrupt them. There is no shortage of tragic stories that bear this out. All spiritual leaders must take care not to allow the corruptions so common in the world to ruin their lives and ministries.

V. The burden of loneliness

Pastors have a unique position within the church—they are part of the church, yet they are unlike the rest of the members because of their status and responsibilities. Pastors often have to keep mum about much of the information they learn. They can’t openly discuss people’s problems with others in the church. They have to conceal certain delicate or embarrassing facts. It is at times wise to withhold information even from one’s spouse. Pastors often don’t feel like they can “be themselves” with their church members because they don’t want to let down the façade of perfection. Even when surrounded by many people, the pastor may feel rather lonely because he has no genuine peers in the membership. Thus, it’s wise for pastors to develop relationships with other pastors for mutual encouragement and support.

Conclusion: Leadership is not for sissies. Those who rise to leadership positions within the church can expect to encounter at least some of the difficulties we’ve examined in this lesson. But none of these potential burdens should prevent a qualified, committed Christian from pursuing church leadership.