

Church Leadership

II. General Biblical Principles Which Apply to Leaders

Leaders are designated and gifted by God for their positions in the local church. Leaders are expected to serve in their positions in specific Biblical ways.

A. The Leader is Under God's authority. Spiritual authority comes from God. The leader is not free to lead any way or use any method he chooses. He is accountable to God for his activities. (For a lesson on "authority," see Luke 7:1-10. For a description of the three levels of Biblical authority, see John 20:21. Reread Matthew 28:18, "all authority ... has been given to me. Therefore go." This verse can be paraphrased "You are accountable to me; therefore do all the things I have commanded you to do.")

In what ways is the church leader under authority?

The leader is called by God. God is sovereign and He chooses the people He wants and provides the spiritual abilities they need to do their work. Paul was chosen; all the apostles were chosen. Each one of us has been chosen. God's chosen people are expected to be in submission to Him, to be obedient. (Consider the relationship between the vine and branches in John 15:16.)

The best leaders are good followers (Jesus Himself is our example; see John 5:17, 8:26-29). In order to be a good discipler, the leader must be a good disciple. The leader must be teachable, a good learner, and obedient if he is to successfully teach others.

B. The Leader is a Servant. (Consider the example of Jesus Philippians 2:1-8.) The most important characteristic of a godly leader is humility.

The church leader must be willing to serve others, to put the concerns of others ahead of personal concerns. "Christ came to serve, not to be served." (Luke 19:10) "He laid down His life for others."

A servant or slave does not have any personal "rights." Everything he does is for the benefit of someone of higher rank.

The leader does not pursue personal interests (See Matthew 20:20-28, esp 25-28. Also John 13:1-16. Note: the only time Jesus said He did something as an example was in John 13:15)

C. **The Leader is a Facilitator.** The primary responsibility of leaders in the local church is “equipping” (See Eph 4:11-16).

- To build up others
- To guide others
- To equip others
- To “influence” others

Successful church leaders get people involved. They share/delegate/assign responsibility to other believers so that those believers will become “equipped and prepared for the work of ministry.” Believers need guidance and experience if they are to become mature.

Something to think about: The maturity of the people for whom the leader is responsible is a significant measure of the quality of the leadership.

A facilitator is a trainer. (See II Timothy 2:2) He helps other believers to identify and develop their gifts and abilities. In fact, the church leader seeks to replace himself; to develop his replacement. The leader seeks to bring out the best in others. The goal of a leader is to help believers to reach their full potential.

In too many fellowships, the pastor seems to do all the work. In addition to preaching and teaching, he plans the services, sets up the chairs, sweeps the floor, cleans the toilets. However, when it comes to church work, it is best to “Put 10 men to work rather than do the work of 10 men.”

Some Attitudes/Behaviors which must be practiced by the leader

1. Obey God and serve God, not men, regardless of the consequences (Acts 5:27-32)
2. Earn the respect of people through integrity, sincerity, hard work, looking out for the interests of others, treating others with dignity and courtesy (II Corinthians 1:12, 6:3-10 Paul; I Timothy 4:12; Philippians 2:1-4)
3. Be a trainer and equipper of people; that is, produce disciples of Christ (II Timothy 2:2; Philippians 4:9; Colossians 1:6-7)
4. Be a team leader and co-worker (II Corinthians 8:16-23)
5. Exercise God-given authority justly in accord with Biblical principles (II Corinthians 13:10)
6. Depend on the power of God (Colossians 1:24-29, esp 28-29)
7. Serve with humility (Acts 20:19; I Corinthians 3:5-9; Ephesians 4:1-3;
8. Serve with love and gentleness (I Thessalonians 2:6-9; Romans 15:1-2)

Some Attitudes/Behaviors which must be avoided

There are warnings in Scripture about some practices and behaviors. Leaders must not:

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1. “Lord” it over others (I Peter 5:2-3)
2. Exercise authority harshly (I Corinthians 13:4-7; Ephesians 4:1-3)
3. Expect others to follow him instead of Christ (I Corinthians 4:1-2, 6-7)
4. Let his position cause personal pride (I Corinthians 3:5-11; II Corinthians 12:1-10, 3:4-6a)
5. Compromise the truth or principles of God’s Word (II Corinthians 4:1-2, 5)
6. Measure his success against others (II Corinthians 10:12-18; I Corinthians 3:5-9 maybe 10-15)

A Biblical Example of the Wrong Kind of “Shepherds” — Read Ezekiel 34:1-10

What Are Some Biblical Characteristics of a False Shepherd?

- He works for himself and thinks only of himself
- He works for money only
- He works because it is a job.
- He works because of the position.
- He works because of the honor it gives.
- He works because of the power over others it gives.
- He works because of the acceptance and recognition which comes to him.
- He works because he is forced into the responsibility.
- He works without real love for the flock.

Some Characteristics of an Abusive Leader

- He operates from a false basis of authority.
- He considers himself to be the source of knowledge, direction, and authority.
- He wears his spirituality on the outside (compare Matthew 23:23-28)
- He desires and expects to receive the recognition and respect of people.
- He dictates and demands help and favors from others.
- He uses his position and power to control others.
- He lacks integrity.

Jesus as the Example of the Good Shepherd — See John 10:1-6, 11, 14-16, 27-29

Jesus had the actions and reputation of a good shepherd (v11, 14)
He is the owner of the sheep (“My sheep”)
He knows the sheep by name (v27)
He protects His sheep (v27-29)
He gives comfort and security (v9)
He stays with His sheep (v9)
He is willing to lay down His life for the sheep (v11, 15, 28)
He seeks other sheep (v16)

Notice the response of the sheep

They trust the shepherd (v26)
They listen for the voice of the shepherd (v27)
They follow the shepherd (v28)

Thoughts are summarized in I Peter 5:1-4

Use I Corinthians 13:4-7 as a Basis of Discussion about the Love Required of a Leader

Meditate on Psalm 23. Think about this Psalm is a description of a pastor-shepherd. What are the responsibilities of the pastor?

The Church-Planter/Leader Must Work to Build Community

He must love the people among whom he ministers.
He must build a community which has a common allegiance to God (have identity in God).
He must build a community of individuals who are bound by love and sympathy for each other.
He must cultivate the desire among members of the community to live and serve together in unity.
He must train the community in goodness and to produce spiritual fruit.

Some Characteristics of the Church-Planter/Leader

He must know his position in Christ.

He must know and accept his role in relation to his congregation (Phil 2:1-4)

He must know and accept the sovereignty and guidance of Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit over the congregation.

He must be approachable and welcoming.

He must cultivate and try to maintain good personal relationships with all people.

He must know the names and circumstances of the members of his congregation.

He must listen to the needs and concerns of the members of his congregation, and understand them at a deep level.

He must encourage and help all people in positive ways.

He must pray for everyone under his oversight.

Other Precautions for the Church Leader

The Bible gives a number of significant warnings and encouragements addressed specifically to leaders. The wise leader who desires to please God and have a productive ministry will:

Flee immorality and evil desires (I Corinthians 6:18; II Timothy 2:22)

Flee the love the money and its root cause, greed (I Timothy 6:10-11; I Peter 5:2; I Corinthians 6:18)

Avoid foolish and stupid arguments (II Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9)

Stay away from false teachers and those who create strife (Titus 3:10; Romans 16:17)

Not neglect spiritual gifts (use spiritual gifts frequently) (I Timothy 4:13-14, 1:3-4)

Watch closely his personal life and teaching (I Timothy 4:16)

Promote Christ, not himself (I Corinthians 3:1-9; II Corinthians 4:3-6)

Lead from a position of servanthood; that is, under the authority of the Holy Spirit (I Peter 5:3-4)

Rely on the power and ability of the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 2:1-5; II Corinthians 4:7, 3:4-5)

Be humble and maintain a sense of privilege; do not become conceited or prideful (I Corinthians 10:11-13; II Corinthians 12:7)

Minister to the needs of people, not just administer programs (II Corinthians 3:1-3, 8:12-13)