

# Biblical leadership

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The Bible gives us:

- many examples of good leadership. eg. Moses, Joshua, Nehemiah.
- many examples of mixed quality leadership. eg. David, Solomon, Peter.
- many examples of poor leadership. eg. Saul and most of Israel's kings.
- the greatest example of leadership ever: Jesus.
- Lots of practical principles for effective leadership.

In this study we'll explore four important Bible principles for effective leadership.

## **Principle 1: Effective leaders are trained, not born.**

Good leadership doesn't just happen. It comes about through experience; through learning from mistakes; through mentoring, coaching and studying.... In other words: through continual training and development. Hebrews 5:14. Great leaders recognise this and invest time in their own training so they are always growing; always learning; always developing. They also invest time in training others who will be able to support, complement and expand their work.

Some examples:

- Moses trained Joshua and then gradually entrusted him with more and more responsibility. Deuteronomy 31:1-8; 32:44-47; Joshua 1:1-9.
- Jesus spent three years training His disciples and then gave them full responsibility for carrying on His work. Matthew 28:18-20; John 14:12,13.
- Paul mentored Timothy and then trusted him with the leadership of the big church in Ephesus. Philippians 2:19-24.

## **Principle 2: Effective leaders are themselves led by the Lord.**

You can't lead others if you don't know where you are going! That's why good leaders are continually seeking to hear God's voice, and to find God's will. When they know the direction that God wants them to move in, they trust the Lord, obey Him completely, and lead their people forward in faith and confidence. This means good leaders are continually obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit and dependent on His wisdom and power. Proverbs 3:5,6. Isaiah 30:21. Psalm 40:8. John 14:26, 16:7-15. People are pretty sensitive as to whether their leader is being led by the Lord or just seeking to do their own thing. Knowing that the leader is being led by the Lord gives the people security and confidence so they are more likely to go forward and embrace all the God has for them.

Being led by the Lord was the secret of Jesus' effectiveness as a leader. He only did what the Father told Him to do! John 5:19; 12:49,50; 14:24. And we all know how effective Jesus was!

## **Principle 3: Effective leaders set a good example.**

It's often hard to make sense of what people say, but it's always easy to see what they do. Effective leaders know this and try to set a consistently good example. They know that when they do something well it's likely their people will also do it well, (including basic things like praying, sharing the gospel, being generous, caring for individuals, and being thankful). Unfortunately the reverse is also true: people follow bad examples just as well as they follow good ones so when leaders set a bad example their people will probably follow suit.

Jesus was a great example to His disciples and told them they should follow His example and do what He did: *I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.* John 13:15. The disciples followed Jesus' example so well they were later given the name "Christians" – Christ imitators. Acts 11:26.

Jesus example is described in Philippians 2:1-11 and provides a wonderful set of qualities that all Christian leaders would do well to emulate:

- Encouragement
- Joy
- Unselfish
- Comfort
- Like-mindedness
- Not conceited
- Fellowship
- Love
- Humble
- Tenderness
- Unity of spirit
- Focused on others' interests
- Compassion
- Unity of purpose
- Servant-hood

Because Jesus demonstrated these qualities *God exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* Philippians 2:9-11.

If you want to be a great leader, follow Jesus' example! Matthew 5:14-16.

#### **Principle 4: Effective leaders are servants, laying down their lives for those they are leading.**

Jesus only ministered for three and a half years. During this time He laid aside His own needs and wants to serve the disciples and those in the local area. He was the ultimate 'servant leader'. At the Cross Jesus then laid down His life for all peoples in the greatest demonstration of love the world has ever seen. John 3:16; John 15:13; Mark 10:45.

Jesus now calls us to do the same: to lay down our lives for others. In fact, He tells us that the only way we will really experience fullness of life is to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Him. Matthew 16:24,25; Luke 9:23-25. As we die to our own desires, walk in obedience to the Lord, and serve others in the same way Jesus did we find what life is really all about.

This is especially true for Christian leaders. If they try to exalt themselves due to their leadership role, they will not prosper and may even find themselves being opposed by God. Matthew 23:12; James 4:6. Effective leaders soon learn that the best thing they can do is to humble themselves before the Lord and before the people they serve. James 4:10; Psalm 25:9. They spend their lives seeking the good of those they serve, and do it with all their energy, wisdom and grace. This is the only way to have God's blessing on what they are doing and gain His approval for their leadership. Colossians 3:23,24; Matthew 25:14-29.

Many leaders even find that they have to lay down their leadership for the sake of others. There comes a time when they have so trained others that they must step aside and allow the next generation to continue 'their' ministry. How can others develop and grow in their leadership if the leader is doing all the leading? To lay down your life for others takes much grace, love, and maturity. To lay down your leadership for others takes even more grace, love and maturity! You may not have 'centre stage' any more, but you will know your leadership has created something ongoing in the lives of others; something eternal. After all, that's how the Kingdom of God works! Matthew 20:26,27.

Christian leadership comes with much responsibility because we are serving the Lord's people, and, at the same time, the Lord Himself. If we follow the principles outlined above we will be leaders who are continually growing in our leadership, who are always seeking to be led by the Holy Spirit, and who maintain a consistently great example as servant leaders. Being a Christian leader is a very high calling, but if we serve the lord faithfully we can look forward to hearing Him say to us. *Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master.* Matthew 25:23.