

Leading

1.	Characteristics of Christian Leadership.....	1
2.	The Call to Christian Leadership	7

Copyright © 2005 YouthTRAIN

All Bible quotations from the New Living Translation unless otherwise stated.

1

Characteristics of Christian Leadership

Defining Christian Leadership

In this first section on Christian leadership we begin by asking the question, “What is a leader?” It is assumed that in embarking on this course of study you have a desire to grow in your effectiveness as a leader but in order to press on toward a goal you need to have a clear idea of what you are aiming at.

A great leader once defined leadership as:

“The art of consolidating the attention of the people against a single adversary and taking care that nothing will split up that attention.”

It’s a good definition, but unfortunately it was uttered by Adolph Hitler in his book “Mein Kampf”. So leadership is not just about **how** we lead people but **where**.

If you have to tell people you’re a leader, you are probably not.

In this session we will look broadly at the sort of leadership that is required to lead young people toward maturity in Christ

1. A Biblical Description of Leadership

The Bible offers further descriptions of Christian Leadership:

So Jesus called them together and said, "You know that in this world kings are tyrants, and officials lord it over the people beneath them. But among you it should be quite different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many."

- Jesus, Mark 10:42-45

Dear brothers and sisters, when I first came to you I didn't use lofty words and brilliant ideas to tell you God's message. And my message and my preaching were very plain. I did not use wise and persuasive speeches, but the Holy Spirit was powerful among you.

- Paul, 1 Corinthians 2:1-4

Care for the flock of God entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. Don't lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your good example.

- Peter, 1 Peter 5:2-3

These descriptions of leadership take our previous definitions to a new level. There is a "spiritual" dimension added in which God is the source of authority and Jesus is the example of how it must be exercised.

The spiritual leader must be "spiritual" first and a "leader" second.

From these verses we learn:

- a. The Christian leader must operate as a servant, looking for ways to serve and make sacrifices for others.
- b. The Christian leader must rely on the Holy Spirit as the source of their power and effectiveness in ministry
- c. The Christian leader must care for those whom they lead, watching over them with love.
- d. The Christian leader must set a good example for those whom they lead to follow.

Natural Leadership vs Spiritual Leadership

1. Similarities and Differences

Natural leadership and spiritual (Christian) leadership have similarities but they also have significant differences.

a. Similarities

i. Origin

Both natural leadership ability and spiritual leadership gifting originate in God. He creates us and that process of creation includes personality and natural abilities and traits.

ii. Development

Both natural leadership ability and spiritual leadership gifting need development. They may exist in latent form but in order for them to reach full expression and effectiveness, training is needed.

b. Differences

i. Source

While both natural leadership ability and spiritual leadership gifting originate in God, natural leadership does not depend on God. The natural leader will lead whether or not they acknowledge God. They are self confident, depending on their own ability. The Christian leader however, will be God confident, recognising the need for constant dependence upon Him.

"The best spiritual leaders are strong natural servants, who assume leadership simply because they see it as a way in which they can serve."

- Robert Greenleaf

ii. Ambition

Inherent in natural leadership is the desire to lead. The natural leader will see the opportunity to lead and will naturally take the initiative necessary to get things done. They will enjoy the responsibility of leading others and will tend to guard their position of leadership against threat. The Christian leader is, however, content to not lead. They are available to God yet willing to be dispensable and to step aside if another should be appointed to succeed them.

The real leader has no need to lead—he is content to point the way.

- Henry Miller.

2. The Example of Paul

i. Paul as a Natural Leader

⁴Yet I could have confidence in myself if anyone could. If others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! ⁵For I was circumcised when I was eight days old, having been born into a pure-blooded Jewish family that is a branch of the tribe of Benjamin. So I am a real Jew if there ever was one! What's more, I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. ⁶And zealous? Yes, in fact, I harshly persecuted the church. And I obeyed the Jewish law so carefully that I was never accused of any fault.

- Philippians 3:4-6

ii. Paul as a Spiritual Leader

¹²Are we trying to pat ourselves on the back again? No, we are giving you a reason to be proud of us, so you can answer those who brag about having a spectacular ministry rather than having a sincere heart before God. ¹³If it seems that we are crazy, it is to bring glory to God. And if we are in our right minds, it is for your benefit. ¹⁴Whatever we do, it is because Christ's love controls us.

- 2 Corinthians 5:12-14

Note the contrasts above. Paul went from being:

- Self confident
- Self sufficient
- Self righteous

to being

- Sincere
- God glorifying
- Motivated by love

Those in Christian leadership may have many natural leadership gifts and abilities or very few. Either way God has called them to utilise both natural and spiritual leadership gifts in ways that acknowledge and depend on Him.

"The leader is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go on ahead, whereas the others follow, not realising all along that they are being directed from behind. There are times when a leader must move out ahead of the flock, go off in a new direction, confident that he is leading his people the right way."

- Nelson Mandela

Servant Leadership

Christian Leadership is essentially servant leadership, and so to fully understand what it means to lead God's people, we need to examine this topic more carefully.

1. Servant Leadership is Other-Centred

The servant leader is not preoccupied with what they gain from leadership. They are not interested in status or comfort. They willingly undergo hardship and suffering humbling themselves in order to meet the needs of others. They are not too important or dignified to undertake even the lowest of tasks and they do so with no thought of personal gain.

"Of a good leader, when his task is finished, his goal achieved, they will say, "We did this ourselves."

- Lao-Tse, Chinese Philosopher, 600 BC.

³ Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. ⁴ So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, ⁵ and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he had around him.

⁶ When he came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, why are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷ Jesus replied, "You don't understand now why I am doing it; someday you will."

⁸ "No," Peter protested, "you will never wash my feet!"

Jesus replied, "But if I don't wash you, you won't belong to me."

⁹ Simon Peter exclaimed "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!"

¹⁰ Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you are clean, but that isn't true of everyone here." ¹¹ For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹² After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing?" ¹³ You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because it is true. ¹⁴ And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵ I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important than the one who sends them. ¹⁷ You know these things—now do them! That is the path of blessing.

- John 13:3-16

2. Servant Leadership is God Honouring

The servant leader follows the example of Jesus and gladly relinquishes status and power for the benefit of others. They do not hang on to leadership because they know it is not a privilege to be contested, but an honour to be conferred.

³ Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. ⁴ Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing. ⁵ Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. ⁶ Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. ⁷ He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. ⁸ And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross. ⁹ Because of this, God raised him up to the heights of heaven and gave him a name that is above every other name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- Philippians 3:3-11

The challenge for us as Christian leaders is to ensure we model a form of leadership that epitomises the servant attitude of Jesus in which we rely on God to infuse the gifts He has given us with His Spirit, and lead with a desire to live sacrificially for others and to bring honour to Him.

People ask the difference between a leader and a boss. The leader works in the open, and the boss in covert. The leader leads, and the boss drives.

- Theodore Roosevelt

"Leadership is one of the things you cannot delegate. You either exercise it, or you abdicate it."

- Robert Goizueta

"Leadership is the ability to obtain followers."

- James C. Georges

Answer the workbook questions on the following two pages.

1. Characteristics of Christian Leadership

a. Understand

List ten qualities a Christian leader needs to cultivate in their lives:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

b. Reflect



Reflect on your own leadership by placing an "x" on the lines below in response to each of the statements about leadership:

Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always

"I am happy to see others excel in leadership, even when they are doing better than me." _____

"I willingly face discomfort and inconvenience, in exercising Christian leadership." _____

"I am willing to undertake menial tasks that are unseen by others." _____

"I am willing to go out of my way to meet the needs of those whom I lead." _____

"I am willing to pass on my leadership responsibilities to another person at any time." _____

"I am willing for my efforts in leadership to go unnoticed and unappreciated." _____

c. Apply

Using your responses from the previous page, reflect on your role as a servant leader. What evidence is there of servanthood in your ministry. What are some practical ways in which you can begin to develop greater servanthood to those whom you lead? (Minimum 100 words):

2

The Call to Christian Leadership

Dimensions of the Call

Indispensable to Christian leadership is the call of God. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, and it is He who calls and appoints His leaders. The role of church members is to discern and recognise this call.

This call operates at three dimensions:

1. The Universal Call – the call common to us all in which God calls us to be his own people
2. The General Call – the call to service in a given sphere of ministry using the particular gifts God has given us
3. The Specific Call – the call to serve, outworking our general call in a specific time and place.

1. The Universal Call

There is a sense that all believers are “called” - called to be God’s own people.

Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure.

Ephesians 1:4-5

Note the following points:

1. **This call is God’s initiative... it is not of our own doing.**
While it is up to us to choose whether or not we receive the gift of salvation, we should not forget that it is God’s gift - something He has initiated even before we were born.
2. **This call is brought about through God’s love for us... it is not brought about through our love for God.**
We can take no credit for the privilege of being called into God’s kingdom. It came about through His love for us and any love we feel for Him in return originated in Him anyway for “God is love” (1 John 4:16).
3. **This call is to be holy and without fault through being “in Christ” and relying on His merits... it is not to be holy and without fault through our own efforts.**
No matter how good we might be we will never reach the standard of perfection required in order to spend eternity with a holy God. Instead we rely on Christ and all he has done for us.
4. **This call is primarily for God’s pleasure... it is not primarily for our own pleasure.**
God takes great pleasure in having us as His children. This is why He took the initiative to save us and bring us into His family.

⁸ God saved you by his special favour when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.”

- Ephesians 2:8-9

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

- John 3:16

²³ For all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard. ²⁴ Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins.

- Romans 3:23-24

You should behave instead like God’s very own children, adopted into his family—calling him “Father, dear Father.”

- Romans 8:15

2. The General Call

On responding to this universal call, all receive a spiritual gift for the benefit of the whole Body of believers. This spiritual gift constitutes a general call to service:

However, He has given each one of us a special gift according to the generosity of Christ.

He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ, until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.

Ephesians 3:7, 11-13

Note the following:

1. **The gift and its associated calling is given according to God's generosity... not according to our merit.**
We don't earn a greater gift or receive a greater calling, by being a "good Christian". Our faithfulness will enable us to inherit all God has for us, but we can never earn it.
2. **The gift is given for the benefit of the church... not for the benefit of the individual.**
The Christian who thinks that their faith is between them and God alone has misunderstood the fact that they have a gift for the whole body. They are required to use it.
3. **The leader is to equip God's people to do God's work.... not to do her/his own work.**
They should always point people's attention toward God and remind them of their accountability to Him.
4. **This work is to build up the church... it is not to build up the leader (and their reputation).**
No leader should expect any praise, renown or credit for what they do in God's name and for His kingdom.

⁴ Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. ⁵ There are different kinds of service in the church, but it is the same Lord we are serving. ⁶ There are different ways God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work through all of us. ⁷ A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church.

- 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

3. The Specific Call

Further to a general call we must discern a specific call about the operation of a Christian leadership gifting. This call concerns details such as scope, timing and location.

Next Paul and Silas travelled through the area of Phrygia and Galatia, because the Holy Spirit had told them not to go into the province of Asia at that time. Then coming to the borders of Mysia, they headed for the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus did not let them go. So instead, they went on through Mysia to the city of Troas.

That night Paul had a vision. He saw a man from Macedonia in northern Greece, pleading with him, "Come over here and help us." So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, for we could only conclude that God was calling us to preach the Good News there.

Acts 16:6-10

Note the following important points:

1. Paul and Silas were not to go into the province of Asia "at that time." They later visited Ephesus in that province on their return journey and Paul stopped briefly, promising to return later "God willing" (Acts 18:19-21). Paul did return while on his third missionary journey and stayed two years, with God perform many powerful miracles through him (Acts 19:8-12).
2. Paul and Silas made an effort to head for the province of Bithynia but the Spirit of Jesus did not let them go. It was not that they were being sinful in heading in that direction; the directive not to go did not come until they had begun to move.
3. Before a door of opportunity was opened, others were closed. The call to Macedonia came after the prohibition to enter Asia and Bithynia. Paul and Silas continued their journey not knowing where they were going, but content in knowing where they were not to go.
4. On entering Macedonia, Paul and Silas soon encountered opposition and were imprisoned. Yet they were able to praise God because they knew that they were doing His will.

Discerning a Call to Leadership

Discerning a call to Christian leadership is seldom as clear as a vision in the night! Nevertheless there are some avenues for clear and specific guidance that can be pursued.

He who thinks he leads
but has no one
following is only going
for a walk.

1. Discerning a General Call to Lead

a. The Confirmation of Others

The call to lead will be recognised by the body of believers.

- Exercise leadership in small ways in areas of service you are already involved with. Seek feedback from those whom you lead; a positive response may indicate the presence of a leadership gifting.
- Consult wise leaders who know you well and will be honest with you. They can help you clarify your gifting and will offer helpful insights to assist you in the discernment of your call.

¹Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called "the black man"), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. ² One day as these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work I have for them." ³ So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

b. The Evidence of Spiritual Fruit

Look for evidence that your leadership is resulting in changed lives. If members of the body are being "built up" and are becoming "mature and full grown in the Lord", then you may have a leadership gifting.

c. Personal Fulfilment

While leadership won't always be enjoyable it should be fulfilling. If you are finding satisfaction from leadership and it is drawing you closer to God, then you may have a leadership gifting.

- Acts 13:1-3

2. Discerning a Specific Call to Lead

In discerning a specific call to leadership, look for answers from the following avenues of guidance to line up.

a. The Confirmation of Others

In endeavouring to determine the details of a specific call to leadership (i.e. scope, timing and location), the advice of others is important. Again, the advice of wise people who know us well can help in ensuring we make right decisions.

⁵ A wise man is mightier than a strong man, and a man of knowledge is more powerful than a strong man. ⁶ So don't go to war without wise guidance; victory depends on having many counselors.

- Proverbs 24:5-6

b. Circumstance

Allow doors to open - don't hammer them down! We need to be sure that the doorway we are stepping through is one God has opened for us.

c. God's Word

We must listen to what God reveals to us through Bible as we regularly study it. While God can and does lead us through one specific verse, guidance will generally be received over a period of time. Take note of prophetic utterances, but ensure they line up with Scripture.

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

- Psalm 119:105

d. Inner Witness of the Spirit

Note the inner prompting of God's Holy Spirit. He is given to us as a guide to lead us into truth. It is dangerous to act on this "prompting" alone, for it is easy for us to deceive ourselves; God will confirm the sense of prompting by speaking to others. Yet this sense of inner prompting is not unimportant. It brings the sense of conviction necessary for effective spiritual service.

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not be presenting his own ideas; he will be telling you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.

- John 16:13

<p><i>Answer the workbook questions on the following two pages.</i></p>

2. The Call to Christian Leadership

a. Understand

List the three types of “call” and use a sentence to define each:

i.

ii.

iii.

b. Reflect



Reflect on your own call to leadership by placing an “x” on the lines below in response to each of the statements about leadership:

Never Seldom Sometimes Often Always

“I am conscious of a clear general sense of call to leadership.”

“I receive positive feedback from those whom I am leading now.”

“My sense of call is confirmed by those in leadership over me.”

“There is evidence of spiritual growth in the lives of those whom I am leading now.”

“I gain a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in leadership.”

“My leadership responsibilities draw me closer to God.”

“I am conscious of a clear specific sense of call to leadership.”

c. Apply

Using your responses from the previous page, reflect on your call to leadership. What evidence is there of a clear call to leadership. Keep in mind that the call to lead is not necessarily clear to us when we start out. What doubts about your call do you have? (Minimum 100 words):