

Course 2, Lecture #1

Leaders Need to Have the Same Desire as Jesus

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This course explores the principles of Christian leadership, modelling the leadership demonstrated by Jesus over the 3½ years of His ministry.

What the Course Is, and What It Is Not.

This course is not a pathway to becoming an elder, or any other leader specifically within the church. Nor is this course meant to replace our own growth in dealing with individuals and learning the leadership skills needed to deal with people. Rather, this course is to lay down the main principles that I have gained over 40 years of ministry experience, which I was never taught, yet have come to realize are the key principles in leading God's people in a biblical way, following the model the Lord established with his disciples.

What Leadership Is, and What It Is Not.

Leadership is not having the loudest voice or being the person who overtalks everyone else. Nor is leadership expecting people to follow you because of your position or title. Leadership is not based upon experience or education or because an individual is on staff. Leadership, however, guides people to become more like Christ in such a way as they want to follow. When people want to follow you because they see the genuineness in your life of your care for them and your integrity and your love for the Lord, that influence will develop individuals who will listen to your lead and follow your example.

Everyone has the capacity to be a leader, but not everyone should be nor wants to be a leader. Leadership comes with great personal sacrifice. This was obviously true with Jesus and all of His disciples. When Jesus called the disciples, we read in the Gospel of Matthew that they left all and followed him.

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him (Mat 4:18-20).

This would've been a great sacrifice as they were professional fishermen who had a family business and servants, which indicates it was a successful business. However, they walked away from it all to follow Christ. We also read in Luke that Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, which indicates that Peter at this point was married. For Peter to follow the Lord at this point of his life required a great sacrifice of time and service.

And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. 39 And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them (Luke 4:38-39).¹

There's always a sacrifice that is required to be a servant of the Lord, but we must remember that the Lord is gracious and always honours those who serve Him, and makes sacrifices to do the work that He calls us to do. This sacrifice may also extend to the entire family as it is possible that later Peter's wife may have joined him in his ministry. "Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? (1Cor 9:5).

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version*

Modelling Perfect Christian Leadership

Jesus serves as the ultimate example of perfect leadership, as He demonstrated humility, compassion, and unwavering commitment to His Father's will, and thus revealed the eternal action of the heavenly plan.

In the 3 1/2 years of public ministry, the Lord Jesus did more in that time than any other human throughout history has ever achieved in influencing others. Even from a secular view, it is obvious that those 3 1/2 years of the teaching and ministry of Christ have changed art, music and even philosophy. And certainly, within the Christian realm, the influence that the Lord Jesus established has changed this world by enabling us to raise up disciples who have the same desire and passion to serve our heavenly father.

Definition of Biblical Leadership

Leadership is the ability to influence, guide, and inspire others toward a biblical truth or vision. Strong biblical leaders provide direction, motivation, and support, always seeking to be invisible so that only Christ is seen, worshipped, and praised.²³ Leaders set the tone by their behaviour and conduct in troubled times, leading by establishing a model for future leadership.

² Padmavati, "7 Definitions of Leadership Every Executive Must Know," *Northwest Executive Education*, March 20, 2025, <https://northwest.education/insights/career-growth/7-leadership-definitions-insights-impact-2025/>.

³ "What Is Leadership?," CCL, accessed August 8, 2025, <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/what-is-leadership-a-definition/>.

Key Aspects of Spiritual Leadership

Following an acrostic of the word LEADERSHIP, we can see 10 aspects that encompasses the qualities of great leadership. Each one reveals the importance that exists in building influence among the people so that we gain the respect for them to follow.

1. Listening - Rather than dictating, leaders listen and understand the thoughts of others while guiding them in unity.
2. Exchanging Communication - Effective leaders express their words clearly and choose them carefully.
3. Authenticity - A leader is genuine in their life, the same each day.
4. Decision Making - They make informed choices and take responsibility for those choices.
5. Empathy - We care about those we lead, and we want them to succeed.
6. Route -Vision - They set a clear goal and propose a route to follow, and communicate that vision so those can gain that vision as well.
7. Sacrifice - Leaders understand that a sacrifice is required of time and effort.
8. Honesty & Integrity - True leadership is built on honesty, trust, and integrity.
9. Influence - Leaders inspire action through words and example, investing in others.
10. Privacy - Confidentiality is key to gaining and maintaining confidence, and giving people the trust to place in you to follow.

Where it All Begins

Leading God's people requires that we have the same desire as Jesus did. For Jesus, this was His food. "Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work" " (John 4:34).

In this passage, Jesus met the woman at the well as they passed through Samaria. In the course of that conversation, the disciples went into town to buy food, and Jesus was left alone with this woman. When the disciples returned, they asked the Lord if He was hungry, and His reply revealed the core essence of what He was there to do. The disciples, however, completely misunderstood the use of the word food, thinking that He had been fed already. However, Jesus was talking about His mission and purpose, and His passion. For Him to speak to a woman, and a Samaritan, emphasized the passion that the Lord had to accomplish the work set before Him. His food was to do the will of the Father. That is the emphasis of Christian leadership. A leader is one whose food is to do the Father's will. And therefore, it is impossible for anybody to be a leader within a church or have any spiritual influence in the lives of others if we first do not have a passion to serve our heavenly Father, to accomplish His work in the lives of others. If we lack a direct passion, then we are not leading, rather we are fulfilling an obligation that we have been placed into. The goal of a spiritual leader is to do the Father's will. And so, above all things, we must gain an understanding of the obligation of obedience, and that obligation comes when we have a high view of the holiness of God. Therefore, leaders must be students of the word of God, constantly seeking the deep truths of the faith, constantly desiring to know the attributes in the nature of our heavenly Father, so that we will gain a glimpse of His holiness and truly come before Him like Isaiah did where he stated "here am I, send me" (Isa. 6:8).

We have an obligation of obedience.

Believers are called to obey God's commands and follow the example set by Jesus in serving others selflessly. Though this is true of all believers, those who have the opportunity to serve the Lord in a church setting must understand what a privilege it is to serve the Saviour. It is important to understand that if we truly understand the measure to which we have been forgiven, and the depth of our offence before a holy God, then serving Him is a privilege and should never be seen as a burden. As a believer who has been gifted with the Holy Spirit and given a spiritual gift, we do have an obligation to serve the Lord, but that obligation should come out of a deep love for Him and a passion to do His work, since we want, above all, to give Him honour and glory, and to do the Father's will. If we do not see service to the Lord as a privilege, then we will only see it as a burden.

And so, the higher our understanding of the Lord is, the greater our passion to serve him, and the lower understanding of the Lord in our life, the greater we will see service to Him as a burden.

The call to serve as spiritual leaders.

While serving is an obligation given to all believers, we must remember that God selects and prepares leaders for the kingdom (Mark 10:40). "No work of God will be left destitute until its purposes are achieved"⁴

The Lord desires to use His redeemed people to serve Him, even if He has not called you into a spiritual position of Eldership or any formal church office. All believers are called to serve

⁴J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer*, Updated ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007).

because we have all experienced the life-changing act of redemption, and have been granted a spiritual gift for the building of the church. However, He seeks individuals whose hearts are committed to Him (2 Chron. 16:9). We must remember that spiritual leadership is necessary to keep the church on track and devoted to Him. Though this is the primary function of the elders, all believers participate in this. To guide others to grow in the image of Christ while raising mature believers to be future leaders, is the mandate of all spiritual leaders.

Biblical excuses that have been used for not serving the Lord are rejected.

Throughout Scripture, individuals offered excuses for why God couldn't use them, each of these men looked only at their own inabilities and felt that they were legitimate reasons that would prevent them from serving the Lord. And yet, as we examine these excuses we see that none of them were valid, and in fact the Lord would use these men with their apparent deficiencies to do the perfect work for Him.

- Moses - Exodus 4:10
- Jeremiah - Jeremiah 1:6-7
- Saul - 1 Samuel 9:21
- David - 1 Samuel 16:11-12
- Gideon - Judges 6:15
- Paul - 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Despite their objections, God both created them as they were and chose to use them, emphasizing that He looks at the heart (1 Sam. 16:7) and uses the lowly to accomplish His purposes (1 Cor. 1:28-30). Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

Paul said he did not approach the Corinthians “with lofty speech or wisdom”; in other words, Paul was saying, when I came to you, I didn’t try to impress you. I didn’t come to you with an attitude of superiority. I didn’t exercise my position of leadership in the context of arrogance or self-exaltation.

Understanding the seriousness of service.

To be used effectively by God, believers must:

- Be devoted to Him (Psalm 86:2)
- Walk in holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1)
- Live a separated life (2 Cor. 6:14-18)
- Be people of prayer (Colossians 4:2)
- Not be ashamed (2 Timothy 1:8)
- Be thankful (Psalm 106:1)

Accountability of our labour in service.

Scripture tells us that we are blessed, and at the same time held accountable for our service to God. This is meant to encourage us to be diligent with our time and service, knowing the Lord honours those who serve Him faithfully. This applies to leaders, as the scripture reveals, not just

elders. Therefore, all who seek to lead will give an account of our efforts to the Lord. And this is why we must take our service seriously, knowing that the Lord will honour faithful service to Him.

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you (Heb 13:17).

The Blessing of Serving Christ.

The joy of serving Jesus and the reciprocating blessings are expressed by Paul:

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:6,7; Gal 6:8).

This principle of giving applies equally to serving; the Lord returns blessings upon those who serve Him wholeheartedly, providing both spiritual and earthly rewards. Serving the Lord should not be seen as a labour, but a privilege. We are given the privilege to have an eternal impact by labouring faithfully for the Kingdom of God.

The Danger of Indifference.

“And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel” (Judg. 2:10).

Just as in the time of the Judges, when those who are God's people have minimal interest in serving Him, the consequences become evident.

When there is a lack of desire to serve the Lord, or service offered with minimal effort and care, the church will be affected. Many churches suffer because there is no sense of the urgency

to give the Lord the glory that is unto Him, and there is a lack of understanding of the privilege and the accountability of our service. This leads to an absence of God's blessing and a visual indicator of complacency.

Prayer Points

- Pray that the Lord would create a desire in your heart to serve Him.
- Ask the Lord to forgive any indifference regarding serving Him.
- Seek forgiveness for excuses that prevent fulfilling God-given tasks, and pray for clarity on how to serve Him effectively in your current life circumstances.
- Request that the Lord equip you daily to serve effectively, giving Him all the glory through your labour.

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