**Part One: Introduction to Leadership**

Why Study Church Leadership?

The quality of church leadership will determine the character and effectiveness of any church. That's why the Bible stresses the importance of qualified church leadership and gives specific standards for selecting those who would serve as leaders of God’s people. Neglecting biblical standards for leadership is a sure formula for problems in the church.

“The nature of leadership within the local church must be viewed through the lens of Scripture, not through the lens of democratic principles and modern corporate structures. Human organizations have goals and agendas that do not correspond with the calling of God’s people. Local churches have been deeply harmed by the adoption of secular organizational philosophies.”( www.cbcgr.org)

Importance of Leadership

Apart from evangelism, no church ministry is as urgent as leadership training. Effective leadership will motivate God’s people to achieve the goals to which God calls them. Without active and effective leadership, churches become first complacent and then stagnant. The artist Michelangelo once said, “The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss our goal, but that our aim is too low and we reach it.”

Leadership for God’s people has been exemplified and commanded by our Lord. After training His disciples to be followers, He gave them the commission and authority to lead. The Great Commission of Jesus has two parts (Matt. 28:18-20. 1) “Go and make disciples.” This is evangelism; 2) “Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.” This is teaching and leading.

Principles of leadership.

Effective, godly leadership is the key to building soul-winning churches that enlarge the borders of the Kingdom and encourage more followers to lead. The extent to which church leaders instill the

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principles of leadership in their followers will directly influence the effectiveness of their churches. It is usually the case that dedicated and focused leadership will bring people to Jesus and get them involved in the Lord’s work, whereas average churches are the predictable result of average leadership. But it should not be assumed the inferior leadership will have the benign result of producing merely inferior churches. Poor leadership tends to harm and break down churches and destroy the work of generations who have labored to build up the church. Solomon’s dire warning applies here: “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18).

An analysis of leadership will reveal several basic principles.

1. People generally go where their leaders lead or allow them to go.

2. Poor leaders tend to take their people only as far as they themselves are willing or able to go.

3. Good leaders, regardless of their personal limitations, will challenge their people to achieve their maximum potential.

4. Nothing moves or happens without some form of leadership.

5. The success of a group can be measured by the quality of its leadership.

Church leaders would do well to observe how effective leadership is sought and demanded in every sector of private, corporate, and public life. 1) The commercial world is always searching for effective leaders who will make business more competitive and profitable; 2) governments seek leaders who can direct the affairs of nations on every political level; 3) school administrators are needed to regulate the academic world; 4) athletic teams need effective leaders to guide them to victory; 5) Christian homes need godly parents who will rear their children according to biblical principles in an atmosphere of trust; and 6) God’s house, the church, can be a beacon of light in our communities and effectively reach out to a lost world only under qualified and godly leaders.

What Is Leadership?

**Leadership defined**

Leadership is the “process of [social influence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_influence) in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others to accomplish a common

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task. Leaders carry out this process by applying their leadership attributes, such as [beliefs](http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/performance/beliefs.html), [values](http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/performance/values.html), ethics, [character](http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leadchr.html), [knowledge](http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/knowledge/knowledge.html), and [skills](http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/performance/skills.html)“ (Wikipedia). According to Peter G. Wiwcharuck, leadership is the art of getting things done through people. Biblically speaking, leadership is the task of leading God’s people into mutual ministry with one another for the purpose of building up the body of Christ and reaching out to the world (Eph. 4:11-13; Matt. 28:18-20).

In the corporate world and governmental circles, the focus of leadership is often on power, authority, or control. Leaders often attempt to promote their own agenda at the expense of their fellow workers. They use the power of their position for self-advancement in a climate of competition and mutual mistrust.

Godly leadership takes the opposite approach. Those who lead God’s people cultivate holy relationships among brethren in an atmosphere of trust. The humility exemplified by Jesus is the guiding principle of Christian leadership.

**Good leaders are good teachers**

The goal of all teaching is to cause changes in the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior of those who are taught. Good teaching will cause positive changes, and bad teaching will have the opposite effect.

Good teachers will not only impart knowledge, they will cause the learners to understand what they have learned and make it a positive part of their lives. Good teachers will also show learners how to apply what they have learned for the benefit of themselves and others. In this way, learners become teachers, and as such they are a part of the continuing chain of teaching and learning that ensures the continuance of spiritual leading and following among God’s people.

**Leadership involves both leading and following.**

In any group of people that remains together for an extended period of time, the principles of leading and following will naturally assert

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themselves: one or more persons will become the leader(s) of the group, and the rest will follow. Even if no formal selection process is involved, one or more people will eventually lead the group to which they belong. These leaders will direct and influence the others who do not choose to lead; that is, they consent to become followers and place themselves under the influence and guidance of those who choose or agree to become leaders.

**Godly leadership involves doing what is right.**

“There are really only two basic principles of leadership that all good leaders follow. (1) When put in a position to lead, lead. (2) When you need to make a decision, always do the right thing; and you will always know what the right thing is” (General Norman Schwarzkopf). Too many leaders do not assert good leadership principles and fail to lead their groups to their full potential. Other leaders take their followers in the wrong direction, perhaps for the wrong reasons. In both cases, their followers could not achieve the goals they might have reached under good leadership.

**Leadership Involves a Leader’s Plan**

Those who lead God’s people must have a vision of what needs to be done in the service of God. Then they must develop a plan that will allow them to lead God’s people to the goal they envision. Finally, the right actions must be taken on the part of both leaders and followers to reach the intended goal.

**Leadership Involves Training New Leaders**

“Success without a successor is a failure” (Peter G. Wiwcharuck). Good leaders are always looking for their replacements. Many groups have eventually become ineffective or have disbanded completely because the original leader insisted on maintaining power and control of the group. Good leaders will recognize the leadership potential of others within the group and train new leaders. In fact, the original group can multiply itself by sending out trained leaders to start other groups. This is the principle of the multiplying ministry that Jesus had in mind when He gave the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20).

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Leadership and Human Nature

**The Nature of Man**

The Bible answers the inquiry of the psalmist, “What is Man?” (Psalm 8:4) by informing us that man is a creation of God and that we have a past, present, and future with God. We find that God created man (and all creatures) for His pleasure (Isa. 43:7; Rev. 4:11); in our lives here on earth, we are to serve and glorify God (1 Sam. 12:24; John 17:4; 1 Cor. 10:31); and God has prepared an eternal home for the faithful from all nations where we may praise and serve Him forever (Rev. 22:3; Rev. 7:9).

**A creation with potential for good and evil**

Man, the creation of God, has the potential for good and evil. The Bible speaks of the nature of man as a “dual personality.” The spirit of man wants to serve God, while the flesh of man wants to serve Satan (Rom. 7:14-25).

**A creation with a need for leadership**

The great potential of man for good or evil must be directed toward good. Spiritual leaders are required to guide man in the right direction. A review of the nature of man reveals that he is a special creation intended to have dominion over God’s creation. He has been created to be a doer, or worker. Because man has been given a part of God’s nature (a spirit that will live forever) man is by nature a believer and worshipper that naturally wants to be part of a group. These attributes of human beings indicate the need for leadership within groups of people. Two additional aspects of human nature should be noted at this point: 1) people are slow to change, and 2) all people are sinners. These last two points should be remembered as we continue to study the nature of man, the creation of God.

Statistically, human beings are predictable in nearly every aspect of their activities and thinking. Human intelligence, behavior, and achievement can be represented by a graphic known as a bell curve. This statistical pattern shows graphically that most people are average and that a few people will achieve higher or lower results than the majority of any population who are average or near average. Typical test scores in a school classroom will show that a

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few students will achieve high marks. A few will have low marks, while the majority of the students in the class will have average marks. Teachers assign grades to their students on this basis.

Good teachers (academic leaders) can inspire their students (academic followers) to achieve higher marks. Some students will wish to become teachers because their teacher has inspired them.

In a similar way, church leaders can inspire their Christian followers to grow in their faith and serve God in a more effective way by becoming leaders in the church. Unfortunately, most Christians remain “average” because they remain uninspired by their leaders. Most Christian leaders project a “follow me” attitude of complacency and do not train their followers to eventually become leaders.

Churches are meeting oriented. Most church members attend worship services regularly, but they are not inspired by the unclear objectives of their church leaders. Many churches invest more in property than they do in people. In essence, many worship services amount to an event in which actors and spectators participate. In such a setting, the spiritual potential of church members is seldom realized.

Churches which operate as one-man organizations stifle leadership potential even more. Whereas good leadership defeats the forces that oppose spiritual progress, poor leadership, (especially that of the one-man pastor system), severely hinders spiritual development. This is especially true in the area of church leadership.

We must keep in mind that while Christian leaders are trying to inspire their followers to achieve great things for God, Satan is pulling in the opposite direction to discourage spiritual progress. Satan’s strategy involves appealing to all of the carnal inclinations of human beings (laziness, worldliness, wrong attitudes, and the like) which lead people away from God and diminish their Christian commitment. The purpose of Christian leadership is to oppose this strategy of Satan.

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The Purpose of Leadership

Good leaders will demonstrate the qualities of leadership that promote progress in Christian service. They will lead by example and show the way; they will create a path of discipleship that leads to greater service and direct their followers in that way.

The alternative to this kind of progressive Christian leadership is a general stagnation that leaves followers in their familiar and comfortable status quo. They will be content to repeat all of the uninspired actions that cause them to remain at the fork in their spiritual road, preferring a repetition of familiar actions that prevent spiritual progress.

Perceptions of Leadership

Three principles of leadership will illustrate why followers are often inclined to mistrust their leaders and hesitate to follow them beyond comfortable limits. 1) Leaders have a perspective that gives them a clearer understanding of the task at hand than the followers have. They are aware of the resources and the people available that will help them achieve their goal. Unless leaders share their perspective and convince their followers that the goal is worthwhile, they will not be able to lead effectively. 2) Followers have a different perspective and often have a different perception of the task and their leader. 3) The willingness of followers to cooperate with leaders is influenced by their perception of the task and of their leaders.

Sometimes the lack of perspective and insufficient information about the task and goal decrease trust in leaders and discourage followers from pursuing the announced goal. Followers may not agree with the goal or their part in achieving the goal. They may hesitate to invest their time and effort in a project that they do not understand or agree with. It is the task of leaders to be sure that the goal is worthy and that followers are properly informed about the virtues of pursuing the leaders‘ intended course of action.

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**Part Two: Leadership Is Biblical**

Leadership In God’s Scheme of Redemption

An overview of God’s scheme of redemption will help us understand that God led His people in two ways before the Christian age: 1) He led them directly, especially during the Partriarchal Age, and 2) He appointed leaders or allowed His people to choose their own leaders to direct their spiritual and political affairs.

**The Patriarchal Age**

The word "patriarch" means "father" and the Patriarchal Age is the time when God dealt directly with the fathers of each family. Because there was no Bible or written law from God, it was the father's responsibility to teach and lead the family in worship. The Patriarchal period begins with the creation and ended with the giving of the law by Moses.  Of course, this ending only applied to the Jews.  The Patriarchal Age continued for the Gentiles until the cross.

**The Mosaical Age**

The Mosaical Age was the period of time when God had a written law (including the Ten Commandments) for the Jewish people and dealt with them according to its teaching. This age began about 1,500 years before Christ came. One important point to remember is that we do not live under this law.

**The Christian Age**

The Christian age in which we live could not begin until the death of Christ ([*Hebrews. 9:16, 17*](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Hebrews.%209.16,%2017)). Now the gospel is the redeeming message for all men of every nation under heaven. The teachings for the Christian age are to be found in the New Testament. We are to live by the teachings of the New Testament and not the Old.

**Why Two Testaments?**

Perhaps an example will help us to understand the difference between the two testaments. Suppose a man has a large sum of money and much land. He makes a will (his testament) showing how his things are to be divided among his children. Later he adopts several other children; and he makes a new will to include them. The old will is no longer binding.

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In like manner, God had a will (the law of Moses) that was only for the Jews ([*Deuteronomy 5:2, 3*](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Deuteronomy%205.2,%203)); but this has been replaced by the New Testament that includes all men. *(International Bible Teaching Ministries)*

God as the Exemplary Leader of His People

Before God chose leaders for His people, He guided their earthly and spiritual lives directly. In the Garden of Eden, He communed with Adam and Eve. Long after the flood in the days of Noah, He continued to have a direct influence in the lives of His people. God counseled the human patriarchs, judges, and kings who directed the affairs of Israel. King David wrote in Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd.” The words of Hebrews 1:1 teach us that God has led and continues to lead His people up to the present time through godly leaders and by means of the spoken and written word.

God Chose Leaders For His People

As God’s Scheme of Redemption unfolded, God gave more leadership responsibility to able men and women among His people. He chose and prepared men such as Moses and Joshua to lead His people (Ex. 3:10; Deut. 34:9; Joshua 1:6-7) but He was always present as their counselor and guide. It was God’s presence during the desert wandering that enabled His people to survive and enter Canaan.

Toward the end of the Old Testament dispensation, God sent John the Baptist and Jesus to prepare his people for the New Testament age. Jesus prayed that His followers would know that God had sent Him as the Savior of the world (Jn. 17:3). Jesus sent His disciples to teach all nations (Matt. 28:18-20) and gave His Holy Spirit to all believers to guide their spiritual lives. When the lives of Christ’s followers are transformed (Romans 12:2), they are ready to take on the role of teaching and leading in God’s Kingdom.

Characteristics of Leaders in the New Testament

The New Testament describes the qualifications of spiritual leaders and gives examples of leadership for us to follow when we select leaders for God’s people. Jesus said, “And this is life eternal, that

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they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Jesus was sent as a leader of God’s people, and God chose others who would be spiritual guides and leaders, as well. Jesus chose and sent out his disciples to preach the gospel (Matt. 28:20-28; Mk. 16:15-16). Paul was chosen to bear the name of Jesus before the gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15). Through Paul, God give instructions for the selection of leaders for God’s people (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9; 2:1-3:11). In these scriptures, Paul describes the biblical qualifications of spiritual leaders of God’s people.

Encouragement for Leaders

The New Testament also contains encouragement for Christians who accept the responsibilities of leading God’s people. Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). He also said to church leaders (and to all Christians), “Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20).

Honor for Leaders

Christians who choose to follow the leaders of God’s people are to honor them for their willingness to serve in the difficult and time-consuming capacity of leadership. We are to remember our leaders, “those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:17). Paul said, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor” (1 Tim. 5:17). These scriptures indicate the high calling and worthiness of positions of leadership in the church of our Lord.

God Is Aware Of Bad Leaders

We conclude this section with the observation that God is aware of the consequence of bad leadership, and He knows the damage they cause to the church and to their followers. The Bible gives warnings about bad leaders and guides us in our choosing of appropriate leaders for God’s people. Jesus asked (Luke 6:39) “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit?” Through Jeremiah (50:8) God said of the leaders of His people in that day, “My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray.” Unless

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God’s people follow godly leaders, they cannot walk in His way and receive His blessings (Ps. 1:1-6; 1 Jn. 1:17).

**Part Three: Leadership and Authority**

Through Isaiah (55:8) God said, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways.” Let us keep this idea in mind as we consider the biblical concepts of leadership and authority.

Authority has been defined as “The right and the power to command and to take action” (Webster). Authority belongs to one or more leaders who are in a position which has been given or assumed.

Elements of Authority

Legitimate authority is conveyed by commission, the process or act of placing leaders in authority. We will examine six elements which define legitimate authority for leading God’s people.

**1. Commission** Authority without a commission (responsibility) is meaningless and dangerous. A biblical example of this situation is Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9-24). Jesus gave the Great Commission and said, “All authority has been given to me…” (Matthew 28:18). Then He sent out the disciples. The Great Commission is the prime example of biblical authority for leadership among God’s people.

**2. Backing or Support**

In the public affairs of nations, the authority exercised by police, army, and other law enforcement entities have the support of government. In religious matters, the authority of scripture must stand behind the leaders of God’s people. God said, “Say to the children of Israel, *I Am* has sent me to you” (Exodus 3:14). Jesus said, “I am with you always…” (Matthew 28:20). When God stands behind a plan, or when God backs duly appointed leaders in the church, we can be sure that Christian leadership meets God’s approval and will be effective.

**3. Confidence**

We can have confidence that we will succeed as a leader or follower in a work of God if we 1) know the work well, 2) know the limits of authority, and 3) know that we have backing or support for the work.

**4. Influence**

Influence is an invisible component of authority. The visible presence of an authority figure gives those involved in a work confidence to

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proceed and to accomplish the task at hand. It is also true that a respected authority may influence work in a positive way, even though the authority figure is absent.

**5. Consequence**

The imposition of authority can have positive or negative consequences. Those in authority have 1) the power to punish or withhold benefits. These actions often result from ignoring or disobeying authority. God said, “Don’t eat this fruit, or you will die.” 2) Another consequence of authority is the power to reward. The one in authority can give benefits to subordinates. Naturally, this power can be abused through favoritism. (Wiwcharuck, 1988)

Where Does Authority Come From?

**1. Sources of Higher Authority**

There are three sources of higher authority. 1) God is just and righteous; therefore, all authority that comes from God is just and righteous. 2) However, we must not forget that God has temporarily give Satan power and authority until Judgment Day. Satan’s power is limited, but it is dangerous for Christians who wish to follow godly leaders. 3) Human authority can be used by people who have themselves been given authority or who have taken authority by force. All human authority is temporary.

**2. People**

People may elect or appoint a leader. The people then become subject to the authority of their leader.

**3. Self-Investment or Assumed Power**

This type of authority may be positive or negative, depending on the person(s) assuming authority. A person may see a problem and undertake to remedy that problem without consulting others or asking to be a leader. Nehemiah is a good example of assumed authority. He saw that the walls of Jerusalem needed to be rebuilt, so he undertook the work on his own initiative (Nehemiah 2:7-9).

**4. Usurpation (Taking Forcefully)**

One person may take authority away from another. This is an often violent act that has been historically used to gain power by force, in a coup d’etat, for example. In such cases, legitimate authority may be usurped by illegitimate leaders. Aaron usurped authority from Moses while Moses was on the mountain (Exodus 32:1).

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**5. Inheritance**

In many countries, the authority to rule has traditionally been transferred by birthright. Such authority is unearned; it is simply inherited by default. In rare cases, this kind of authority is undesired by the one who inherits it. **Note:** It is not unusual for preachers in some countries to feel that their sons or relatives should inherit the church and the preacher’s salary when they die. (Fair, 1996)

What Kind of Authority Is Given to the Leaders of God’s People?

**Absolute Authority**

The two kinds of authority that leaders may exercise are absolute authority and functional (limited) authority. The Greek word *exousia* is used in the New Testament to describe absolute authority. This type of authority has limited application in the Bible. *Exousia* in the sense of absolute authority in religious matters is reserved for God, Christ, the apostles, and Scripture. (Fair, 312) God is described in scripture as “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending” (Rev. 1:8) and “I am the first and I am the last” (Isa. 44:6). These descriptions indicate the omnipotence of the God of heaven who has all authority. This absolute authority was given also to Jesus (Matt. 28:18; Jn. 17:2). Jesus granted his absolute authority to His apostles (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10). It can be inferred that scripture also is absolutely authoritative by the following reasoning: God is the source of Holy Scripture; Christ Jesus is the central message; and the Holy Spirit inspired godly men to write the words of the Bible. Since the origin of Scripture can ultimately be explained by divine inspiration (Zech. 7:12; 2 Tim 3:14–17; 2 Pet 1:20–21) as defined above, then the authority of Scripture is directly derived from the authority of God.

**Functional (Limited) Authority**

Keeping authority in perspective helps us to understand the kind of authority exercised by Christian leaders. Let us consider two New Testament examples of functional or limited authority. 1) The centurion said, “I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me” (Matt, 8:9). While the centurion had authority over some people, he was himself under the authority of others. 2) Paul said, (1 Corinthians 11:3), “Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of

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Christ is God.” Both of these examples illustrate the limited nature of all authority which is not *exousia* authority. We can conclude that church leadership is functional authority and by definition is limited in its scope. The authority exercised by church leaders is under the ultimate *exousia* authority of God, Christ, and scripture.

Authority and Responsibility

Many people think of authority only as power. They see it as a means to exercise control and obtain what they want. Those who assume positions of authority must also assume responsibility for the position they hold and for their deeds while in a position of authority.

**Definition of Responsibility**

While people in authority often enjoy certain rewards or privileges that result from their position, the responsibility that comes with authority imposes duty upon the one in authority. Duty makes one accountable, and accountability may include natural, legal, or moral obligations. Let us examine each of these components of responsibility.

**Components of Responsibility**

Responsibility consists of obligation, accountability, and privilege. 1) Responsible leaders have obligations and duties that they must fulfill (James 4:17). Their position compels them to exercise authority. Otherwise, they will not be worthy of the position they hold.

2) Responsibility also makes those in authority accountable. They must answer to someone for their assigned responsibility and for their actions and decisions. Consider the steward in Luke 16:2. Responsible persons may be required to pay a consequence for failure to fulfill responsibility (Samson in Judges 16:21; unprepared servant in Luke 12:47). The higher the position, the greater the authority a leader has. An increase in authority involves a corresponding increase in responsibility and accountability. Failure to carry out responsibility can bring judgment and punishment (1 Timothy 2:14; James 3:1).

3) Responsibility can bring benefits and privilege (Luke 12:48). The ultimate privilege or reward of responsible stewardship is the eternal home with God (Matt. 25:34).

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**Principles Related To Responsibility**

Now we will consider several principles related to responsibility. 1) Those who give authority automatically impose responsibility. 2) Those who accept authority must also accept responsibility. 3) Those who accept authority and responsibility assume obligation and accountability. 4) Obligation is a pledge or guarantee that the assumed responsibility will be fulfilled. 5) Accountability is paying the consequences for failure to fulfill responsibility. 6) Responsibility without obligation and accountability is irresponsibility.

**Authority and delegation**

Delegation is the act of entrusting others with authority and responsibility. In other words, delegation means to share authority. Delegation has three components. 1) Entrusting some authority and responsibility to others. 2) Making that person or group obligated to fulfill the task delegated. 3) Making that person or group accountable for the authority and task so entrusted. Here are some biblical examples of delegation.

When God called Moses to be the leader of His people, he placed Moses in a position of responsibility between Himself (God) and the nation of Israel. Moses was given authority to lead God’s people, but Moses was answerable to God. Therefore, the authority of Moses was not absolute. When the burden of leading God’s people became too great for Moses to carry by himself, he was advised to share his authority and responsibility with other leaders (Ex. 18:19-20). Another occasion when Moses delegated leadership authority is described in Numbers 11:16.

**Part Four: Leadership Qualities**

It natural to expect that if one works hard and is dedicated to the organization or group, that effort will eventually be rewarded with honor and rank. Jesus gave us another model for leadership, the one who is the “loving servant of all” (Mk. 10:45; Gal. 5:13). Oswald Sanders has defined two basic principles of spiritual leadership: *the sovereignty principle* and *the suffering principle*. The sovereignty principle states that only God can choose leaders for His people. “To sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared” (Mark 10:40). We may

appoint leaders or become leaders ourselves, but it is God who

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decides who is truly worthy to lead His people.

“Can you drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?” (Mark 10:38). With this statement, Jesus defines the suffering principle. Only those who are willing to sacrifice all and suffer for Christ are worthy to lead. These are hard principles to accept and follow, but they indicate that not everyone is qualified to serve as a leader of God’s people.

Leaders must be aware of the presence of God.

One of the attributes of God is His omnipresence. He is everywhere at once, and especially in the lives of Christian leaders. God was present 1) at the creation, 2) in the lives of OT patriarchs, 3) in the life of Jesus, 4) in the Christian life, and 5) has promised that the redeemed will be in His presence throughout eternity.

God has demonstrated His presence 1) through His direct leadership, 2) when He led His people out of Egypt, and 3) when He appointed responsible men and women to lead His people. To lead God’s people most effectively, leaders must place themselves under the leadership of God.

Leadership Qualities

**Natural leadership**

The administrators of typical human organizations must possess the technical skills required by their profession and be highly motivated. Generally speaking, 1) they are self-confident, 2) they know human nature, 3) they make their own decisions, 4) they are ambitious, 5) they employ creative leadership methods, 6) they enjoy command, 7) they seek personal gain, and 8) they are independent.

**Spiritual leadership**

An essential difference between natural and spiritual leadership is motivation. While natural leaders are often driven by ambition and self-promotion, spiritual leaders seek first of all to serve God. Spiritual leaders 1) are aware of God’s presence, 2) place their confidence in God, 3) seek to do God‘s will, 4) live humble lives, 5) follow God‘s example of biblical leadership, 6) seek to obey God in all things, and 7) depend on God for guidance in their leadership roles. (Sanders, 2007)

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Personal Qualities of Christian Leaders

The character and quality of Christian leaders is summarized in the pastoral epistles of Paul (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus). Although these qualities are given in these scriptures in regard to elders and deacons, they are a worthy standard for all Christian leaders. Among Christian leaders, only elders and deacons are required to be married. According to Paul, Christian leaders are:

**Above reproach** (1 Timothy 3: 2, Titus 1: 6).

Their exemplary lives attract people to Jesus. They are of good reputation and trustworthy. A case in which such men were chosen is given in Acts 6:3.

**Faithful to their wives** (1 Timothy 3: 2, Titus 1: 6).

God wants leaders who are faithful and dependable in all things. Wedding vows are one of life’s greatest commitments. A man who can lead his family demonstrates that he can lead God’s people.

**Temperate** (1 Timothy 3: 2).

Self-indulgence and over-indulgence are worldly traits that Christian leaders must not cultivate. They should avoid all situations and habits that would cause them to compromise their position and example as leaders of God’s people.

**Self-controlled** (1 Timothy 3: 2, 3:8, Titus 1: 8).

It is best for leaders to be prudent and keep their desires under control. Self-control is a sign of maturity and is a quality that followers will wish to imitate.

**Respectable** (1 Timothy 3: 2).

Christian leaders must have the respect of the people they lead. Their lifestyle, attitudes, and appearance must demonstrate commitment to Christ and reflect the values they wish their followers to imitate.

**Hospitable** (1 Timothy 3: 2, Titus 1:8).

The *lack* of hospitality will cause many to be turned away on judgment day (Matt. 25:43). Christian hospitality is an example of brotherly love and one of the traits that Paul lists among the qualities of Christian leaders.

**Able to teach** (1 Timothy 3: 2).

Those who wish to lead God’s people must have a desire to increase their own knowledge so that they may teach others. One cannot properly lead without teaching, and teaching by example is one of the best kinds of instruction.

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**Examples of sobriety** (1 Timothy 3: 3, 3:8, Titus 1: 7).

Paul does not explicitly forbid alcoholic drink in this text, but the context will bear the implication that it is best to avoid strong drink altogether. This is in keeping with Paul’s other admonitions dealing with the power of Christian example. Christian leaders should do nothing that would lead others into temptation.

**Gentle** (1 Timothy 3: 3, Titus 1:8).

"Blessed are the meek (gentle) for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Christian leaders must understand the difference between meekness and weakness. A gentle and peaceable leader will create an atmosphere of love and service that inspires his followers and that will make him a more effective leader.

**Not quarrelsome** (1 Timothy 3: 3).

Christian leaders will not cultivate attitudes that lead to strife and contention among their followers. A domineering spirit that causes others to feel unimportant and unappreciated has no place among God’s people, especially among Christian leaders.

**Free from the love of money** (1 Timothy 3: 3). "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). The desire for wealth, as well as the desire for recognition, possessions, and promotion, has no place among Christian leaders.

**Good household managers** (1 Timothy 3:4, Titus 1: 6).

Christian leaders should be exemplary in all areas of life. The degree to which the Christian leader manages his own household well is an indication of how successful he will be in leading God’s people.

**Not novices** (1 Timothy 3: 6).

The ability to lead God’s people is an accomplishment that is not instantly attained. Mature development of Bible knowledge and Christian character are important indicators of leadership potential. It takes time and dedication to reach the level of ability and commitment that would qualify followers of Christ to become leaders of God’s people.

**Respected by those outside** (1 Timothy 3:7).

Those outside of the circle of a Christian leader’s church fellowship ought to recognize the qualities of his faith and character. All Christians must be in the world, but “not of the world” (Jn. 17:16).

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Every aspect of the Christian leader’s life, including finances, friends, profession, family, and hobbies, must be exemplary and reflect positively upon his Christian commitment.

**Not dishonest** (1 Timothy 3:8, Titus 1: 7).

Those who lead God’s people are often entrusted with money and grave responsibilities. They have influence that could be misused. Complete honesty in all areas of life is required of those who want to influence their followers in a way that pleases God.

**Not quick-tempered** (Titus 1: 7)

Many of the Christian virtues mentioned by Paul in the pastoral epistles indicate that leaders of God’s people should lead exemplary lives that are characterized by patience, tolerance, and self-control. Leaders who keep their emotions in check are more likely to influence their followers in a positive way. "The fruit of the Spirit is . . . patience…" (Galatians 5:22).

**Not violent** (Titus 1: 7).

Physical and verbal violence are hallmarks of worldly people. Christian leaders will not tolerate or practice such behavior. Jesus said that we would be blessed if we respond to aggression with love and patience (Matthew 5:11).

**Lovers of that which is good** (Titus 1: 8).

Christians, and especially Christian leaders, should love that which is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Philippians 4: 8), and they should inspire their followers to have the same attitude.

(Fillingham, 2014)

**Part Five: Leadership in the Church**

In this section, we will ask and answer several questions about church leadership. 1) How does the church differ from other groups or organizations? 2) How does leading the church differ from leading other groups or organizations? 3) What types of church leaders are approved by God?

**1. How does the Church differ from other groups or organizations?**

The Lord’s church differs fundamentally from human organizations in

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that it is a spiritual entity; therefore, leadership for God’s people must also include a spiritual concern for the members of the group and ensure that both leaders and followers are accountable to God. Paul said, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

Christian leaders and followers should keep in mind the words of Isaiah: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways,” declares the Lord (Isaiah 55: 8). These points should also be noticed: 1) The church is not a corporation. 2) The church is a body of God’s people. 3) The church already has leaders: God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. 4) The church needs human leaders to more effectively accomplish God’s will for the church. 5) The church needs leaders, not managers.

**2. How does leading the Church differ from leading other groups or organizations?**

Spiritual leaders need all of the positive skills required for leadership in the business world. They must organize and motivate people. They need vision, confidence, and self-control. Two key differences between spiritual leadership and business leadership have to do with relationship and goals. Business leaders cultivate relationships with their colleagues and workers that will benefit the company. The goal of business leadership is to make the company profitable. Spiritual leaders seek personal and spiritual relationships with their followers, and the mutual goal of spiritual leaders and followers is to grow in Christ and glorify God. It should be the goal of spiritual leaders to remove the corporate mentality from church leadership and institute God-directed leadership principles.

Bill Hybels has written in his book, *Courageous Leadership*, “Even though the work of leaders in business, government, or education may be important, the cause to which they have dedicated their skills has one thing lacking: it does not have the power to change the world…Dynamic teaching, creative worship, deep community, effective evangelism and joyful service will combine to renew the

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hearts and minds of seekers and believers alike, strengthen families, transform communities, and change the world.”

**Three philosophies of leadership**

Now we will consider several leadership styles that have been developed for government, human organizations, and the business world. Not all of the leadership styles and philosophies that are employed in human organizations are suitable for spiritual leadership. Most leadership philosophies are summarized in the three most widely-accepted leadership models: 1) autocratic, 2) democratic (participative), and 3) delegative.

**1. The Autocratic Leadership Philosophy**

This leadership style is all about control and how much control leaders should give to their followers.  Leaders who adopt this philosophy provide crystal clear expectations about what needs to happen, how it should happen, and when it should happen.  There is a clear distinction between the leader and followers, and decisions are often made from the top down with little or no input from other group members.  Leaders take full responsibility for decisions made, and they control the performance of their followers.  This leadership philosophy is at its best when there is little time to form a cohesive group decision or when the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the organization.

God-direct leadership would automatically exclude the “one-man pastor system” that is prevalent in denominational Christianity and in many congregations of God’s people in foreign countries. Especially in the foreign mission field, the one-man pastor system is widely found because of the strong personality of the leading man or because brethren have never received proper teaching on spiritual leadership.

In essence, the typical pastor system places the preacher (pastor) at the top of a pyramid structure. There are several dangers in such a system. 1) Power corrupts, and the pride that comes with such power very often leads to personal and group problems; 2) The congregation is often identified with the “pastor.” 3) The congregation stands or falls on the wisdom and strength of one man.

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4) The collective wisdom and experience of other church members is neglected. 5) If the pastor’s zeal decreases, the entire congregation slows down. 6) Worship under the pastor system tends to become passive. 7) A pastor on the wrong track will lead the entire flock astray: “If the blind lead the blind…”

Many pastors have an autocratic or dictatorial style. 1) They control all decision-making; 2) they not ask or accept opinions of others; 3) they do not permit others to question decisions or authority; 4) they promote a passive following; 5) they stifle creativity and new ideas; 6) they seldom let others make decisions; 7) they are critical of differing opinions; 8) they rarely give recognition; and 9) they fail to recognize the skills and abilities within other people.

The autocratic or dictatorial control of pastors or other leaders who will not share authority leads to several negative consequences. 1) Every member cannot be a priest (1 Pet. 2:9); 2) Every member cannot function as a part of the New Testament body of believers (Eph. 4:16); 3) Many spiritual gifts of church members are never used (1 Corinthians 12:7).

**2. Delegative Leadership Philosophy**

A delegative leader offers little or no help to followers and leaves the decision-making to other group members.  Followers of this types of leader tend to have more demands of their leader, are unable to work independently, and show little cooperation.  This leadership philosophy is most effective when group members are highly knowledgeable in several different areas and must pool their combined expertise to solve group problems.

**3. The Democratic (Participative) Leadership Philosophy**

A leader who practices this leadership philosophy offers guidance to organization members while still being a part of the group.  This type of leadership is democratic, considerate, participative, and consultative.  It focuses on creating and maintaining good working relationships that are supportive and interactive.  Followers are encouraged to participate and engage in the decision making process, and their input is considered.  This cooperation results in a group that is more motivated and creative as a whole.

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**Benefits of A Participative Ministry**

Participative ministry is a mutual ministry in which Christians teach and lead each other. Such a ministry builds up the body of Christ because Christians edify, support, and encourage each other. The effect is a stronger, loving body that is united to serve together as God’s people and reach out to the world with the gospel (Eph. 4:11-13; Matt. 28:18-20).

The participative leader 1) considers the ideas of all team members; 2) serves as team facilitator to expedite decisions and actions; 3) leads simultaneously as a coach and team member/player; 4) frequently accepts team’s ideas over personal ideas; and 5) seeks to stimulate creativity within a culture of innovation. The participative ministry model allows the entire body of Christ to function as a single and vital organism that is united in the cause of Christ (1 Cor. 12).

**3. What types of church leaders are approved by God?**

There are several styles or models of leadership that have been identified. Many successful leaders combine two or more leadership styles that match their personalities and fit the situation at hand. Leaders that are able to adapt to emerging conditions are more likely to have the confidence of their followers.

**Charismatic leaders** can be effective in motivating people immediately and moving them forward toward a goal. This leadership style has the disadvantage of being centered in one person, and the group or organization may fail if the leader loses enthusiasm or leaves the organization.

**Transformational leaders** attempt to create optimism and enthusiasm among group members by convincing them to buy in to the organization’s philosophy and become team players. This leadership style is often successful in the short term, but it is difficult to maintain a high level of participation and enthusiasm on a sustained basis. Individual or group burnout and loss of focus are common among the followers of transformational leaders.

**Innovative leaders** encourage creative solutions to problems and often promote an unconventional course of action to achieve group goals. Innovative leaders are visionary, and they can be successful if they can solve the problems that hinder group progress.

**Situational leaders** have the ability to adapt to emerging problems and mold their leadership style to situations as they emerge.

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Situational leaders are most effective when they can lead their followers through changing conditions. Followers may at times be confused and insecure if changes occur often or if they have not been trained to adapt to different conditions.

**Servant leaders** put service to others before their own self-interest.  This type of leader tends to include one or more team members in the decision making process and shares credit for success with the entire group.

**Which model should spiritual leaders choose?** Successful leaders must attract and hold followers. They must have a worthy goal, and help their followers reach that goal. One of more positive elements in each of the leadership styles discussed above may be used by spiritual leaders to motivate and guide their followers. Above all, the Christian leader must be a servant leader, an imitator of Christ. Now we will examine three types of spiritual leaders that play key roles in leading God’s people.

**The ministry of the elder**

In his address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-32) Paul uses three terms for the leaders of God’s people: he calls them elders, shepherds, and bishops. The English word elder indicates one who is older and mature. The Greek word from which elder is translated in this passage is *presbuteros*, meaning dignity, maturity, or respect. Shepherd comes from the Greek word *poimenos,* meaning shepherd, protect, feed, or nurture. Bishop is from the Greek word *episkopos,* meaning overseer, guardian, or protector. When these three concepts are combined, we have a clear idea of the type of church leader that Paul was describing in this place: elders are to guide, mentor, and equip the saints to serve God. Specific qualifications are given by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

**An elder must:** 1) desire the task (1 Tim.3:1); 2) be above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7); 3) be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6); 4) be temperate (1 Tim. 3:2); 5) be self-controlled (1 Tim. 32: Titus 1:8); 6) be respectable (1 Tim. 3:2); 7) be hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8); 8) be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9); 9) be gentle (1 Tim. 3:3); 10) manage his family well (1 Tim. 3:4-5); 11) have believing children (Titus 1:6); 12) have a good reputation with outsiders (1 Tim. 3:7); 13) love what is good (Titus 1:8); 14) be

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upright (Titus 1:8); 15) be holy (Titus 1:8); and 16) be disciplined (Titus 1:8).

**An elder must not:** 1) be given to much wine (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7); 2) be violent (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7); 3) be quarrelsome (1 Tim. 3:3); 4) be a lover of money (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7); 5) be overbearing (Titus 1:7); 6) be quick-tempered (Titus 1:7); 7) or be a recent convert (1 Tim. 3:6).

**The ministry of the deacon**

The first deacons to serve in the New Testament church were selected by the congregation at Jerusalem shortly after Pentecost (Acts 6:1-6). The apostles brought the congregation together, set up the qualifications, gave the number of men, and made the appointments. We should note that it was the church which made the selection of the men (Acts 6:3). It is clear from Paul’s instructions to Timothy (1 Tim. 3:8-13) that deacons should be godly men of good reputation who are willing to serve. In fact, the Greek word that is translated deacon means servant, minister, or helper. When combined with the list of qualifications given to all young men in the church (Titus 2:6-8) the biblical qualifications for deacons can be determined. Deacons must; 1) be men of dignity (1 Tim. 3:8); 2) not be double-tongued (1 Tim. 3:8); 3) not be addicted to much wine (1 Tim. 3:8); 4) not be fond of sordid gain (1 Tim. 3:8); 5) hold to the mystery of faith (1 Tim. 3:9); 6) hold a clear conscience (1 Tim. 3:9); 7) be tested (1 Tim. 3:10); 8) be beyond reproach (1 Tim. 3:10; Titus 2:8); 9) be the husband of only one wife (1 Tim. 3:12); 10) be a good manager of his children (1 Tim. 3:12); 11) be a good manager of his household (1 Tim. 3:12); 12) be sensible (Titus 2:6); 13) be an example of good deeds (Titus 2:7); 14) be pure in doctrine (Titus 2:7); 15) be dignified (Titus 2:7); and 16) be sound in speech (Titus 2:8).

**The ministry of the minister**

The ministry of the church minister (also called preacher or evangelist by some churches) is the most public leadership role in most churches. Confusion over the meaning of biblical terms in regard to church leadership has led many denominations to call their preachers or ministers “pastor,“ whereas the New Testament is quite clear in reserving the term “pastor” for the shepherds or elders

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who lead churches. Here we use the terms minister, preacher, and evangelist to indicate the men who deliver sermons, evangelize, and perform other duties that have to do with proclaiming the Word.

Several Greek words describe various aspects of the service or work of the minister. We will consider three important words used in the New Testament that refer to the role of the “preacher,” “minister,” or “evangelist.”

1. ***Kerusso*** is translated “proclaim” (Lk. 12:3; Rev. 5;2); “publish" (Mk. 1:45; 5:20); and "preach" (Matt. 3:1; 4:17; Acts 8:5; Acts 9:20). The basic meaning of the word is "to be a herald; to officiate as a herald; to proclaim after the manner of a herald.” The word does not refer to the message that is proclaimed. The word indicates that the minister is a herald or messenger, proclaiming the message that originated with someone else.

2. ***Euaggelizo*** is translated as “declared" (Rev. 10:7); ***“***preach" (Rev. 14:6); “bring good tidings" (Lk. 2:10; 1 Thess. 3:6); "declare glad tidings" (Acts 13:32);”preach the gospel" (Lk. 4:18; 9:6; Rom. 1:15; 15:20; 1 Cor. 1:17; Gal. 1:8; 4:13). The basic meaning of the word isto make the message known.

3. **Diakonos** is translated as “minister” (Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:7; 1 Tim. 4:6); “ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5); and “servant” (Matt. 23:11; Mk. 9:35; Jn. 2:5; Rom. 16:1). The basic meaning of the word is “one who serves,” whether as a preacher of the word or a servant of Christ in other roles in the church.

**Part Six: Leadership Through Mentoring**

Mentors are teachers and leaders who share experience and knowledge with those who wish to improve their Bible knowledge or their service to God and the church. The import concept in mentoring is the imparting of knowledge from the more informed to the less informed, or from the more experienced to the less experienced. Factors such as age, social status, and professional achievement do not necessarily determine mentoring roles. Mentors may be in a position that is inferior to the one being taught. It is possible for a younger person to teach an older person. An employee could teach his employer, and a slave could teach his master.

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The word “mentor” is defined as “a wise and trusted counselor or teacher.” The Bible does not contain specific instructions for a mentoring ministry, but we find many examples of mentoring in both the Old and New Testaments. Moses was mentored by his father-in-law Jethro, first as son-in-law and then as a leader ([Exodus 18](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exodus%2018)). The mentoring relationship between Eli and Samuel prepared Samuel for the tasks and responsibilities that were his after Eli’s death ([1 Samuel 1-4](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Samuel%201%E2%80%934)). Jesus mentored His disciples ([Luke 9](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%209)), and both Barnabas and Paul excelled in mentoring ([Acts 9-15](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%209%E2%80%9315)).

Jesus made His style of mentoring clear: He led so that we can follow. He developed in his disciples the character, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective ministry. He said, “If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me” ([Matthew 16:24-26](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matthew%2016.24-26)). Because He is our leader and we are to follow Him, Christian mentoring is a process dependent upon submission to Christ. Neither the mentor nor the candidate controls the relationship. As such, the process is best characterized by mutual sharing, trust, and enrichment as the life and work of both participants is changed. The mentor serves as a model and a trusted listener. The mentor relies on the Holy Spirit to provide insight, change lives, and teach through the modeling process.

The Apostle Paul spelled out mentoring as his leadership model very simply. “Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ” ([1 Corinthians 11:1](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Corinthians%2011.1)). “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice” ([Philippians 4:9](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Philippians%204.9)). In essence, he is saying, “Let me mentor you. Let me be your role model.” He reminds the new Christians at Thessalonica to “follow our example” ([2 Thessalonians 3:7](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Thessalonians%203.7)). He meant: 1) Follow my example. 2) Be an example to others. 3) Then teach what you have learned. It goes without saying that if mentors expect others to follow their example, they must be wholeheartedly committed to following Christ. Any hint of hypocrisy—“do what I say, not what I do”—will be detrimental to both the mentor and his charge.

Not only Jesus and the apostles, but elders in the local church do

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their work by mentoring. Peter commands, (1 Pet. 5:3) “Be examples to the flock” ([1 Peter 5:3](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Peter%205.3)), and Paul explains to the elders at Ephesus, “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you” ([Acts 20:17](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2020.17)). In other words, Paul is telling the elders, “I showed you, now you show them.” In all truth, if a Christian leader is not mentoring someone, to that degree he or she is not living up to his or her calling.

Of course, God has filled the body of Christ with many potential mentors besides those who are named as elders or shepherds. The official church leaders cannot personally meet all the mentoring needs of everyone. While it may not be possible for shepherds to personally, intentionally, and directly mentor each sheep that needs mentoring, they are to help these needy sheep find godly mentors. To provide for the mentoring needs of their local community of faith, the leaders must continually expand the circle of mentors by “equipping others” to mentor. Biblical mentoring will result in “chains” with several generations of mentors whose apprentices mentor others, and so on. (Gotquestions.org.).

**Part Seven: Selecting Church Leaders**

**The background for selecting church leaders**

The selection of Matthias

Acts 1:15-26 records the selection of Matthias as the replacement for Judas. 1)Peter laid out the qualifications (vv. 21-22).2)The whole church made nominations (v. 15). 3) Then they chose two men (v. 23).Next, they prayed and cast lots to find God‘s will (vv. 24-26). Note: *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD (*Proverbs 16:33).

The selection of deacons

Acts 6:1-7 records the selection of the deacons. 1) The apostles laid out the qualifications (v. 3). 2) The whole church made the selections (vv. 2, 5). 3) The apostles did the installation (v. 6).

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**Part One: Introduction to Leadership**

**The basis for selecting church leaders**

Church leaders should be selected from among the people (Acts 6:3, KJV)

1.  “**Look ye out”** means to investigate the candidates for the purpose of determining whether or not they have the necessary qualifications.

2.  “**Among you”**—literally, “from among you.” This procedure ensures that people will be selected from among the people who will be the followers of the leaders they choose. The leaders will have the acquaintance and approval of those who willingly choose them.

Church leaders must be Spirit-filled (Acts 6:3)

1. Leaders of God’s people should be “full of the Spirit and wisdom,” having qualities that equip them to be informed and skillful leaders. Leaders who are spirit-filled are more likely to act wisely, unselfishly, and without favoritism.

2. Leaders of God’s people must demonstrate the character of elders, overseers, shepherds, and bishops (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

3. Leaders of God’s people must give evidence of appropriate giftedness. While direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit is not available to Christian leaders today, those who are chosen to lead God’s people must be dedicated Christians who have leadership skills that are appropriate for their leadership task. These skills (or talents or gifts) include: a) Administration (1 Corinthians 12:28); b) Discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10); c) Faith (1 Corinthians 12:9); d) Leadership (Romans 12:8); and e) Wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8).

4. Selecting leaders on the basis of spiritual gifts has several benefits: a) It puts the best people in leadership; b) It causes the body to work as it should (Acts 6:7; Ephesians 4:11-13).

The trust factor in the selection of church leaders

Trust is fundamental in any group of God’s people. It is a factor that defines relationships and is the foundation for effective cooperation. Trust relates basically to confidence in the intentions and motives of another. Trust also influences confidence in the sincerity of another. It is the optimistic expectation that another’s behavior can be depended upon.

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Fundamentals of trust relationships

1. Trust is seldom absolute. This is because of the existence of distrust. Trust and distrust are interrelated and must be managed. Distrust has all of the opposite expectations of trust. Distrust allows no full expectation that the other person or group can or will fulfill promises made. Distrust is a natural emotion that arises from our normal human experience. We cannot assume that even the best Christian leaders will have the complete trust and confidence of all followers in every situation. Even the most trusting followers would not fly in an airplane piloted by a Christian leader who had never had a flying lesson. This exaggerated example shows that no one person can be competent in all areas of human endeavor. We must choose our Christian leaders according to their qualifications in the areas in which they are expected to provide wise and godly leadership.

2. Trust opens one to vulnerability. This means that complete trust would lead to disappointment if the trusted leader should fail to live up to the expectations of the follower. Trust in Christian leaders must be developed to the point at which it is complete in a particular area. This does not mean that such full trust must be extended to all areas.

3. Empowerment of leaders is proportional to the trust their followers place in them. Low trust will result in ineffective or dysfunctional leadership. Participatory leaders who share authority usually receive a higher level of trust from their followers than do authoritarian leaders. Other factors such as individual or group motivation and success are influenced by the proportion of trust and distrust. All of these trust factors apply to relationships between individuals, and also to relationships in small and large groups, in an organization, and between organizations. Trust emerges as individuals in a group mature and as the relationships among group members mature.

**A typical elder selection process\***

No scriptural precedent exists for a fixed plan and time line for selecting and installing elders and other spiritual leaders in a congregation of God’s people. Many congregations follow a plan

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similar to the one given here. The process will include the components of 1) preaching, 2) teaching, 3) prayer and fasting, 4) nomination, 5) personal counting of cost, 6) discernment, and 7) affirmation and ordination.

**1. Preaching**

The local minister or someone else chosen for the purpose will preach a series of sermons dealing with God’s vision of biblical leadership.

**2. Teaching**

Before and during the selection process, Bible classes typically focus on the role and characteristics of elders and other spiritual leaders. This teaching is usually coordinated with the sermon topics on spiritual leadership presented from the pulpit.

**3. Prayer and Fasting**

Some congregations enter a period of prayer (or prayer combined with fasting) to help them find God’s leading as they try to identify and select the spiritual leaders among them. This season of prayer and fasting concludes with the identification of leadership candidates.

**4. Nomination**

After potential leadership candidates have been identified, baptized members are given a nomination form. Members submit the name or names of the men they believe God is calling to shepherd their church. Usually it is required that the nomination forms be signed by the nominating church member and delivered to an appointed person before an announced deadline.

**5. Personal “Counting the Cost”**

The men whose names have been submitted will be contacted and asked to pray and reflect about their willingness and capacity to serve in the role of elder. The men who, after prayer and reflection, are willing to serve as elders, are presented to the church on an announced Sunday.

**6. Discernment**

Once the names of all candidates are made known to the congregation, the members enter a period of spiritual discernment. The congregation is invited to discuss with each nominee the gifts he has that would help him lead and shepherd the congregation. If any member of the congregation believes that a nominee does not meet

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the standards set forth by Scripture, the concern should be written, signed, and given to the current elders (or an appointed committee, if no elders exist). These men will prayerfully address all biblical concerns by examining the scriptures relating to the elder selection process.

**7. Affirmation and Ordination**

Once the current eldership (or an appointed committee, if no elders exist) completes the discernment phase, all men who have been nominated to serve, who have prayerfully considered the task, and who do not have an unresolved concern will be affirmed and ordained on an appointed Sunday.

\*Belton Church of Christ

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