

The Biblical Metaphor of Leadership

Purpose: For the student to value and practice the biblical metaphor of leadership – especially that of a shepherd.

Objectives: By the end of this session, the student will:

1. Become familiar with the Hebrew understanding of leadership.
2. Understand and embrace the characteristics needed in a spiritual leader.
3. Be willing to work with God to see these qualities developed in their life.

Key Verse: Psalm 23:1

I. Introduction:

List significant leaders from the Bible and be prepared to discuss the “Biblical model” of leadership they exemplify.

(Note to instructor: Be prepared to share your answer(s) to this question. Perhaps you could also share about a leader who was a great example of a shepherd in your life, and why.)

II. A “Biblical Model” of Leadership

Model: a person or thing considered as a standard to be imitated.

There are a number of models of leadership in the Bible. This allows us to relate to the different styles and learn from them.

III. Common Titles of New Testament Leadership

A. Elder - in relation to rank or positions of responsibility

In the Christian churches, those who, being raised up and qualified by the work of the Holy Spirit, were appointed to have spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over, the churches - Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5,7

B. Deacon

1. Primarily denotes a servant without reference to character. It occurs in relation to domestic servants, the civil ruler, Christ, followers of Christ in relation to their Lord and to one another, and servants of Christ in the work of preaching and teaching.
2. It views a servant in relationship to his work

C. Ruler

A ruler, chief, prince or magistrate referring to the Gentiles, political leaders, or spiritual powers - I Corinthians 2:6,8; Rev. 1:5; Luke 12:11; Ephesians 6:12

The Greek way of understanding a thing was to break it down into its component parts, its particulars, then develop abstract concepts to define the particulars. These abstract concepts then became the primary thing and the original became secondary.

The Hebrew way of understanding was through word pictures. They were an earthy people and understood life through their relationship with the world around them, not through abstractions.

The Hebrews didn't have a definition for leader, they had a metaphor. The biblical authors, being primarily Hebrew, didn't define leadership or model it after a particular person, but rather, they described it after a particular profession — the shepherd.

IV. The Hebrew way of understanding leadership: The metaphor

Look up the verses below and write down your thoughts on how leadership is described metaphorically.

(Note to instructor: If the students did not receive these notes before coming to class, break them up into groups of about 3 or 4 and assign which groups will have which verses. Give them about 5 minutes to look up the verses and write down their thoughts. Then have the students come together to share their answers with the class.)

If the students received these notes before coming to class, go through each one and have different students share their thoughts on each one. Make corrections where necessary.)

Genesis 48:15 *(Israel said God was his shepherd all his life)*

Numbers:27:16-17 *(“..that the congregation may not be sheep with no shepherd)*

2 Samuel 5:1-3 *(David will shepherd God's people Israel)*

1 Kings 22:17 *(Israel scattered like sheep with no shepherd)*

Psalms 78:70-72 *(David shepherds Israel with integrity and skillful hand)*

Psalm 80:1 (*Shepherd of Israel, shine forth*)

Isaiah 40:11 (*God compared to shepherd carrying lambs and gently leading ewes*)

Isaiah 44:28 (*God calls Cyrus his shepherd*)

Matthew 2:6 (*Jesus is a ruler who will shepherd Israel*)

Matthew 9:36 (*Jesus saw people as sheep with no shepherd*)

John 10:11-15 (*Jesus the great shepherd, knows His sheep, sheep know Him*)

John 21:15-17 (*“Tend/feed my sheep*)

Acts 20:28 (*Watch over God’s flock that Jesus bought with His blood*)

1 Peter 5:1-2 (*Leaders should willingly shepherd God’s flock, not for financial gain*)

V. A closer look at a Shepherd

Write down how each passage describes shepherds.

Psalm 23 (The good side)

Ezekiel 34 (The bad side)

(Note to instructor: Have the class share what they wrote down here. If not given, you could add the following answers.)

(Provider, guide)

(Comforter, protector)

(Fed themselves instead of the flock)

(Fed themselves from the flock)

(Did not help the weak, lame, or sick)

(Did not search out the lost)

(Ruled harshly and brutally)

VI. Application to us

A. The Shepherd himself:

1. Is anointed by God

a. Direct Appointment by God

Examples: Saul, David, Moses, Paul, Paul & Barnabas, Cyrus.

b. Through God Ordained Leadership, Structure

Examples: 12 spies, Moses’ judges, Solomon, Titus, Timothy
Government

c. By Nature

Examples: Husband head of wife, parents head of children,

2. Must be filled with the Holy Spirit

To be Spirit-filled empowers the leader to accomplish God's ends.

Spiritual leadership can be exercised only by Spirit-filled people. Other qualifications for spiritual leadership are desirable. To be Spirit-filled is indispensable. Jesus said, "...apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Even those whose duties are largely temporal in nature must be people controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 6). Wherever you see spiritual leadership, the Holy Spirit is behind the scenes, empowering, directing, leading. Paul wrote, "...not that we are competent to consider anything as coming from ourselves but our competency is from God, who made us competent...(by) the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:5,6).

3. Must be devoted to God's Word (Colossians 3:16)

The indwelling Word enlightens the leader as to God's ways and equips him for the task.

Christian leaders need to be devoted to the word of God. Because a man of God depends on God, he learns to listen to and depend on God's Word for goals, methods, insight and power. It is the Word of God that makes him "adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). Those in our sphere of influence need the assurance that we are regularly meeting with God and hearing his voice--that we are leading them from the guidance we are getting from God. They want to listen to the person who listens to God.

4. Must be devoted to prayer

Prayer brings the will and power of God to earth. (Lord's prayer)

"We (leaders)...will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). The Apostles viewed prayer as the extreme work of an activist. Today, however, prayer is often seen as an interruption of the work. It is passed on to someone less aggressive so the leader can lead. Prayer is often the weakest link in the life of the spiritual leader. Leaders, by their nature, are activists. They want to get things done. Yet Jesus, for all He came to do, "would often slip away to a lonely place to pray" (Luke 5:16). E.M. Bounds wrote, "men are looking for better methods. God is looking for better men--men of prayer."

5. Must be a man of character

Character gives credibility to the leader.

"And David shepherded them with integrity of heart" (Psalm 78:72). God will not use a leader who lacks integrity.

a. Character is within our grasp.

Character does not mean perfection. Perfection is unattainable, but character is within our grasp. Character is built through making and keeping promises and commitments. It is consistency of life. It is putting all of the areas of our life in the same direction. The four cardinal virtues are prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude. In Titus 2 Paul writes that older men should be “dignified, temperate, sensible, sound in faith, love and perseverance.”

- b. Without character, you have no credibility.

Once you have lost integrity, you have lost credibility. Once you have lost credibility, no one will want to follow you.

- c. Self-control is the foundation of character.

Self-control protects the leader.

Leaders must be able to lead themselves before attempting to lead others.

- i) In your personal life

The test of leadership is not what is done in public, but in private (Matthew 6:1-24). The life of a leader is one of evaluating the cost (Luke 14:25-33). A leader is not perfect, but is always in the process of taking the next appropriate step in his or her life of faith. Once a leader stops learning and growing, he stops leading.

- ii) In your home life

Howard Hendricks says, "if it doesn't work at home, don't export it." If you are married and you fail with your spouse and children, you have failed as a Christian leader...period! Qualities of leadership are forged in relationships with your family and loved ones.

- iii) In your work

I Thessalonians 5:12,13 says, "now we ask you brothers to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you." Leadership in God's kingdom is not a life of executive privilege, but that of hard work. The work may be very enjoyable, challenging and rewarding, but it is work. That's why it is called "the work of ministry." We are admonished to "....lead with diligence" (Romans 12:8).

6. Conviction and Vision

Conviction is knowing what God wants and being willing to pay the personal

price to see it happen. People see this as vision. Vision inspires the people. Conviction inspires the leader.

A leader without conviction is not a leader. The person God uses has a clear idea of what God wants done and his part in doing it. Moses met with God at the burning bush and received his marching orders. God gave Joshua crystal clear instructions of what he wanted Joshua to do and how he wanted Joshua to live. If you do not know where you are going, you have forfeited the right to ask others to follow you.

7. Faith

Faith assures the leader.

Faith is what motivates us to action. We believe God is going to accomplish the vision which he has given and therefore we act in faith. A person of faith is a person of inner strength and courage. A leader's faith inspires courage in one's followers. Perhaps Bill Bright's greatest contribution to the body of Christ has been his faith which has inspired others to take the Great Commission seriously.

B. The Shepherd's relationship with the sheep

Everyone appointed by God to a position of spiritual leadership is "one who will give an account" for the lives of his followers (Hebrews 13:17).

Spiritual authority is bestowed by God for the benefit of those being served. Paul writes about "...The authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than pulling you down..." (II Corinthians 10:8).

C. The Shepherd's leading of the sheep

God gives leaders to His people "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11,12).

A GOOD DEFINITION OF A SHEPHERD IS:

A Shepherd is a man or woman with a God-given commission to develop himself, to determine God's purposes for a specific group of God's people and lead them toward that purpose.

(Note to instructor: Discuss "Let's Talk About It" together in class. Be prepared to share your own answer to each one.)

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT...

1. Which view of leadership, apart from the biblical examples, has most influenced your idea of leadership?
2. What changes, if any, do you need to make in your thinking about leadership as a result of this study?
3. What are you wanting your ministry team to do that you yourself are no longer doing? What have you stopped emphasizing in your ministry because it is presently absent in your own life?
4. What are you doing to feed yourself from God's Word? What have you learned about walking in the power of the Holy Spirit after becoming a team leader?
5. How well does your purpose as a leader fit God's purpose for a leader? What areas of leadership do you need to adjust in order to better fit God's purpose?
6. How would you define vision? Do you have a clear vision of what God wants done in your place of ministry?
7. What one quality of spiritual leadership would you like to see strengthened in your life this year? Why?