

Becoming a Leader

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to explain three critical elements in leadership and challenge the class to reach for them.

Objectives: This session will help you to:

1. Define what a leader is.
2. Explain to someone else the three critical elements of leadership.
3. Develop a personal plan for developing your leadership abilities.
4. Feel more confident in developing your leadership abilities

Key Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:1

I. Introduction

In Luke 19:15-23, Jesus shared a parable of 10 men to whom their master gave one mina each to invest while he was away. Upon his return he asked for an accounting. One had made 10 more, another 5. He praised both of them, and put them in charge of an amount of cities equal to the increase in their minas. The third, however, did nothing with his. The master rebuked him, took his mina away from him and gave to the one who had made 10 more mina.

The point of the story is that we all have different abilities that God has entrusted to us and He is looking for us to multiply what we have to the best of our ability. So it is with leadership. In Romans 12:6-8 Paul commands those with the gift of leadership to lead according to the grace given to them. God did not design us all to be a Moses, or a Paul, or a Dr. Bill Bright. But He has designed us all to lead at some level. We are made in His image. Leadership is exercised across a wide spectrum. We can all lead; it's just a question of the level to which we are called to lead. Today, we want to help you understand the universal aspects of leadership that apply to all of us, and how to develop them.

What are some universal things that we can say about leadership, some common ways of defining it, of describing it?

II. Leadership Defined

A. Difficult to define

As you can see, leadership is difficult to define. It is used for a very wide a spectrum of activities. The skills needed for each are quite different. But there are some general attributes that are characteristic of all good leaders.

B. Commonly Defined

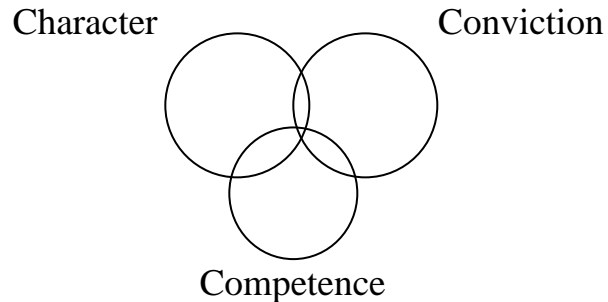
A few years ago IBM sent their top leadership away for a week with one objective: develop a working definition of leadership. This is what they came up with: "a leader is one who can create, motivate, communicate and sustain commonality of purpose."

Leaders have an ability to cast vision, enlist people to join, secure the needed resources, reach the vision and empower the enlisted people to fulfill it.

This hits some critical aspects of leadership, but leaves out some vital ones. For instance, under this definition Hitler and Stalin would be categorized as great leaders. In one sense they were. They exemplified everything in IBM's definition. But they really aren't the kind of leader we want to exemplify. It may be helpful to look at leadership through an even broader lens.

III. Three Critical Elements of Leadership

A. Character



Character is foundational for good leadership. Someone has defined character as that which we are when no one is watching. Another has said that a person with character fears neither night nor day. These give good word pictures, but they still don't define clearly what we mean when we say that someone has character.

Karl Day, from *Washington Watch* has defined character this way, "For our purposes, character connotes noble, positive, distinguishing or defining standards of moral and ethical behavior. Implicit in the definition are such attributes as industriousness, honor, loyalty, compassion, self-control, integrity, courage, and fortitude."

This certainly brings out some implicit ideas inherent in the word. It's positive, it's man at his best. It deals with superior values and ethics. It reveals itself in relationships, work, trials and prosperity.

The Scripture says much about character and leadership. We are to be holy, as He is holy. A leader is to live his life above reproach as evaluated by his peers and his family. Character is the primary attribute of a biblical leader. Fail here and the biblical leader loses the right to lead, even if he excels at everything else. Having this alone, though, does not mean a person can lead. He needs a couple other qualities.

B. Conviction

A leader believes deeply about something. His vision for the future directs his daily life. The leader's heartthrob is for the realization of his dream. He sees the future so clearly, that it exists for him today. With this vision he has the ability to incite others to join him in it.

Conviction is the framework from which a leader lives and has his being. It sets the direction. It tells him when to say yes and when to say no. It defines how he uses his time and his resources. It sets the limits of his efforts.

Conviction often shows itself in boundless energy for accomplishing what has been envisioned.

Conviction inspires, but it doesn't get the work done. Left alone, it burns people out. Thus, a third attribute is absolutely essential for effective leadership.

C. Competence

The leader is competent; he knows how to motivate people to get things done. He may have a wide variety of technical skills, depending on the field in which he leads. But three skills all good leaders seem to possess are the ability to gather competent people around them, to get their associates to work together for a common good and to solve problems and make good decisions.

Character is the foundation upon which leadership is based. Upon this, the framework of conviction is built, which is filled in with necessary competencies. Without these three, it is hard to be a good leader. Since we all want to be a part of the "faithful men" who are entrusted with passing the good news onto others, we need to pursue the development of these three areas. How do we do that?

IV. Developing the Elements

A. Accurate Discernment of Current Character, Convictions and Competencies

1. 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:12-16

We need to know what Godly character looks like, what Godly convictions we should hold, and a biblical attitude toward work, giftedness and the body.

2. Evaluation by close, honest associates

No one knows us like those we live with everyday. We need their honest input. They need to be honest with us about our character, convictions and competencies, without reference to their own plans for our lives. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; deceitful are the kisses of an enemy." (Proverbs 27:6)

3. Competency/Personality Testing

You can take a wide assortment of profiling tests to learn your competencies. This provides a helpful framework for discussion. Confirm your findings with an honest, close associate.

B. Develop a Realistic Plan for Each

Once we obtain a fair appraisal of ourselves in the three areas, then we can move to the next step. Take your top two strengths. Develop a plan as to how can you develop them even more. Take your two weakest areas. Develop a plan how you can develop them to an acceptable level. Be realistic! You can't do everything, so pick those things that will have the greatest impact. Focus your efforts on your strengths, not on your weaknesses. Too often we focus on our weaknesses. God's gift to the body of Christ through us is our strengths, not our weaknesses. Make developing your strengths your top priority. Develop weaknesses only to minimize them. They will not become strengths except in keeping you humble and teaching you your need for others.

C. Accountability

1. Personal

Come up with a plan. Have incremental objectives. Reward yourself when you accomplish each increment. Structure your time. Take a course and discipline yourself to improve in the areas that you want to grow in.

2. Social

Find someone to whom you can share your plan, who will help you develop it and who will hold you accountable to it. You should have regular meetings where you discuss your progress with this person(s).

V. Conclusion

We need to lead according to the grace God has given to us. To become a faithful leader we need to develop a godly character, hold biblical convictions and have the competencies needed for what we are called to. Our leadership is a stewardship entrusted to us and someday we will have to give an account for how we multiplied the gifts God has given to us. Do not squander God's blessing for those you lead. Do not lose out on the prize for yourself.

Discussion Questions:

1. How would you define a leader?
2. What are the three critical elements of leadership?
3. When will you develop a personal plan for developing your leadership abilities?
4. How did this talk help you feel more confident in developing your leadership abilities?