

(English) Spiritual Leadership Principles Lesson 2 (Part 2)

Biblical Qualifications for Leaders

Welcome back. This will be Part 2 of Lesson 2 in our Spiritual Leadership Principles course. In lesson 2, we have been talking about the Biblical Qualifications for Leaders.

We did some brainstorming of leadership qualities and characteristics of effective leaders. We saw that these qualities, many of them, mirror the attributes of God, spiritual gifts, the fruit of the spirit, and many of these qualities that are valued around the world. No matter what industry or organization you are looking at, it is interesting that most of these effective leadership qualities have a biblical foundation.

We looked at the biblical definition of leadership within the church. We started with the elders because if the qualities of an elder are important, then these should be helpful for any person in a leadership role in the church at any level. These principles can also be applied in the secular world as well.

We looked at the importance of shared leadership, not just serving by yourself, but leading together in a group. There are many benefits connected to that.

We also looked at the biblical call for qualified leadership. In 1 Timothy chapter 3 and Titus chapter 1, there are qualifications for biblical leaders. We don't have to make them up. We don't have to wonder what they are. God has spelled that out, and God seems to place a high value on WHO we are as a leader, our character, and not just about WHAT we do, the skills or the qualifications that we bring to a leadership position.

In Part 2, we want to continue on page 11 with another important qualification for biblical leadership, Servant leadership.

There is a reference to John 13:14-15. Jesus said, "If I then, the Lord and teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you."

Jesus is God. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet, he is setting an example for his followers to be servant leaders, to humble themselves. If you want to be great, you must be a servant of all. There's a quote that I included that comes again from the book, Biblical Eldership.

"After the Emperor Constantine elevated Christianity to the status of a state religion in 312 AD, the once persecuted faith became a fierce persecutor of all its opposition. An unscriptural clerical and priestly caste was consumed by the quest for power, position, and authority. Even Roman emperors had the guiding hand in the development of Christian churches. The pristine character of the New Testament church community was lost. When we read the Gospels, however, we see the principles of brotherly community, love, humility, and servanthood at the very heart of Christ's teaching."

Leaders should have a focus on humility, servanthood, and love. And the quote was saying that as the church began to grow, the world began to influence the church. The culture had more influence on the church than it should.

And some of these leadership qualities of humility, servanthood, and love that Jesus modeled were pushed aside. The focus of self-advancement, power, of leading in a dictatorial way, in an authoritarian way, began to take more prominence.

We need to continually assess whether we are drifting from the foundational biblical principles and desiring instead practical, worldly strategies.

Related to this issue of servanthood, humility and love, Jesus was clear. Look at the references on page 11.

- Matthew 11:29, Jesus, says, come to me all who are weary and heavy laden. I'll give you rest. And He said, take my yoke upon you. I am gentle and humble in heart. And you'll find rest for your souls. Jesus is describing Himself here as gentle, as meek, power under control, and humble. We are called to conformed to Jesus' likeness.
- In Mark 9, we must humble ourselves and be a servant of all. If we want to be great, we need to be humble ourselves and be the servant, the slave of all.
- In Mark 10, the Son of Man came to offer Himself as a sacrifice. He came to serve and suffer for the glory of the Father and his love for the world. The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many.
- We see the same thought in Matthew 23, Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees. He says, don't be like them. If you really want to be great, you must humble yourself, and then God will exalt you. God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.
- In Luke 22, the context of the Last Supper. The Apostles, are still arguing about who is going to be the greatest. Jesus says the greatest will be the one who serves. If you want to be great, you must be servant of all.
- In John 13, before Jesus goes to the cross, he provides an example by doing the job that the lowest of lowest servants would do. He was washing the feet of His disciples. This was an example of servanthood that they and we should follow.
- Then at the end of John chapter 13:34-35, Jesus says, "A new command I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so, you must love one another. By this, the world will know that you are my followers if you love one another." This word for love is the love of God. The self-giving, self-sacrificing, unconditional love of God. And was the command to love one another new? No, it was from the very beginning. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength" (Deuteronomy 6) and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18). Jesus did change the standard. No longer are we just love our neighbor as ourselves. He says, "As I have loved you." The way that Jesus loves is now the standard. This is how we are called to love and to lead.

These key elements of a spiritual leader are humility, servanthood, and love. The Bible provides much practical guidance for the responsibility of leaders within the church.

In a moment we will read two passages, Acts chapter 20 and 1 Peter chapter 5.

And as we read them, we can look for these responsibilities, first of elders, and then of any leader. These responsibilities include protecting, feeding, leading, and caring for the flock that is under our care.

Before looking at those, the passage in Ezekiel 34:1-10 provides a wonderful contrast between the bad shepherds or leaders and what should be avoided in biblical leadership within the church. Jesus is the ultimate example of the Good Shepherd.

Follow along as I read Ezekiel 34:1-10.

“The word of the Lord came to me, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, even to the shepherds. Thus says the Lord God, ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves. Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat. You clothe yourselves with the wool. You slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened. The sick you have not healed. The injured you have not bound up. The strayed you have not brought back. The lost you have not sought. And with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts.

My sheep were scattered. They wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth with none to search or seek for them. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. As I live, declares the Lord God, surely because my sheep have become a prey and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts. Since there was no shepherd and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves and have not fed my sheep. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God, behold, I am against the shepherds and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths that they may not be food for them.”

The bad shepherds,

- Did not strengthen the flock
- They did not heal the sick
- They did not bind up the wounds
- They did not bring back the strays
- They did not search for the lost.
- They allowed the flock to be scattered.

The Good Shepherd (John 10), Jesus is the Good Shepherd. The good shepherds, the good leaders, protect and feed and lead and care for the flock. They willingly lay down their lives for the sheep.

They know their sheep and their sheep know them. It's a great contrast compared with the bad shepherds.

Turn to page 12.

On the left-hand side of the page, you see a number of passages and references to the biblical job description for leaders. You can see references to Acts, Paul's letters to the churches, Paul's instruction to Timothy, instruction to Titus, Peter's instruction to the Asian elders, James' instruction to the sick, and then even in Hebrews.

You may notice that there are things that the elders are to do for the people. And there are ways that the people who are being led are to respond to their leaders. So there is responsibility on both sides.

On the right side of the page, I found Acts 20:17-38 to be very helpful leadership passage.

Please pause the recording and read this passage and then write down the examples of leadership that Paul summarizes for the elders from the church in Ephesus. Look for the ways Paul led, fed, protected and cared for the flock that God placed under his care for three years,

Pause the recording to read Acts 20:17-38.

How did you do?

Let me just run through some key things that I took away from Acts chapter 20:17-38 related to leadership responsibilities in the church of protecting, feeding, leading, and caring for the flock.

- In verse 18, see the Apostle Paul saying that, number one, there was obedience on his part. He was saying, and follow the example of his life. And his life was one of obedience to the Lord.
- Verse 19, I see humility. There were tears of compassion that were a part of the way Paul cared for the people. And he was putting the needs of others ahead of his own.
- Verse 20, I see courage. I see the ability to teach the full counsel of the Word of God. And I see a focus on relationship as well. He went from house to house. It wasn't just a large group. Paul valued personal relationship in his ministry.
- In verse 21, I see vision. It was a gospel-centered vision that Paul was focused on.
- In verse 22 and 23, I see as spirit-led leader with a desire to suffer, to persevere for the cause of Christ and the gospel. I see servanthood as well.
- Verse 24, I see perseverance, to finish well, to be focused on the mission.
- Verse 25, to stay focused on the message as well. And that message was the kingdom of God.
- Verse 28, Paul set an example. And he's telling them, shepherd the flock. Follow my example. You have a responsibility to oversee and protect the people that God has put under your care.
- Verse 29, to protect from false teaching, from these wolves that are going to come in, even from within the church.
- Verse 31, to remain alert, to teach, to lead well.

- Verse 33, to not be greedy for money or financial gain. You saw many of these qualities in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- Verse 34, focus on serving others.
- Verse 35, work ethic, to work hard, and then to be generous, to be willing to give. It's better to give than to receive.

What is so amazing about this passage, is that it is so practical. This is not hypothetical or conceptual. This is real. It came right out of Paul's life. The other elders could not dispute anything that Paul shared.

Notice also that it was not just an elder, it was the elders of the church in Ephesus. Paul was encouraging and challenging all of them. He's saying, you saw how I lived among you for these three years. By God's grace, live these out as well. This is a high calling that you have. It's important to lead well.

The second passage on page 12 is 1 Peter 5:1-4

Peter said, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's suffering, who also will share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them, not because you must, but because you're willing. As God wants you to be, not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve, not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

What are some of the leadership responsibilities and attitudes that you can see from this passage in 1 Peter 5?

- Shepherd God's flock. There's a responsibility of being a shepherd. This involves feeding and caring and protecting.
- There's an attitude that's involved, a motivation that's involved, that's willing to serve.
- Leaders are not greedy for financial gain or self-advancement.
- Humility is essential. Leaders must put Christ first. Godly leaders desire to shine a spotlight on Christ and bring glory to him through the work that we do.
- Leaders are not to be harsh, not to be authoritarian, not to be a dictator. This principle applies for all leaders. It is true of a husband leading spiritually in his marriage and his family, a team leader in the workplace, an elder in a church, a pastor, someone leading the prayer ministry or the women's ministry or men's ministry. We are to not lead in a harsh way, not an authoritarian way, but to be a servant leader.
- Leaders set an example. We are to be known by the members. How we live should be set an example for how they can follow as well.

Peter gives us some other principles. In 1 Peter 1, he says we are to be holy.

In 1 Peter 5 we are called to be humble. God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. Also in chapter 5, we are to be sober minded and alert because our enemy, the devil, is prowling around. We need to be alert and be focused on our God given calling.

Page 13 is a powerful summary of what it looks like to be a godly leader in the church. Follow along as I read. Underline those points that you think are most needed in the church today. Highlight where you need to grow and develop as a leader.

“In addition to shepherding others in a servant spirit, the elders must humbly and lovingly relate to one another. They must be able to patiently build consensus, compromise, persuade, listen, handle disagreement, forgive, receive rebuke and correction, confess sin, and appreciate the wisdom and perspective of others, even those with whom they disagree.”

Paragraph 2: “They must be able to submit to one another, speak kindly and gently to one another, be patient with their fellow colleagues, defer to one another, and speak their minds openly in truth and in love.”

Paragraph 3: “Stronger and more gifted elders must not use their giftedness, as talented people sometimes do, to force their own way by threatening to leave the church and take their followers with them. Such selfishness creates ugly carnal power struggles and endangers the unity and peace of the entire congregation.”

Paragraph 4: “The solution to this problem is not to revert to one-man rule or to leave the church. That's the easy way out. The Christian solution is to humble oneself, love as Christ loved, wash one another's feet, repent, submit, pray, turn from pride, shun impatience, and honor and love one another.”

Paragraph 5: “True elders suffer and bear the brunt of difficult people and problems so that the lambs, the people of the church, are not bruised. They bear the misunderstandings and sins of others so that the assembly may live in peace. They lose sleep so that others may rest. They make great personal sacrifices of time and energy for the welfare of others. They see themselves as men under the authority of Christ. They depend on God for wisdom and help, not on their own power and cleverness. They face false teachers, fierce attacks. They guard the community's liberty and freedom in Christ so that the saints, believers, followers of Jesus, are encouraged to develop their gifts, to mature, and to serve one another.”

Wow, we could take a whole lesson just digging into these 5 paragraphs and discussing the importance of each point. I hope you can see how much love, love for God and love for others is incorporated, into the life of a leader (and every follower of Jesus).

Jesus says, a new command I give you, love one another. The world will know you are my followers by the way you love one another. This is meant to be the distinguishing characteristic of the Jesus' church. Those who are called to be leaders in whatever role, this love should be present in our lives so we can be an example. And when we blow it, when we sin, we are to confess and repent. We are to ask for forgiveness and be forgiven.

This is our model of leadership within the church, not perfect leadership, but spirit-filled leadership.

Hopefully, this lesson has highlighted some key biblical leadership criteria, such as

- shared leadership
- qualified leadership
- servant leadership, focused on protecting, feeding, leading, and caring for God's flock that's been placed under the leader's care.

The questions for you to think about on your own are:

- Which aspects of biblical spiritual leadership are most needed in the church today?
- What impact might there be in the church if leaders consistently modeled these qualities?
- What impacted you in the final 5 paragraph summary on page 13?

As we close out Lesson 2 – Part 2, you can summarize your key learnings at the bottom of page 13.

Take time to pray as you continue growing in the character of Christ as a leader, and whatever that leadership role may be in your life at this time. God bless.

We will continue with Lesson 3 – The Leadership Principles from Nehemiah.