

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP

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PRACTICAL ASSIGNMENT

INTRODUCTION

This lecture from Ian Roberts today is on leadership and in particular Biblical Principles of Leadership. You, ladies and gentlemen, are here because you are leaders. God in His wisdom, has appointed you to a position of leadership. Now that is good, and at the same time bad. Leadership carries with it a high price. James 3:1 says,

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Did you get that? Each one of us will be judged more strictly than our brothers and sisters who are not here. Why is that? Simply because we are leaders. The influence we have over our brothers and sisters is considerable, and any misuse of that influence can bring about the *downfall* of many people. That is why, as leaders, we will be judged more strictly. And that is why we need to have a good understanding of Biblical leadership.

Now we only have a short time to look at a topic that could well be a week-long seminar in itself. I have chosen to limit this lecture to focus on a number of *personal* characteristics of a good leader. What a good leader *is* rather than what he does. I hope that you will find it helpful. The first aspect that I want to mention is that:

I. LEADERS ARE MEANT TO BE EXAMPLES

Now let us consider the case of Barnabas. If you have your Bibles, turn with me to Acts 4:36&37. And we read this,

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means son of encouragement) sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Now, what one word would best describe Barnabas' character as depicted here? Ok, **generosity** would be the word we would choose.

Turn with me now to Acts 11. A church has been planted in a city called Antioch, and when the church at Jerusalem heard about it, they sent Barnabas there to pastor that church. Barnabas, in turn, went to Tarsus to pick up Paul, and they ministered together in Antioch. We pick up the story in Acts 11:27-30.

During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

Now what one word best describes the disciples' character? Ok, again, generosity would be the word we would choose. And what did we discover about Barnabas in Acts chapter four? That he was generous. Ok do you think this could possibly be a coincidence? No way. Not likely. The disciples at Antioch were generous because their *leader*, Barnabas, was generous. Now it does not matter what church you go to, which organization you are affiliated with, you will find that the attitudes and values of the people reflect the attitudes and values of the *leader*. If you would go to a church



minister is committed to evangelism, the church as a whole will be committed to evangelism. If you go to a church where the senior minister is committed to missions, then the church as a whole will be committed to missions. Now I cannot give you a reasonable explanation as to why that is. Suffice to say, that this is one of the dynamics of leadership with which you will have to contend.

You are a leader, and whether you like it or not, people are **modeling** themselves after you. Now how does that make you feel? In 1 Corinthians 4:16 Paul says, *"I urge you to imitate me."* And again in 1 Corinthians 11:1, *"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."*

Now be honest for a moment and ask yourself, "What would happen if **all** my congregation, students and course coaches **imitated me?**" Would the kingdom of God surge ahead with leaps and bounds? Or would it grind to a halt, caught up in sin and petty arguments and self-glorification?

You are a leader, and as a leader you are an **example**. Now whether you are a good example or a bad example, that is up to you. But if you are a bad example, you may like to consider Jesus' words, found in Luke 17:2, where he says,

It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck, than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.

All of us should be able to say, like the apostle Paul,

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Leaders are to be examples

II. LEADERS ARE TO BE PRAYING PEOPLE

Now turn with me to the book of Joel, in the Old Testament please, chapter 1:13-14. And we read this,

Put on sack cloth, O priests, and mourn; wail, you who minister before the altar. Come, spend the night in sack cloth, you who minister before my God; for the grain offerings and the drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God. Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord. Joel 1:13

Notice who it says is to cry out to the Lord— The priest, those who minister, the elders, you and I. Notice also why it says to cry out, *"...for the grain offering and the drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God."* Now given the context of this passage, these verses can mean one of two things:

- Either the locust and famine are so bad that there is no grain or drink for offering.
- Or the locusts and famine are so bad, that people are keeping all the grain and drink offering for themselves, and not bringing their tithes to the priests.

So either the people as a whole are starving, or the people as a whole are disobedient. Now, either way, the message is clear, that it is the ministers who are to pray for the people as a whole. In addition to other prayers, leaders are instructed to pray for matters of a corporate nature. Matters such as your ministry, your leaders, your course coaches, your finances, your vision, your nation and your government.



Ezekiel 22:30 says,

I looked for a man among them who would build up a wall and stand before me in the gap, on behalf of the land, so that I would not have to destroy it.

As leader you need to be praying for your **nation**, that God would raise up **holy** men into leadership, who will govern with wisdom and **justice**. That God would raise men committed to sharing the gospel with people in this land.

We said before that leaders are examples. If you want your people to be praying people — you must be a praying leader. A few years ago I had the opportunity of listening to a man named Yongi Cho, the senior minister from the largest church in the world, in South Korea. Yongi Cho is a man of prayer. He has founded his ministry on prayer, and everything he does is bathed in prayer. And the results are obvious. The largest church in the world, with an estimated over three quarters of a million people attending.

Leaders are to be praying people.

III. LEADERS ARE TO BE SHEPHERDS

This is such a huge responsibility that Jesus himself has said that he will take up this task. We as leaders are to model ourselves on the Good Shepherd. Turn with me to Ezekiel 34:11-16,

For this is what the Sovereign Lord says "I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land; There they will lie down in good grazing land, and they will feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down," declares the Sovereign Lord. 'I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. But the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.'

Notice what the Good Shepherd says he will do. He will,

- a) "**tend** them in good pasture," (Ezekiel 34:14).
- b) "**search** for the lost and bring back the strays," (Ezekiel 34:16).
- c) "**bind up** the injured and strengthen the weak," (Ezekiel 34:16)
- d) "**destroy** the sleek and strong," That is the those sheep that oppress the others.
- e) **stand guard** against wolves. This is an area that needs great wisdom and discernment.

There was an incident that occurred in a church in Australia sometime ago, where into its midst, came a wolf in sheep's clothing. The young man in question was a faithful member of the church. He attended the Bible College associated with the church and was a model student. He won a number of awards for academic excellence and



for practical assignments. He began a youth group in the church and built it up from scratch to well over one hundred young people attending every week. And yet that same young man is now in jail for crimes he committed against some of those young people. It happens that wolves will come in, in sheep's clothing, and try and take your flock. **You need great wisdom and discernment** from the Lord to detect these people and to get rid of them.

I want to ask you today: What kind of shepherd are you? How do you measure up against the Good Shepherd?

A. Do you tend your sheep in good pasture?

- Do you ensure that your sheep have plenty of good spiritual food that will help them to grow into spiritual maturity?
- Do we spend time with God in preparing a good meal for our sheep?

B. Do you search for the lost, those who do not know Jesus?

- Do you bring back the strays, those who have wandered away from Jesus?
- Do you bind up the injured with prayer?
- What are we doing about the poor, the widows and the orphans to nurse them back to health so that they can participate fully in life?

C. Do you strengthen the weak?

- With words of encouragement?
- By teaching them how to study the Bible and grow in the Lord?

D. Do you rebuke those who oppress others?

E. Do you protect your sheep against false teaching and divisive or oppressive elements?

This is what the Good Shepherd says he will do. Dare we do anything less? But, in case we may have other ideas about how we will shepherd our flock, let us read Jeremiah 23:1-4,

'Because you have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you,' declares the Lord. 'I will remove you and place other shepherds over them, who will tend them.'

Do not be misled. God cares more about your flock than you do. And the warnings are quite clear: If we fail to shepherd our flock as the Good Shepherd would, He will remove us and replace us. Such is the awesome responsibility of being a shepherd. And I have seen God remove some people from their ministry. But so too is the immense joy of seeing your flock grow as you tenderly love them and serve them, administering discipline where necessary, and with wisdom, discern the wolves and put them to flight.

Leaders are to be shepherds.

IV. LEADERS ARE TO BE SERVANTS

The greatest example we have of this is our Lord Jesus, who himself said,

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28)

This is what distinguishes Christian hierarchy from worldly hierarchy. In the world, the manager, he sits at the top, and under him are the assistant managers who bow to every demand that he has. Then under them are the supervisors who obey the commands of the assistant managers. And under the supervisors come the workers, and they just simply do as they are told. In this hierarchy we have the leaders lording it over the workers, exercising authority over them. Jesus says,



It is not to be so with you. Instead, anyone who wants to become great among you, must be your servant. And whoever wants to be the first, must be your slave.

~Matthew 20:26-27

Jesus turned the world system up-side down. Putting the leaders at the **bottom**, serving the workers at the **top**. So ours is not an enviable position. We are almost at the bottom rung of the ladder. The only people lower than you, are Abraham and the other ministry leaders. Think of all the people you work with. Picture a hierarchy, with **yourself at the bottom**, your coaches above you, and all your students above them. They are all the people, you must serve. Now ask yourself: **“Am I serving** all these people, or lording it over them?” Ask yourself: “How can I serve these people better?”

As leaders, it is easy to get caught up in the importance of our job, in the importance of our position. Yet I have found a verse that helps me keep everything in perspective. It is Luke 17:7-10 and this is what the Bible says,

Suppose one of you had a servant plowing, or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat.’ Would he not rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything that you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’

Leaders are to be servants

CONCLUSION

As I mentioned at the start, time limits us from discussing more on this topic of Biblical Leadership, but this time we saw that:

A leader is to be an example.

He is to be a praying person.

He is to be a shepherd.

He is to be a servant.

May God bless you as you seek to do all these things in your ministry.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

We are happy to present the video, audio and paper materials that have been prepared by New Life for Churches. You have the privilege upon completion of your practical assignment to use this lecture with others.

Practical assignment

Completed

- Complete the following questionnaire.

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1. Do you ensure that your sheep have plenty of good spiritual food that will help them to grow into spiritual maturity? _____
2. Do we spend time with God in preparing a good meal for our sheep? _____
3. Do you search for the lost, those who do not know Jesus? _____
4. What are we doing about the poor, the widows and the orphans to nurse them back to health so that they can participate fully in life? _____
5. Do you strengthen the weak?
 - a. with words of encouragement? _____
 - b. teaching them how to study the Bible and grow in the Lord? _____
6. Do you rebuke those who oppress others? _____
7. Do you protect your sheep against false teaching and devisive or oppressive elements? _____

- Based on the above questionnaire, what do you need to improve in your leadership?

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- How do you intend to do this? (use the back of the sheet if necessary) _____

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- Begin to implement the above plan today! Write some of your successes below. _____

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- Be prepared to share from this sheet at the next seminar.