



worldoutreach

SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP

MODULE THREE: QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHRISTIAN LEADER



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SESSION ONE: CORE DISTINCTIVES OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS (Part 1)

These distinctives are the core qualities necessary as the 'basics' for anyone serving in Christian leadership.

1. A Christian leader is a Christian

This is 'the' core distinction of a Christian leader – we have placed our trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Jesus is now the Lord of our life. We are an authentic Christian, not just in name, but in lifestyle.

2. A Christian leader is a committed follower of Jesus

Building on being a Christian, a second core distinctive of Christian leadership is that we're a committed follower of Jesus (Matt. 4:22-23; Mark 8:34). What does it mean to follow him? Jesus told us very plainly in Matt. 16:24: deny oneself, take up their cross and follow him.

3. A Christian leader loves God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength

As a committed Christ-follower, a leader should have a deep love for the Lord, as a response to God's love for us (1 John 4:16,19). This means loving God with ALL our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30).

4. A Christian leader pursues intimacy with God

Because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we can now draw near to God anywhere, anytime with full assurance (Hebrews 10:19-20, 22; James 4:8). This is not just seeking God's 'hand' (what he can do for us), but seeking God's 'face' (who he is).

5. A Christian leader practices the daily disciplines of prayer, engagement with Scripture and worship.

Growing leaders maintain and depend upon the daily devotional practices to sustain their spiritual life and leadership/ministry responsibilities.



SESSION TWO: CORE DISTINCTIVES OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS (Part 2)

Continuing our examination of 10 core characteristics, we now note the remaining five.

6. A Christian leader lives a life empowered and led by the Holy Spirit

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16) provides the enablement a leader needs to live the Christian life and discharge the responsibilities of their leadership.

7. A Christian leader works hard at developing godly character

Aubrey Malphurs in his book, *Bring Leaders*, defines character as 'the sum total of a person's distinct qualities, both good and bad, that reflects who he or she is (being) and affects what he or she does (behaviour).' Leaders have to 'hunger and thirst' for godly character (Matthew 5:6).

8. A Christian leader is rightly motivated

A leader's motives are very important. It's imperative for Christian leaders not to be driven by ambition, position, status or power, but by bringing honour and glory to God, by pleasing and obeying God, and by loving and serving people.

9. A willingness to serve

Christian leaders have a desire and passion to use their leadership position to serve people (1 Peter 5:2; 4:10-11).

10. A call to, gift of or desire for leadership

Christian leaders have a call (1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:11), gift (Rom. 12:8) or desire to lead.



SESSION THREE: CHARACTER QUALITIES OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS (Part 1)

The following is not a comprehensive list, but a representative list of character qualities necessary for effective, engaging and enduring Christian leadership.

The development of these qualities is a process.

1. Accountable

There is a difference between our responsibility as a leader and our accountability as a leader. Our responsibility is an ongoing duty to fulfil our role or complete a task at hand, whereas being accountable means taking ownership for the results of that responsibility.

There is a day of final accountability (2 Cor. 5:10; Romans 14:10,12; 1 Cor. 3:10-15).

2. Authentic

Authenticity means that we are real, genuine, transparent, readable, honest and vulnerable.

The people we lead, and those we lead with, must see and know the REAL us!

3. Faithful

God requires those who represent him in leadership to be faithful, which means we are dependable, reliable, consistent and trustworthy to our responsibilities, call, word (promises), people and God's Word (1 Cor. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:2).



SESSION FOUR: CHARACTER QUALITIES OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS (Part 2)

4. Honouring

Scripture teaches that we are to honour a number of specific people: God, parents (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-2; cf. Deuteronomy 5:16; Leviticus 19:3), governing authorities (Romans 13:7), everyone (1 Peter 2:15, 17) and our spiritual oversight (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 5:5; Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Honour has both an inward and outward dimension.

5. Humility

Being humble begins with having a right estimation of ourselves in relation to God (Rom. 12:3). (Rick Warren) 'Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.' Leaders should have a humble attitude (James 4:6) and maintain a child-like trust, dependence and obedience to the Lord (Matthew 18:1-4). Scripture also teaches us to be humble in our attitude toward one another (Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:3; Colossians 3:2; Titus 3:2; 1 Peter 5:5;).

6. Integrity

Paul urged Timothy to 'set an example' (1 Timothy 4:12) as a leader of exemplary and transparent integrity in all parts of his life. In contemporary culture, integrity is seen as 'the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness' (Webster's Dictionary), and adherence to a moral or legal code. Christian leaders must display integrity not only in their public life and ministry, but in every area of their lives. They must be careful of the subtlety and hypocrisy of 'selective integrity'.

Definition of integrity in Christian leadership: 'The intentional and conscientious commitment to be principled, ethical, honest, trustworthy and authentic in every area of one's life.'

Psalm 78:72 says of David's leadership that he '*...shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skilful hands he led them.*'



SESSION FIVE: CHARACTER QUALITIES OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS (Part 3)

7. Loyalty

Loyalty is a character quality we must nurture if we are to be trustworthy, dependable and seen as a team player. Loyalty is primarily outworked in a relational context.

Loyalty is not a feeling; it is a choice. Loyalty has multidirectional expressions across the organizational structure of your church (or organisation): upward (to our leaders), across (to our fellow team members), and downward (to those we lead).

8. Teachable

By definition, 'teachable' means the ability to be taught or to learn, but teachability, in a Christian leadership context, is not just our aptitude (i.e. our capacity to learn) but our attitude (i.e. our willingness to learn). Applications of teachability:

- Being teachable, at its base level, is a desire to learn, specifically about leadership;
- Being teachable also means asking the right questions to gain understanding;
- Being teachable means being open and humble to receive correction, a loving rebuke, words of instruction from the wise, or a note of caution;
- Being teachable can also mean coming to the realisation that we may be/are wrong.

9. Trustworthy

Trustworthiness is a character quality which gives other people confidence or a firm belief in our honesty, integrity, transparency, ability or reliability. Being trustworthy means that we can be trusted. Trust takes time to build and earn, but it can be broken.

10. Truthful

Being truthful means not lying (Proverbs 12:22; Colossians 3:9), not fabricating or embellishing a story to aggrandise ourselves (Ephesians 4:25; Proverbs 12:19), not abdicating personal responsibility, and not apportioning blame to someone else to avoid incrimination (Genesis 3:12-13). In respect of our relationships within the Christian community, we are implored in Scripture to '*...speak the truth in love...*' (Ephesians 4:15).



SESSION SIX: QUALITIES FOR LEADERS IN PAUL'S PASTORAL EPISTLES (Part One)

By combining two key passages in two of Paul's Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 3:1-10 and Titus 1:5-9), we find a list of qualities required of 'elders' and 'deacons'.

1. Above reproach

At the top of the list of qualifications for church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:1-10 (cf. Titus 1:5-9) is to be '*above reproach*' (1 Timothy 3:2), which means that a leader behaves, both publicly and privately, in a way that can withstand assaults from opponents inside or outside the church (v. 7). A leader's reputation within the church and broader community must be beyond substantive accusation.

2. Home life in order

Paul then called for leaders to have their marriage and family life, that is - their 'home life' in appropriate order. He wrote of leaders being the '*husband of one wife*' (1 Timothy 3:2) and how a leader's children must be '*respectful*' (3:4) and not '*have a reputation for being wild and rebellious*' (Titus 1:6 NLT).

3. Self-mastery

Leaders are to be: '*temperate, self-controlled, upright, holy, disciplined*' (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8) which means they must internally regulate and control their lives. By the Spirit's power, it means exercising restraint, discipline and control *in and over* their lives.

4. Respectable

The word 'respectable' brings the connotations of well-thought-of, decent, upright, commendable and worthy of respect. Importantly, Paul wrote how leaders must not only be respectable within the church community (as it says in verse 2), but also the general community (as in v. 7).



SESSION SIX: QUALITIES FOR LEADERS IN PAUL'S PASTORAL EPISTLES (Part Two)

5. Hospitable

The Greek word translated as hospitable (*philoxenia*) in v. 2 literally means 'a love for strangers'. Paul is not just speaking about being hospitable to other Christians, but also to strangers. All Christians are urged to be hospitable as it says in Rom. 12:13; 1 Pet. 4:9; 3 John 5, but especially Christian leaders (cf. Titus 1:8).

6. Able to teach

This does not mean every leader has to have a teaching gift or the gift of a teacher, but have a degree of competence in sharing the Word of God with others, whether in a formal environment or, more often, one-on-one.

In the NT, those leaders who formally teach the Scriptures are required to: teach sound and uncompromising truth (Titus 1:13; 2:1-13); refute false doctrines and spurious teaching (1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 2:14); provide practical instruction for how the various demographics of the church should conduct their lives (1 Timothy 5:1-20; Titus 2:1-10); unapologetically exercising the authority of Scripture (Titus 2:15); show '*...integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech...*' in teaching (Titus 2:7-8).

7. Spiritual maturity

Paul wrote that a leader must not be a recent convert (v. 6), but have exhibited a measure of maturity in their faith. Apart from not being mature enough to handle responsibility, Paul's chief concern is that too much responsibility may cause them to become proud.

A humble attitude to God and people is, therefore, one of the essential indicators of spiritual maturity that qualifies someone for Christian leadership.

8. Good reputation

Following on from the earlier reference to leaders being respectable, in verse 7, Paul wrote that leaders '*...must also have a good reputation with outsiders*' (1 Timothy 3:7). which is another term for the 'non-Christian public' (NEB) or the broader community. Also see Colossians 4:5 and 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. The reason Paul insists on leaders having a good reputation is to avoid the hazard of potentially being discredited or disgraced. This, he argues, is the devil's principal stratagem against leaders – discredit the gospel by discrediting Christian leaders.



9. Live by sound doctrine

As 1 Timothy 3 continues, Paul shifts his focus from 'overseers'/elders (vv. 1-7) to 'deacons' (vv. 8-13). In verse 9, Paul wrote that they (referring to deacons) '*...must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience*'; that is, with strong and sincere conviction. This implies a conscientious application of the Scriptures to the realities of their everyday lives.

10. Tested

Leaders are to have been through a period of testing (1 Timothy 3:10). The purpose of the probationary 'testing' is for them to demonstrate they can serve appropriately in a leadership capacity, which, in context, is as a 'deacon'. Rather than be thrown into the 'deep end', they are given lesser responsibilities to test them and, importantly, prepare them.

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