

Part One.

The Character of a Leader

We begin with the character of a leader for one simple reason: this is where the Scripture concentrates its focus. The New Testament, in particular, gives only minimal attention to what a leader does. Nowhere will you find any extensive job description for the role of pastor, elder or bishop. We come across only the thinnest references to teaching the truth (Acts 20:27-31; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9) and equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12) as indicators of a leader's role. You won't discover a gifts checklist or a list of the top ten skills that a leader should have anywhere in the Bible.

The Bible is much more concerned about *who* a leader is than *what* a leader does. Why? New Testament leadership is about reflecting the character of *the* Leader and Shepherd of the flock, Jesus Christ. In the Pastoral Epistles (1-2 Timothy and Titus), Paul gives us lists of qualifications to be an elder in the church. With the exception of "apt to teach," all the qualifications are related to moral and spiritual character.

Therefore, in part one, we will study three characteristics of a leader.

Holy (chap. 1). Jesus Christ is the embodiment of the holy God and therefore our source and model for holy living. True leaders are reflectors. If Jesus is the sun, we are the moon, which can be seen only as it reflects a light that is not its own. Since we have no light of our own, we are reliant on making sure that we stay plugged into the One who is the source of light. Therefore, our first study looks at committing ourselves to cultivating the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the nine delicious character qualities that are simply a summary of the person of Jesus Christ.

Habitual (chap. 2). Christian leaders find true life and joy in the One they serve. They cultivate the rhythms and habits of a fruitful relationship with Christ that causes others to say, "The joy in that leader's life is something I want to have." This lesson examines how we can develop a training program that renews us so that "streams of living water will flow from within" us (John 7:38).

Humble (chap. 3). Good leaders exercise their power and influence properly. The worldly notion of power entails being dominant over others. Fear, intimidation and coercion are used to control. Jesus says, "Not so among us." Godly power does not exalt leaders but empowers those who are being served. In a word, the Christlike leader is *humble*.

1 / Holy

Memory Verse: 1 Peter 1:14-19

Bible Study: Isaiah 6:1-8

Reading: Simply the Greatest

Leadership Exercise: Holiness Health Check

Core Truth

What is the preeminent quality of Christ's character that informs the life of disciples who lead others?

Leading disciples^[] fix their gaze on the holiness of Christ and seek to reflect this holiness in the character and conduct of their own lives. This holiness is a blend of moral purity, spiritual produce, sacred purpose and transcendent power.*

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.
2. Restate the core truth in your own words.
3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?

Memory Verse Study Guide

Memory Verse: 1 Peter 1:14-19

Putting it in context: The apostle Peter was a man who had come face-to-face with his own sin. He had tried to talk Jesus out of going to the cross, bragged about how much more loyal he would be to Christ than the other disciples, and then bitterly denied Jesus when the pressure was on. Peter has also come face to face with God's amazing grace. This moves him to issue the very striking appeal in this text.

1. How could "ignorance" make a person "conform to... evil desires" (v. 14) or pursue an "empty way of life" (v. 18)? Give an example of this.
2. Based on your own experience or observations of others, what are some of the "evil desires" that might actually lurk behind the actions of someone in leadership?
3. What does the word *holy* (vv. 15-16) mean or suggest to you?
4. What does it mean to "live... as strangers here in reverent fear" (v. 17)?
5. List at least two arguments (more if you can) for being holy that Peter advances in this passage.

Inductive Bible Study Guide

Bible Study: Isaiah 6:1-8

Isaiah 6 recounts the calling of the prophet Isaiah into the service of God. The events we read about occur shortly after the death of Israel's beloved king, Uzziah. Up to that point Uzziah was the most formidable being that Isaiah had ever known. A brilliant statesman, uncommonly strong moral leader and winsome public figure, Uzziah had shepherded Israel for an unprecedented fifty years. When he died, all of Israel, including Isaiah, went into bitter mourning. Never again would they encounter such greatness. And then Isaiah was given this vision.

1. At Isaiah's time the great temple at Jerusalem would have been by far the largest, most glorious structure Isaiah had ever seen, especially since Uzziah had restored it. What does verse 1 suggest, however, about the magnitude and glory of God?

What words are used to describe God's glory?

2. "Seraphs" were angelic warriors, beings of staggering strength and speed. In verse 4 we're told that the sound of their voices created a cataclysm of shock and awe in the temple. The reference to their "feet" is likely a euphemistic reference to "private parts." What do you think is the significance of these mighty beings covering up their eyes and "feet"?
3. What do the seraphs say about the character and influence of God in verse 3?

What is the significance of their repeating "holy" three times?

4. What initial emotional and spiritual response did Isaiah have to this encounter (v. 5), and why?
5. Have you ever felt anything like this when contemplating God's nature? How do you relate to this experience of worship?
6. According to verses 6-7, how does the Lord alleviate Isaiah's sense of moral disintegration?
7. Why do you think Isaiah volunteered himself when God called (v. 8)?

8. What questions or issues does this passage raise for you?

Reading: *Simply the Greatest*

The story is told of an older man who for many decades habitually returned every few years to the city of Athens. Upon each visit, he would climb to the top of the Acropolis, take a seat on one of its ancient stones and spend an hour or two letting his eyes wander over the massive pedestal, the soaring columns, and the perfect proportions of the Parthenon. When asked to explain the reason for this pattern, the elderly gentleman's eyes crinkled as he smiled: "I do this because it keeps my standards high."

For the same reason, many of us who hope to be used of God as leaders keep returning to gaze upon Jesus. He is the greatest possible standard for what it means to be a person and a leader. To be fair, claims like this have been made of others. When Vladimir Lenin was entombed in Moscow in 1924, the following inscription was placed next to his embalmed remains: "Here lies the greatest leader of all people of all time. He was the lord of the new humanity. He was the savior of the world."^[1]

Those words, whether applied to Lenin or any other leader, ring hollow today, don't they? Those leaders lie dead and buried (or one day will). The clock is ticking, and their kingdoms are (or will be) history. Yet the person and influence of Jesus remains as alive today as the first day he stood on the temple mount of Jerusalem. As the twenty-first century was dawning, *Time* magazine made this observation:

The memory of any stretch of years eventually resolves to a list of names, and one of the useful ways of recalling the past two millenniums is by listing the people who acquired great power. Muhammad, Catherine the Great, Marx, Gandhi, Hitler, Roosevelt, Stalin and Mao come quickly to mind. There's no question that each of those figures changed the lives of millions and evoked responses from worship through hatred.

It would require much exotic calculation, however, to deny that the single most powerful figure—not merely in these two millenniums but in all human history—has been Jesus of Nazareth.... [A] serious argument can be made that no one else's life has proved remotely as powerful and enduring as that of Jesus."^[2]

Leadership is the art of multiplying influence, and by this standard Jesus must be considered the master artist. This is something of why so many of us agree with the writer to the Hebrews that Jesus is "worthy of greater honor" (Hebrews 3:3) than other leaders. Even those who cannot yet accept the core Christian claim that Jesus was the Creator of the universe, was made flesh (John 1:1-3, 14), cannot help but stand in awe or admiration before the brilliant ethical framework, the towering moral example, the enduring spiritual and social effects of the life and leadership of Jesus. The famed Briton H. G. Wells once wrote: "More than 1900 years later, a historian like myself, who doesn't even call himself a Christian, finds the picture centering irresistibly around the life and character of this most significant man.... The historian's test of greatness is 'What did he leave to grow?' Did he start men to thinking along fresh lines with a vigor that persisted after him? By this test, Jesus stands first."^[3]

He is simply the greatest.