

Studies in Church Leadership: Discussion 5
Defining Leadership

Review:

- i. In our most recent studies of Church Leaders we have been focusing on the work that God has given Elders to do: So far, we have been exploring this by looking at some of the different aspects of leadership that they are to provide:
 - a. We have studied the role of Elders as Watchmen among God's people; the need for them to keep a vigilant watch to warn of any potential dangers:
 - b. Last week we looked to the example of Jesus in John 10, as well as the 23 Psalm to explore the Elder in the role of Shepherd: That they are to be compassionate, loving men, who guide the sheep God has given them charge over:
 - (i) But for this discussion I want us to take a couple of steps back from that approach, and spend some time talking about leadership in general.

I. What are some general misconceptions about how to define leadership?

A. Intellect = Leadership :

1. This would be a fairly common response: Wouldn't this be a wise attribute to seek out in a leader? After all, does anybody truly want a to follow someone who doesn't have a clue?
2. Well, the truth is that while being intelligent may very well help you in your role as a leader; it does not automatically make someone a leader:
 - a) Can you think of someone who obviously possessed a great deal of knowledge but was severely lacking in leadership skills? **Consider the Example of Solomon:** who prayed for, and was granted wisdom above all others in **1 Kings 3:9**
 - (i) Has there been anyone in possession of greater wisdom than King Solomon? **1 Kings 11:1-5** records that Solomon had 700 Wives, and 300 concubines: Did he lead them very well? Verse 3 tells us that Solomon was the one who ended up being led: away from serving the Lord:

B. **Achievement = Leadership:**

1. This would another fairly common marker of leadership in the eyes of many: I want to follow someone who has a long list of accomplishments to their name: That way I'll know that they know what they are doing!
2. As with intelligence, this may or may not have a great deal to do with making an effective leader, really there are very few achievements that the world idolizes that mean much to God; it doesn't make you a leader:
 - a) There sports figures and film stars, CEOs, who have more physical accomplishments than I could dream of: but they are certainly not leaders:
3. Can you think of anyone who had accomplished much, but couldn't lead?

Consider the example of Samson: in Judges 13-17

- a) From a physical standpoint, Samson accomplished more individually than any other Judge of Israel:
 - (1) Other Judges may have killed a few enemies here and there, perhaps they led an army against Israel's oppressors, but Samson killed close to 5,000 Philistines by himself! And those are just the ones we know about!
 - (2) Do you remember Samson for his great leadership?
 - (a) Chances are you remember him for:
 - i) his selfishness; treating his bride with contempt, growing angry when his riddle was solved, and throwing a tantrum in Judges 14
 - ii) his pride; as he took every affront as an insult to himself, not God or his people:
 - iii) his immorality; first going to the Harlot in Gaza, and then to Delilah in the valley of Sorek in Judges 16
 - iv) you remember that he died with his eyes gouged out and the roof collapsing on his head: Samson was no leader
 - (1) The Bible is filled with examples of men who had great achievements, but were not good leaders: Many of the Kings of Israel come to mind!

C. Management = Leadership:

1. Managers and Leaders are very often used interchangeably: If someone is a successful manager then that means they would automatically make a good leader: Anyone in the Armed forces will testify against that:
2. This is being recognized more and more even from a worldly perspective: In an issue of Forbes magazine from earlier this year, there was an article entitled “Why Great Leaders Make Bad Managers: and That’s OK” Listen to this quote given by one popular author on the subject of leadership:
 - a) *A leader is somebody who sees opportunity and puts change in motion. A manager is somebody who follows that leader and sees how to structure things*
3. Again, while having good management skills may or may not be helpful; they do not automatically make someone a leader: (I’d say on a side note that I believe this is at least in part why we have deacons: God didn’t expect Elders to spend all of their time acting as managers: Much like the quote from this article, they have the vision on how to guide God’s flock, and the Deacons follow them and help with the structure of things)
 - a) Again, Biblically speaking, can you think of someone who was a good manager, but that did not equate into good leadership? Lets go back to **1 Kings 11**:
 - (1) Where did the first King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel come from? It was a ‘manager’
 - (2) Solomon had looked out, saw that Jeroboam was a valiant man and in v29 placed him in charge of all of the forced labor:
 - (a) What do you remember about Jeroboam? We will talk about this more in a moment: But it is certainly not his good leadership skills:

D. Position = Leadership:

1. This is perhaps the most common myth about leadership: If you are given position, then you are automatically a leader:
 - a) Let me tell you from personal experience: This is not true! (*Illus of Cabinet Shop*)
2. Do you remember the story of Gideon the Judge? Do you remember the story of his son, Abimelech? Look at **Judges 9:1-4**

- a) Abimelech went out, and bought his position: There were even a few men who followed after him: But did that make him a leader?
- (1) We've mentioned Abimelech most recently in the story of David and Bathsheeba: Abimelech's fate became a proverb not to go near windows when attacking a city:
 - (2) Abimelech is remembered, not for his leadership, but because in 9:53 a woman killed him by throwing a millstone on his head:
 - (a) Israel had no desire to follow this man; no matter what position he claimed for himself:
- b) The list of kings have numerous men and even women who sat themselves on the throne, thinking it made them a leader, only to find out very violently that it did not:
- (1) David had other sons than Absalom to rise up and try to be leader of Israel: We will look at that in 1 Kings Chapter 1:
 - (2) In **1 Kings 16** Zimri killed King Baasha, and sat on the throne for an entire week before burning the palace down on himself when he saw that the people were following Omri, and not him.
 - (3) Speaking of Omri, his grand-daughter Athaliah would place herself on the throne and would stay there for a little while before being deposed in 2 **Chronicles 23**:
- c) Leaders are indeed given a position, and it is an important one: The difference is that we place leaders in a position because they *are* leaders. We don't place people in a position to make them leaders:

II. Then What is Leadership?:

- A. In his book entitled "Spiritual Leadership" author J.O. Sanders simply stated that leadership is **influence**:
- 1. That is very basic: It is very simple, but it is really not much more complex than that: Whether it is for good, or for bad, leadership is my ability to get others to follow: By definition, if nobody is following me, then I am not a leader:

2. The importance of a man's influence cannot be overstated: Influence has the ability to produce long lasting effects in either direction:
 - a) Consider Joshua's influence on the people of Israel: His life has a long lasting stabilizing impact in the nation of Israel: In **Judges 2:6-7** the leadership of Joshua inspired great faithfulness in the nation throughout his life; But the text says in v 7 that it went beyond that, and even during the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, a generation removed:
 - b) We should be looking for men who like Joshua, can influence others to follow the Lord:
 - (i) On the other end of the spectrum, negative influence can have a long lasting destabilizing impact:
 - (a) We've already mentioned Jeroboam: 1 Kings 15:26 tells us of his legacy:
 - (b) I think it is worthy pointing out that the negative seems to outlast the positive: which makes it all the more important that we choose godly men, with a positive influence:

Conclusion:

- So what are we looking for in our leaders? Are we defining leaders by their intellect and achievements? If so, take heed to God's warning to Samuel in 1 Samuel 16!
- As we continue to consider the important task of selecting Elders, we need to look around among us and ask the question: Do I see men here who I believe can Influence this flock to serve God?