

# Leadership for Christians – Part 3

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## **Agree or Disagree? Leadership isn't for everyone.**

If you answered agree, you are right in as much as not everyone can lead and all of us, either are now, or were once followers. Titus Livy observed, "Being a general calls for talents different than those of a soldier." Another way to phrase it is to say, "Too many chiefs and not enough Indians."

You see, leaders exert influence through the leadership of other people. A leader has made learning a habit and has gained a great deal of valuable experience becoming a "doer" or "performer" himself or herself. The next step is taking on that responsibility of leading others. It is at this level that the group grows when and because the leader is present.

## **Agree or Disagree? Leaders and followers have the same mind-set?**

It all depends on perspective. Leaders learn to view things a certain way, and from a certain vantage point. J. Robert Clinton said, "The difference between leaders and followers is perspective. The difference between leaders and effective leaders is better perspective. Effective leaders have better perspective."

## **TEAM – Together Everyone Achieves More**

A leader thinks in terms of the "team" efforts and what resources he or she can pull together to get the job done. The working concept is really what a team of individuals can do. This could be called "leverage." A single person can only do so much, assuming they have maximized their effort.

Webster, in his dictionary, describes leverage as the action or the mechanical advantage gained by it. A leader's team is his lever. There is a mechanical advantage gained by a leader orchestrating the efforts of a group of people to accomplish a larger task. I'm describing a multiplication of results by duplicating efforts.

In the gospel of Luke the Lord "appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where He was about to go." Then He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." He then encouraged them to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest field. He knew that with all these men sowing the seeds of the gospel that there would be a great yield. This was an example of how well this leadership principle works. We're told that "the seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name'."

## **Agree or Disagree? In leadership quantity is more important than quality?**

Is it "the more the merrier" that really counts in getting things done? More important is the concept of finding and developing the "right" people. These are people who are willing to "buy in" to the leader and his vision.

George Barna said, “Every leader has an incomplete set of tools to lead with and must, therefore, know what he can and cannot do. Effective leaders overcome their weaknesses by combining forces with others whose strengths compensate for those weaknesses, thereby creating a more complete and powerful mix of gifts and abilities” While finding and equipping others will take a great deal of a leader’s time, as we have seen through our explanation of leverage, it will be more than worth it.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 tells us in Solomon’s wisdom, “A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.” I’ve used this object lesson at certain weddings to illustrate the principal of duplicating for the sake of strengthening. (Three #2 wooden pencils are harder to snap than one pencil!) God, a man, and a woman, can not easily be broken when they stick to and with one another.

Selfishness, pettiness, and similar malfunctions will stop a leader’s progress right in his tracks however. The ability to rise above these things and think in terms of a bigger picture is critical. Good judgment and a positive attitude pay big dividends in leadership. Jesus displayed this impeccably on the Cross when we prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” He was willing to forgive and overlook hurts and offences to serve the greater good of making the sacrifice for people’s sins.

It has been said as well, “A mother’s job is never done.” I’m here to remind you that being a leader is not a “nine-to-five” job. It requires consistency and diligence, for mothers and other types of leaders as well. Those types of dads are sometimes remembered by their children with thoughts like this one by Mike Schacter. He writes about the kind of leadership his “pop” lived each day. His dad was a retailer named Irving Schacter. “Sometimes I find myself offering this prayer: ‘Please don’t let me give up on my son, as my father didn’t give up on his.’”

Elmer L. Towns observes, “People follow a leader who gives compelling reasons to reach the objective.” And getting the most out of those you lead also means you get into the habit of “catching your people in the act of doing something right.” Then you acknowledge it and recognize and reward it, often publicly. In the fellowship of the church we often will want to strive more to give God the glory, but thanking people for using their God-given abilities doesn’t hurt. When others hear of or see the selfless actions of those we lead they will be all the more likely to go and do likewise because it pleases God and feels good when we do it.

To influence people we have to believe what can be accomplished with team effort. “An old fable tells of a farmer whose mules pulled a man’s truck from the ditch. It was a big truck, the cross-country type, complete with sleeper and fuzzy dice. ‘How much can one of those pull?’ asked the truck driver, sizing up the farmer’s two scrawny looking mules. ‘Bout ten tons each,’ said the farmer. ‘But my truck weighs at least three times that,’ the truck driver said. ‘Doesn’t matter what they can pull separately,’ answered the farmer. ‘It only matters what they can pull together.’” That’s the power of a team!

To accomplish this type of amazing feat a leader must function as a coach. A coach increases the performance of the individual team members and gets them to work together effectively. Another way of describing a leader is to say he or she is a Field Commander. Leaders are actually there in person, they are in the fight with the troops, not just directing from a posh board room. They observe and direct activities. They observe where changes may be needed and they orchestrate accordingly. They measure results and keep score. They also help solve problems - like a fireman who spots a forest fire and acts to throw water on the flames and douse them. He “heads problems off at the pass before they can blossom into a full-scale conflagration.” Much of this he accomplishes by communicating with the team. Ever notice how often a good coach calls a time out and during it strategizes, corrects, exhorts, and calls plays? Meanwhile, he listens for feedback that is respectful and gets to the root of the problems.

I recently counted 91 times in Holy Scripture where the Holy Spirit used the word “lead” or a form of the word, like “leads, or leader(s).” In Matthew 15:14 Jesus is replying to the foolish and arrogant Pharisees and teachers of the law who question and condemn His disciples and Him for what they do and where they go. He had just called them hypocrites and told His disciples to “listen and understand” a few things. Suddenly He erupts and exhorts them to waver no longer in hearing out these false prophets and charlatans. He says, “Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

Leadership takes vision, a clear picture of where a leader wants to lead his troops. This requires earnest prayer that God would make His commission clear and bless the efforts of the leader to lead and grant faithful followers who will trust and follow their leader. While we cannot always guarantee that people will follow where we are leading them, we must continue to lead. Even Moses, even Jesus, even Paul, even Luther, lost many along the way who refused to acknowledge God’s will and stubbornly “walked no more” with their faithful leader. Did they moan and cry about those acts of rebellion and rejection? No. The door is always open for people to repent and return, but a good shepherd spends his effort and time with those who haven’t willingly “jumped ship” or “fled the sheep pen.” Lead those who will accept your humble and Christ-like leadership and go on. Always do your best and God will see to blessing your efforts. Remember, we’re in charge of being faithful, He is in charge of the results of our labors because it is He who sends us out.

Let’s Pray!

Dear Shepherd,

Thank you for giving us this time to learn how difficult and yet important it is to lead. Bless us with insight that is grounded in Your faithful and powerful Word. We know how weak and imperfect we are. Forgive us for our sins of unwillingness to go and lead those in our congregation, our homes, our schools, our communities, our organizations, and our country. Help us to accept Your yoke that calls us to lead. Train us at the foot of Your cross to be the kind of leaders that You are for Your sheep and lambs. Give us zeal and brotherhood to work as a team to accomplish the goals that You deem worthy. And thank you for all the people that You send into our lives as good examples of effective, faithful, yet imperfect leadership. We ask You to bless our humble efforts, for we must decrease as individuals and You must increase. In Jesus’ name we earnestly pray all these things. Amen. Yes, so shall it be! Amen.