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## Principles of Christian leadership

February 28th, 2015

Some leadership gurus describe leadership as being "influence, nothing more, nothing less". In some ways this is true. However, I believe there is more to Christian leadership. Christian leaders are people who are moved at God's pace and in God's time to God's place. Christian Leadership is about taking a central role in taking people further into God's plans and purposes and encouraging others into a deeper relationship and understanding of God.

Over the years I have read a number of leadership books and seen some of these principles in practice. Some have been good and some not so good. In this article I want share the five of the most important things I believe Christian leaders should do and be, to be the most successful leaders they can be.

### 1. Christian leaders need to cultivate an intimate relationship with God

The first and most important thing Christian leaders need to do is develop and strong and intimate relationship with God. In an article by Gordon MacDonald he says, "the forming of the soul that it might be a dwelling place for God is the primary work of the Christian leader". Developing this intimate relationship with God through daily prayer and reflective Bible study is vital if Christian leaders are going to be all they can be in God.

We see that Jesus modelled this drawing away to a solitary place to connect with His heavenly Father in prayer. In [Mark 1:35](#) we see that He did this alone and in [Mark 6:35](#) he called the disciples to draw away from the pressing crowds. As Christian leaders we need to follow Jesus example to make sure we come aside from the business of life and ministry to make our connection with the Father. As we do, we find that our relationship with God grows and we allow Him to speak to us. We can also learn from Scripture and receive guidance on how He wants us to lead the people we are overseeing. I believe this time alone with God is vital for our growth, seeking direction and for our long term survival of the pressures of ministry brings.

### 2. Christian leaders need to have a servant heart

The second thing Christian leaders need to have is a servant heart. In [1 Peter 4:10](#) the Bible says that "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms". At the heart of this verse is being called to serve and we are to use what God has given us for the benefit of others.

In Matthew chapter 20 we see the disciples we having a discussion on who was the greatest amongst them. Jesus enters the conversation in verses 26 and 27 and says, "...Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave". In this short statement Jesus turned their views of leadership and greatness completely upside down. The Gentile rulers of the day lorded their power and authority over the people and treated them harshly. Jesus told His followers they need to live different and that greatness comes not from being served, but by being a servant to others.

### 3. Christian leaders need to be shepherds of God's people

I believe as Christian leaders one of our prime objectives should be to love and care for people under our ministry. The Bible says in [1 Peter 5:2](#) that

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Christian leaders should, "Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly – not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God". This verse tells those in leadership to watch over those in their care like a shepherd watches over his flock.

In John chapter 10 Jesus talks about the role a shepherd plays in caring for his sheep. He says that they provide food, water and protection and if one strays the shepherd goes out to look for the lost sheep and brings it back to pasture. As a result of this care and protection the sheep trust and listen to the shepherd's voice. Our heartbeat as Christian leaders should be to provide love, care and a safe place where people can grow in their faith and service to God.

#### **4. Christian leaders need to live with character and integrity**

One of the keys to successful long Christian leadership is the desire to live with character and integrity. In [1 Timothy 3:8-12](#) and [Titus 1:5-9](#) it lists 24 characteristics that should be seen in Christian leadership. Some of these include being of good behaviour, not greedy for money, not given to excessive drinking, not quick tempered, but being self controlled, a responsible steward, one that holds fast to the Word of God and has a good reputation outside the church. It tells us that these qualities should be evident in the lives of those who are called to Christian leadership. In saying this though, it does not say that one has to be perfect to be in Christian leadership. That is not possible as we are all human and fall short at times. However, it is saying that these things must be evident most of the time.

I firmly believe that as Christian leaders we need to have this same commitment to living with character and integrity the Bible talks about. We need to have a good testimony both in and outside the church and before God and man. Billy Graham put it perfectly when he said "If I were ever to do anything dishonouring to Christ, I would rather He take me home to heaven before I did it".

#### **5. Christian leaders need to be committed to making disciples**

The last words of Christ before returning to heaven are recorded in Matthew chapter 28:19-20. It says, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you". This verse is a clear command to reach people with the love and saving message of Jesus and to teach them how to follow Jesus and His teachings.

As Christian leaders I believe the core of what we do is to love God, love people and to make disciples. We need to focus our energies on loving and bringing people into the Kingdom and teaching them how to continue to grow in their faith and service of God. The early church understood this and as a result many thousands of people came to faith in a short time. In Acts chapter 2:42 we see that, "All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer". In committing themselves to these things, the early church members were able to grow to maturity and be sent out in their community to reach others for Christ.

#### **Summary**

In this article I have shared the things that I believe are vital for those in Christian leadership. I believe that the foundation of Christian leadership is the forming an intimate relationship with God by regular prayer and disciplined Bible study. As we do these things we will grow and change and are able to start to see the world through God's eyes. This then allows us to move out into the world with a servant heart and the attitude of a shepherd to love and care for those entrusted to us. As we do these things we need to live with an attitude of integrity and humility before God, while resolutely playing our part in fulfilling the Great Commission.

