

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

The Bible give examples of many who have taken leadership positions in their times. What is “Christian Leadership” and what are the qualities required of such leadership? Jesus words in Math 5:13, “You are the salt of the earth” perhaps defines the calling of God to be a leader to influence our surroundings. We can understand about Christian leadership when we study the parables which Jesus taught his disciples. These parables focus on the requirement of the discipleship and many of them indicate the leadership qualities needed. In the parables Jesus talks about masters - servants’ relationship, working of business men and kings, shepherd and sheep. Some of the parables from which we learn of leadership are listed below:

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| Mat. 24:45-51 | Fulfill masters purpose | Heavenly vision |
| Mat. 25:14-30 | Servants talents | Expand master’s interest |
| Luk. 10: 30-37 | Good Samaritan | Compassion |
| Luk. 14:28 | Business Man | Plan and count the cost |
| Luk. 14:31 | King | Plan and count the cost |
| Jn.10:1-18 | Good Shepherd | Lead, feed, correct & protect |

From the teaching of Jesus, if we have to draw up a leadership strategy, it will be something like

- Developing Vision
- Understanding the Mission
- Communicating the Vision and Mission
- Planning the details
- Shepherding the Flock
 - Feeding the flock
 - Correcting the flock
 - Protecting the flock
 - Leading the flock

We are called at some stage in our Christian life to develop into a leader to fulfill the purpose of God. The New Testament reveals how the early church leaders like Paul functioned as leaders.

DEVELOPING VISION

The Lord endues every one of His child with gifts of the Spirit. With these gifts and with our natural talents (these were also given by the Lord during human birth) His children are expected to be leaders each one in his own area to combat and thwart the wiles of the enemy. The main goal is the expansion of His kingdom through making disciples (Math 28:19, 20) and crushing the enemy under our feet (Rom 16:20). This has been the goal from the inception of the Church on the day of Pentecost. Leaders should be conscious of this overall goal and wait upon the Lord to find the role and mission they have to accomplish.

Jesus through death and resurrection ushered in the New Testament period. God had promised through prophet Joel (Joel 2:28) what He will do in the New Testament period. The promise in Joel talks of how the Lord will guide His children. “He will pour out His Spirit, they shall

prophesy, they shall dream dreams, they shall see visions”. Probably the single most important task facing a leader is to develop an understanding of where the organization needs to be at some future point. This is revealed by the Lord when leaders wait upon the Lord in prayer (Acts 13:1). Without a future vision, organizations are destined to live in the past and ultimately die. *“Where there is no vision, the people perish”* Prov. 29:18. For any Christian organization such a vision must come from God. This process combines prayer and reflection on understanding where and how God is moving. Eventually an understanding of God’s calling for the ministry or the organization will evolve. Leader along with his team should spend much time in prayer and by this the team’s hearts will be prepared (Acts 1:14). Any vision, which thus evolves, will always be in tune with the enumerated principles of the Word of God. God speaks in a number of ways, through His Word, through experience, through counseling, and through other ways. Listening to these will help the leader to understand the direction in which God wants the group to move. The Leader should keep discussing the understanding of God’s leading with the team members.

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UNDERSTANDING THE MISSION

Once convinced of the vision, the directions to move should be defined. Such a definition becomes the mission of the group. Mission is a set of activities which when carried out will fulfill the vision. While the leader provides the major input in this, the team members also follow in this process. Paul is a good example in this. Paul experienced the vision on the way to Damascus (Acts 26:19). Then he executed his vision through his missionary journeys. The guidance of the Spirit is very important in this (Acts 13:2). The leader should get a clear grasp of the implications of the vision to plan a mission based on it (Rom 15:18-23). After his experience on the way to Damascus, Paul immediately went to Arabia. We do not know what exactly he was doing there. Most probably it was during this time in Arabia that Paul would have worked out the details of the mission arising out of the vision. His vision of ministry to the Gentiles had its associated problems to be sorted out. If he has to minister to the Gentiles what instructions will he provide to the Gentile converts particularly regarding circumcision. Paul was sure of his stand on this issue and fought for it even with Apostles like Peter (Gal 2:11-16). In all probability he must have crystallized these concepts during his sojourn in Arabia.

COMMUNICATING THE VISION

Communicating the vision and activities related to the mission is very vital. Paul talked of his vision more than once (Gal 1:16, 2:7, Acts 22:6-11, 26:12-18, Gal 1:15-17). He emphasized that he has been called to minister to the Gentiles. Paul communicated these very clearly both vocally and in writing.

Again when there was a dispute about the conversion of the Gentiles, Paul, Barnabas and some others went to Jerusalem to discuss the issue (Acts 15:2). The issue was settled after discussion with the Apostles and elders (Acts 15:6). Therefore we find that communication forms an important role in carrying out the vision.

He also communicated the mission activities. At Antioch, the word was given only to the Jews (Acts 11:19). Barnabas and Saul were ministering at Antioch (Acts 11:26). The prophets and

teachers were worshiping and fasting when the Spirit of God told them to set apart Paul and Barnabas for the task for which God had called them (ministry to the Gentiles Acts 13:1,2). This is a radical departure from their practice of reaching out only to the Jews. It is indeed a new vision. When they return Paul and Barnabas explained to the church how God had opened the door for the Gentiles (Acts 14:27). This is how the vision and mission gets approved by the Church.

PLANNING THE DETAILS

Paul when he was called to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles, he sought the guidance of the Lord regarding the places to visit. He went on three missionary journeys. His ministry details pertain to

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| Preparation | Gal 1:15-17 |
| Relating to church leadership | Gal 1:18 |
| People and location | Rom 15:19b |
| He checked on what they learned | Acts 19:1-7, Gal 1:6 |
| He checked on their growth | Acts 15:36, 1 Cor 1:11, 2 Cor 1:15,16, Col 1:3, 1 |
| | Thess 1:3 |
| Follows them up with letters | Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and |
| | Thessalonians |
| He worked for reconciliation | Philemon |
| He worked with teams | Phil 23, 2 Tim 4:19, 21, Col 4:10-12, Rom 16:3, 9,21-23 |
| He warned them of the future problems | Acts 20:28-31 |

Paul carefully worked out the details of the cities where he can meet Gentiles to present the gospel. Through his three missionary journeys he travelled over all the regions of the Gentiles. Starting from Jerusalem he meticulously covered the cities right up to Ilyricum. He embarked on three journeys which helped him to check on the growth of the churches that he established.

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK

Feeding the Flock:

Jesus referred to those people who call on His name as sheep. Among the animals sheep rank among the dumbest, unlike dogs which are intelligent a sheep become disoriented, confused and frightened easily and is incapable of finding it way back to the flock. That is why Jesus taught the parable of the 'Lost Sheep' indicating without the shepherd the sheep is helpless.

A Christian leader is expected to feed his flock. For feeding the flock God has provided us with the Word of God. Therefore one of the very important functions of a Christian leader is to provide the sheep with the teaching and understanding of the Word of God. Moses wrote in

Deu.8.3 “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’.

Correcting the Flock

The shepherd is to bring back the sheep which goes astray. In other words, it means correcting and disciplining the stray sheep. Such a correction is to be done according to the Scriptural principles. We read in Pro. 3:12 that the Lord disciplines those whom he love. This is a good example for a Christian leader to provide correction and discipline wherever it is necessary. The correction and discipline must be based on the revealed principles of the Word of God.

Protecting the Flock

While Jesus talked of his followers, he has also mentioned about the enemy identifying them as false teachers and false prophets along with the powers of darkness. These enemies try to lure the sheep with wrong doctrines, questions the authority of the Bible providing wrong interpretation of the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:1-9, Acts 20: 28-32). Jesus in Math 7:15 mentioned that they come in sheep’s clothing but are ravenous wolves.

Leading the Flock

Another role of the shepherd which is very important is leading the sheep in the ways of the Lord. The Bible is clear about Lord providing guidance to each of his sheep. It is the responsibility of a leader to teach and help the sheep to understand and hear His master’s voice and learn to follow the footsteps of the Master (1Pe. 5:2-4).

STUDIES IN NEHEMIAH

BACKGROUND

Neh 1:11b I was the cup bearer to the king.

Nehemiah although came from the background of exiles and conquered people, he developed himself, joined the King’s service, got promotions and became the “Cup bearer”. This is a post equivalent to that of a Governor. Being in the King’s palace he would have learnt some of the leadership strategies used for governing a nation.

HIS DESIRE, THE VISION

1: 1,2 He was concerned about the Kingdom of God, city of God Jerusalem and the people of God.

1:4 He sought a solution for the situation. He sought God’s guidance

1:5-10 He understood the situation in the light of God’s word

Building the walls of Jerusalem became his vision

PLANNING & PRAYER

1:11 He decided what to do

He will seeks King’s permission to go & rebuild Judah 2:5

He has already planned what he will do

Go to Jerusalem
Build the walls of Jerusalem
Establish Jewish control of Jerusalem

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Then spread over to Judah
His master plan included Judah. His immediate plan was for Jerusalem
He gets permission from concerned authorities 2:7,8
He approached the King and got his permission

UNDERSTANDING THE MISSION

2:11 He himself goes to the place of action
He told no one – shows maturity
2:12-16 He studies the situation and estimates the work involved

BUILDING THE TEAM

2:16 He gathered a team who will do the work
2:17 He shares his vision
Come let us build that we may no longer suffer
Shares his testimony how God helped him
2:18 Team is ready to build the walls

THE TASK : BUILDING THE WALL

3: 1-32 Work is shared among all
Each one performs his part

PROTECTING THE FLOCK

4:1-3 Opposition
4:4-5 Facing the opposition through prayer
4:7-8 Opposition intensifies
4:9-23 Prayer and new strategy to continue work while facing threat

CORRECTING THE FLOCK

5:1-5 Problem among God's people
5:6-13 Nehemiah provides correction
9:1-38 Confession of the people
13:1-31 Nehemiah's reforms

CONCERN FOR THE FLOCK

5:14-19 Nehemiah's concern for the people and his actions

FEEDING THE FLOCK

8:1-18 Nehemiah arranges teaching the people the Word of the Lord

CONCLUSION

God used men (Moses, Joshua) and women (Deborah, Esther) as leaders to guide, protect his

people as well as to fulfill his purpose. In all such circumstances it was not just one supreme leader who single handedly completed a task. Rather we find numerous leaders at different levels (Ex 18:21-23, Deu 1:9-18). In fact at some time or other everyone plays the role of a leader, sometimes the role may be bigger, sometimes smaller. Therefore it is necessary for those who have tasted the love of God and responded to his call, to prepare to take up leadership positions.