

Christian Leadership

The first rule of good leadership, according to Jesus, is to **humble yourself and become a servant to others**. Jesus is our example in this, in that **He humbled Himself** to be born a human being, and then go to the cross to die for the sins of the world (Philippians 2:5-11). He is our example as the Good Shepherd, and any leaders in the church are His "under shepherds", whether they go by the name of Pastor, Elder, or Bishop, it is all the same thing in the word of God. The epistles of I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus were all written by Paul to young pastors, giving them instruction on how to lead their flocks, and giving qualifications for being a "senior pastor" of a congregation. The spiritual gift of "pastoring" however, is given by God to many people who are not, and may not ever be, the senior pastor of a church congregation. A pastor in this sense, is anyone to whom God has given a group of people to care for. The word "pastor" means "shepherd", so the spiritual gift of being a pastor (Ephesians 4:11-13) applies whenever you have a group of "sheep" under your leadership, and especially if you are teaching or preaching as well. Therefore, we are going to look at the attitudes and qualities of a shepherd who is caring for his or her sheep the way God intended.

- **Matthew 23:6-12** "They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and **to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'** But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. **But he who is greatest among you shall be your SERVANT.** And whoever exalts himself will be abased, and **he who HUMBLER himself** will be exalted."
- **Luke 22:25-27** "And He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called "benefactors". But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and **he who governs as he who SERVES.** For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet **I am among you as the One who serves.**"
- **Matthew 18:1-4** "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' And Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore **whoever HUMBLER himself** as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."
- **I Peter 5:1-6** "The elders (pastors) who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: **Shepherd the flock of God which is among you**, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain, but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with HUMILITY, for **God resists the PROUD, but gives grace to the HUMBLE.** Therefore **humble yourselves** under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."
- **Romans 12:6-8** "Having then **gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us**, let us use them: if prophecy (preaching), let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry (serving), let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation.....**he who LEADS, with diligence**; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness."

Pride is the opposite of humility or being humble. Yet, how often have we seen young pastors or church leaders become **proud and puffed up with their own importance**, forgetting that it is God who has put them in that position, not themselves? Or, we may find some young

Christian, a fairly new believer, who is enamored with the idea of having his own ministry. He is looking at others and comparing their ministries to **what he thinks he should have** (this is coveting, as well as pride), and he doesn't realize that it may have taken many years for God to develop those other believers and their ministries. Another manifestation of pride in a pastor or leader is their desires for titles. Jesus warns against this desire for titles as the Pharisees did in Matthew 23:6-12, and also against their desires for "the best seats in the synagogues" and other similar kinds of recognition from their followers. Some groups, who call themselves Christian, even use names and titles like "Holy Father" and "Reverend" for their church leaders, when **these titles should ONLY be given to God Himself!** The terms pastor, elder and bishop are Scriptural names, and it is a sign of respect to use that title when referring to someone in that position. The pride comes in when **the pastor or leader himself** becomes overly concerned with titles, positions, and in worrying about or **boasting about the size of their congregations**, comparing them to others, and sometimes even lying or "stretching the truth" in reporting how many are in their congregations.

Jesus is our example also of **how we are to LOVE and CARE for His sheep.** God's people are referred to as His sheep in both the Old and New Testament. In John 21:15, where it says **"LAMBS," it means the new, baby believers** in particular, who are most vulnerable. God takes very seriously the teaching or "feeding" of His lambs and sheep, so that is why Romans 12:8 says "he who LEADS should lead with diligence." "With diligence" means giving it your all, making it your top priority, and not being lazy or selfish. Those shepherds (pastors, ministers) who do not feed His sheep properly, or mistreat them, will be severely judged (read Ezekiel 34 and Jeremiah 23), but God says He will send good shepherds to feed them, and of course, Jesus himself is the ultimate Good Shepherd. Jesus said that the Father sent Him to bind up the wounded and heal the brokenhearted, and He sends us out in the same way (John 20:21).

- **John 10:11-13 "I am the good shepherd.** The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he who is a hireling and not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and **does not care about the sheep.**"
- **Luke 4:18** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; **He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted,** to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who are oppressed."
- **John 20:21** "Then Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be unto you: as My Father has sent Me, **even so I send you.**"
- **John 21:15-17** "...Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." He said to him, **"Feed My LAMBS."** He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." He said to him, **"Tend My sheep."** He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, **"Feed My sheep."**
- **Titus 1:4-13** "To Titus....Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and **appoint elders (pastors) in every city** as I commanded you.....For a bishop (pastor, elder) must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine (not a heavy drinker), not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, **that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict** those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers....."

God gives us many examples in the Old Testament as well, although some are examples of what NOT to do in leadership. I Corinthians 10:11 says, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition....." In Ezekiel chapter 34 and Jeremiah chapter 23, God shows us what the wrong kind of pastors are like, and **how they mistreat His sheep for their own selfish motives**. He pronounces judgment upon them, and says that He will set up shepherds, instead of them, who will care for His sheep. He also gives some of the qualities of a good shepherd, with Himself as the ultimate Good Shepherd.

- **Ezekiel 34:12 & 15-16** "As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." "I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick...."
- **Jeremiah 23:3-4** "And I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countriesand will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. **And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them**; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, says the Lord."

An example in I Samuel chapters 13 through 16 of a poor leader is King Saul. We see how Saul gradually became more and more disobedient to God, until God could no longer use him as king, and He appointed David as king instead. Saul started out being filled with the Holy Spirit (I Samuel 10:6-12), but he allowed his own weaknesses and character defects to turn him away from God. Some serious weaknesses or character flaws that Saul had were:

1.) Fear of man - he cared more about what people thought of him than what God thought of him, and so he disobeyed God's clear instructions. As a pastor or leader, don't be a "people pleaser", but remember that there is really only one Person you need to please, and that is God. The "fear of God" is a good thing, but "fear of man" only brings a snare, which means trap, something that will trip you up.

- **Proverbs 29:25** "The **fear of man brings a snare**, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe."

2.) Doing things "his way" - always wanting to change God's instructions, as if somehow, he could do it a better way. God's word warns about this and calls it "leaning on your own understanding" and "being wise in your own eyes." As a pastor or leader, don't think you have to come up with "newer and better" ideas than what is in God's word.

- **Proverbs 3:5-8** "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and **do not lean on your own understanding**. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. **Do not be wise in your own eyes**; fear (reverence) the Lord and depart from evil....."

3.) Bitterness and anger - he became a bitter, jealous man, and even tried to kill David, because he thought if he got rid of the "competition" it would somehow bring back the favor of God to him. As a pastor or leader, never look at other churches, ministries, or groups as "competition", or compare them with yourself and your ministry as to size, how many followers, how much money or better buildings and facilities they have, etc. That will only lead to bitterness, jealousy and envy, and will quench the Spirit of God from working in your life and ministry (Ephesians 4:30-31, I Thess. 5:19).