

Principles of Spiritual Leadership

TOPIC LESSON GUIDE

“All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.” (Ecclesiastes 8:9)

LESSONS

1. AN HONORABLE AMBITION
2. THE SEARCH FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS
3. THE MASTER'S MASTER PRINCIPLE
4. NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS
5. THE CRITERIA OF LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL
6. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEADERSHIP
7. THE COST OF LEADERSHIP

LESSON 1

AN HONORABLE AMBITION

“And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not.” (Jeremiah 45:5)

“To aspire to leadership is an honourable ambition.” (1 Timothy 3:1)

1. Our word “ambition” derives from a Latin word meaning “canvassing for promotion.” A variety of ingredients may be present:

- A. To be seen and approved by men, to be popular
- B. To stand well among one’s contemporaries
- C. To exercise control over others
- D. You can name many more

2. Ambitious men enjoy power that money or authority brings. Such carnal ambitions were rebuked by the Lord.

3. The true spiritual leader will never canvass for promotion! Jesus announced a new standard of greatness:

“But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them.⁴³ But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:⁴⁴ And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.” (Mark 10:42-44)

4. True greatness, true spiritual leadership is achieved not by reducing men to one’s service, but in giving oneself in selfless service to them. And that is never done without cost. It involves a bitter cup and experiencing a painful baptism of suffering. The true spiritual leader is concerned infinitely more with the service he can render God and his fellowman than with the benefits and pleasures he can extract from life. He aims to put more into life than what he takes out.

5. Our ambition needs to be channeled into God’s for our life. Our response to His drawing and leading needs to be, I have one passion, it is Him, and Him alone.

LESSON 2

THE SEARCH FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

“For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” (Psalm 75:6-7)

“And I sought for a man among them. that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.” (Ezekiel 22:30)

1. When God finds such a man who conforms to His spiritual requirements, who is willing to pay the full price of discipleship, He uses them to the limit, despite his patent shortcomings.
2. In a sense it has been always true that that type of dedicated leadership has been in short supply, for the simple reason that its demands are too stringent.
3. The overriding need of the Church, is to discharge its obligation to the rising generation, is to a leadership that is.
 - A. Authoritative. People love to be lead by one who knows where they are going and who inspires confidence. They follow, almost without question, the person who shows himself wise and strong, who adheres to what he believes.
 - B. Spiritual. Leadership that is unspiritual, that can be fully explained in terms of the natural, although ever so attractive and competent, will result only in spiritual fruitlessness, corruption₃ and immorality.
 - C. Sacrificial. Modeled on the life of the One who gave Himself a sacrificial for the whole world, who left us an example that we should follow His steps
4. It is the binding duty of those in positions of leadership to face-up-to the situation and do all in their power to see that the torch of a truly spiritual leader is passed on to the younger.
5. Leadership is often viewed as the product of natural endowments and traits of personality, intellectual capacity, force of will, and enthusiasm. These God-given talents do greatly enhance leadership beyond question, but those are not the factors of paramount importance in the spiritual leader.

6. The real qualities of leadership are to be found in those who are willing to suffer for the sake of objectives great enough to demand their wholehearted obedience.
7. Spiritual leaders are not made by election or appointment, by men or any combination of men, nor by conferences. Only God can make them. Simply holding a position of importance does not constitute one a leader, nor do taking courses in leadership or resolving to become a leader.
8. The only method is that of qualifying to be a leader.
9. Religious position can be conferred by bishops and boards, but not spiritual authority; which is the prime essential of Godly leadership.
10. That comes, often unsought, to those who in earlier life have proved themselves worthy of it by spirituality, discipline, ability, and diligence, workers who have heeded His call.
11. Spiritual leadership is a thing of the Spirit and is conferred by God alone. When His searching eye alights on a servant who has qualified, He anoints him with his Spirit and separates them to their distinctive ministry.
“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.” (2 Chronicles 16:9)
12. Samuel Logan Brengle, a truly great spiritual leader of the Salvation Army outlined the road to spiritual authority, and leadership in these challenging words:

“It is not won by promotion but by many prayers and tears. It is attained by confession of sin, and much heart searching and humbling before God; by self surrender, a courageous and uncomplaining embracing of the cross, and by an eternal, unfaltering looking unto Jesus crucified. It is not gained by seeking great things for ourselves, but rather, like Paul, by counting those things that are gain to us as loss for Christ. That is a great price. but it must be unflinchingly paid by him who would be not merely a nominal but a real spiritual leader of men, a leader whose power is recognized and felt in heaven, on earth and in hell.”
13. The highest positions are reserved for those who have qualified in secret. It is that element of sovereignty that begets awe and a great humility in those to whom leadership is entrusted.

“The Church is painfully in need of leaders. I wait to hear a voice and no voice comes. I love the back seat in conference. I would always rather listen than speak, but there is no clarion voice to listen to.”

LESSON 3

THE MASTER'S MASTER PRINCIPLE

“But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefests shall be servant of all.” (Mark 10:43-44)

1. Christ’s view of His Kingdom was that of a community of members serving one another, mutual service. Paul advocates the same idea,

“For, brethren, ye have teen called unto liberty; only use not literty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself” (Galatians 5:13-14)

and of course our loving service is to spread to the needy world around us. But in the life of the Church today, it is usually the few who serve the many.

2. Being a servant to all is not popular. Some seek; the glory and not the shame, the crown, but not the cross. to be masters, not servants

3. To be master to all, two leadership principles of permanent relevance must be clearly understood. The first, there is sovereignty in spiritual leadership.

“But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.” (Mark 10:40)

4. Our emphasis would probably have been, “It is for those who have prepared themselves for it. But, Jesus emphasized the fundamental difference in leadership principles, “It is not so among you. ” No theological training or leadership course will automatically confer spiritual leadership or qualify one for an effective ministry. Jesus later shares,

“Ye have not chosen me. but I have chosen you and ordained you. that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of/he Father in my name, he may give it you. ” (John 15:16)

I am not here by selection of a man or the election of a group, but by the sovereign appointment of God!

5. And the second principle, there is suffering in spiritual leadership.

“But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” (Mark 10:38)

Jesus, speaking to James and John, was too straightforward and honest to conceal the cost in the service of the Kingdom. To the Lord’s probing question they returned the glib answer, “we are able” thus betraying a lack of self-knowledge. Jesus told them they would indeed drink the cup and experience the baptism. They learned for an influential spiritual ministry there would be a steep price to pay and that it cannot be paid in a lump sum. In

the end it cost James his head and John finished his days in a concentration camp. There ministry was costly, it cost everything.

6. The fundamental lessons that greatness comes by way of servanthood, and that first place in spiritual leadership is gained only by becoming everybody's slave. The thought of suffering and servanthood are linked, even as they were in the life of the Lord. And is the servant greater than his Lord?

7. The Spirit of Servanthood. Primacy in leadership comes by way of primacy in servanthood. The principles of servanthood in the life of Jesus must be the patterns of ours. (Isaiah 42:1-5)

A. Dependence. Jesus voluntarily "emptied himself"

"But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:7-8)

Surrendering His privileges and the independent exercise of His will. He voluntarily became dependent upon His Father.

B. Approval. Desiring the Father's esteem instead of man's.

"I delight to do thy will O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (Psalms 40:8)

C. Modesty. The ministry of God's Servant would not be strident and flamboyant, but modest, meek, and humble. In this day of blatant and arrogant self-advertisement, that is a most desirable quality. God's servant works so quietly and unobtrusively that many even doubt they existence.

D. Empathy

"A bruised reed shall he not break and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." (Isaiah 42:3) The Lord's Servant would be sympathetic and understanding with the weak and erring. Failing men and women are often crushed under the callous tread of their fellowmen; but not so with the Lord's Servant. He is to specialize in mending bruised reeds and fanning the smoking wick into a flame again.

E. Optimism. God's servant is undiscourageable. A pessimist never makes an inspiring leader. Hope and optimism are essential qualities for the servant of the Lord.

F. Anointing. The same anointing Jesus received is available to us.

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: he went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil for God was with him." (Acts 10:38)

Until the Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism, Jesus created no stir in Nazareth. but then events of world-shaking importance began to happen. Is the servant greater than his Lord? Can we dispense with that which was the prime essential for the effectiveness of His ministry on earth?

LESSON 4

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS

*“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”
(1 Corinthians 2:1-4)*

1. Leadership is influence, the ability of one person to influence others. One can lead others only to the extent that they can influence them to follow their lead.
2. Spiritual leadership is the blending of God-given natural and spiritual qualities. A God-made leader.
3. The spiritual leader influences others not by the power of his own personality alone, but that personality irradiated, interpenetrated, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Because he permits the Holy Spirit undisputed control of his life, the Spirit’s power can flow unhindered through him to others.
4. Spiritual leadership is a matter of superior spiritual power, and that can never be self-generated. There is no such thing as a self-made spiritual leader.
5. Natural leadership and spiritual leadership have many points of similarity, but there are some respects in which they may be antithetical. That is seen when some of their dominant characteristics are set over against one another.

NATURAL

Self-confident

Knows men

Makes own decisions

Ambitious

Originates own methods

Enjoys commanding others

Independent

Motivated by personal

SPIRITUAL

Confident in God

Also knows God

Seeks to find God’s will

Self-effacing

Follow God’s methods

Delights to obey God

God-dependent

Motivated by love for considerations God and man

LESSON 5

THE CRITERIA OF LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

“Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a leader among them.” (Numbers 13:2)

1. Our Lord’s assessment of leadership potential tended to cut right across the popular opinion and custom of that day, as well as our own.

He chose laymen, rather than men from the religious hierarchy. All of the disciples came from the humbler people; they were not from the influential class but men unspoiled by the sophistication for their day.

2. He chose men with little formal education. But to their latent talents they added fervent devotion and fierce loyalty, albeit with some isolated instances of failure. Failure is a great teacher. It is a better teacher than success. The ability to fail is a great quality.

3. Because qualities of natural leadership are by no means unimportant in spiritual leadership, there is value in seeking to discover leadership potential both in oneself and in others.

4. Most people have latent and undeveloped traits that through lack of self-analysis and consequent lack of self-knowledge, may long remain undiscovered. An heart-searching study of the suggested standards of self-measurement could result in the discovery of such qualities where they exist, as well as the detection of incipient weakness that would make one unfit as a spirit leader.

A. Have you ever broken yourself of a bad habit? To lead others, one must be master of oneself.

B. Do you retain control of yourself when things go wrong? The leader who loses self-control in testing circumstances forfeits respect and loses influence. He must be calm in crisis and resilient in adversity, and disappointment.

C. Do you think independently? The spiritual leader cannot afford to let others do his thinking or make decisions for him.

D. Can you handle criticism objectively and remain unmoved under it? The humble man can derive benefit from petty and even malicious criticism.

E. Can you use disappointment creatively?

F. Do you readily secure the cooperation and win the respect and confidence of others?

G. Do you possess the ability to secure discipline without having to resort to a show of authority? True leadership is an internal quality of the spirit and requires no external show of force.

H. Have you qualified for the beatitude pronounced on the peacemaker? It is much easier to keep the peace than to make peace where it has been shattered. An important function in leadership is conciliation, the ability to discover common ground between opposing viewpoints and then induce both parties to accept it.

I. Are you entrusted with handling of difficult and delicate situations.

J. Can you induce people to do happily some legitimate thing that they would not normally wish to do?

K. Can you accept opposition to your viewpoint or decision without considering it a personal affront and reacting accordingly? Leaders must expect opposition and should not be offended by it.

L. Do you find it easy to make and keep friends? Your circle of loyal friends is an index of the quality and extent of your leadership.

M. Are you unduly dependent on the praise or approval of others?

N. Are you at ease in the presence of your superiors?

O. Do your subordinates appear at ease in your presence? A leader should give an impression of sympathetic understanding and friendliness that will put others at ease.

P. Are you really interested in people? Or do you entertain respect of persons? Is there hidden racial prejudice?

Q. Do you possess tact? Can you anticipate the likely effect of a statement before you make it?

R. Do you possess a strong and steady will?

S. Do you nurse resentment or do you readily forgive injuries done to you?

T. Are you reasonably optimistic? Pessimism is no asset to a leader.

U. Are you in the grip of a master passion such as that of Paul, who said, "This one thing I do?"

V. Do you welcome responsibility?

5. While always aiming at excellence, one should avoid the snare of perfection. However, inflexibility and intolerance in attitude is likely to alienate people who is creative and ambitious.

6. An unwillingness to accept responsibility for failure or the tendency to lay blame at someone else's door will forfeit confidence.

7. In ability to keep a confidence has cost many a leader his influence with his people. Similarly the inability to yield a point, and thus shatter the image of infallibility, will achieve the same result.

LESSON 6

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEADERSHIP

“Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the church.” (2 Corinthians 11:28)

1. To serve was Jesus’ definition of leadership, and that is true whether in the realm of the secular or of the Spirit. The Son of God became the servant of God in order to fulfill the mission of God. That same image provides a pattern and norm whereby individual Christians, missionary, and churches may learn how to fulfill their God-given mission.

2. The true leader regards the welfare of others rather than his own comfort and prestige as of primary concern. He manifest sympathy and concern for those under him in their problems, difficulties, and cares, but it is a sympathy that fortifies, builds up, and stimulates, not that softens and weakens.

3. Discipline is another responsibility of the leader, a responsibility that is often unwelcome. However, in any church or religious society there is a great necessity to maintain godly and loving discipline if divine standards are to be maintained, especially in matters of soundness in the faith, morals, and Christian conduct. Here is the spiritual leader’s standard;

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1)

4. The fundamental requirement in all disciplinary action is love. The person who has faced and honestly dealt with his own failures and shortcomings is best qualified to deal with the failures of others in a sympathetic and yet firm manner. Love is the measure, and the spirit of meekness will achieve far more than a critical spirit.

5. In approaching a matter that appears to require disciplinary action, five points should be born in mind:

- A. Such action should be taken only after the most thorough and impartial inquiry.
- B. It should be undertaken only when it would be for the overall good of the work and the individual.
- C. It should always be in a spirit of genuine love and conducted in the most considerate manner.
- D. It should always be with the spiritual help and restoration of the offender in view.
- E. It should be done only with much prayer.

6. To guide is another responsibility. The spiritual leader must know where he is going and like the shepherd go ahead of his flock. The ideal leader is one who hears the voice of God, and beckons on as the voice calls him and them. Paul gave this challenge to the church at Corinth,

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Paul knew where he was going and was therefore able to challenge them to follow him utmost to His highest.

7. To undertake responsibility and do it willingly is a necessary mark of a spiritual leader. If he is not prepared for that, he disqualifies himself for the office. One who evades the more onerous and difficult involvement incidental to his position limits his influence to that extent.

8. When Elijah was translated, Elisha assumed without hesitation the responsibilities of the prophetic office vacated by his master. He accepted the authority conferred with the falling mantle and became a leader in his own right. In each case the determining factor was the assurance of a divine call. Granted that assurance, no one need hesitate to assume the responsibilities God allots.

LESSON 7

THE COST OF LEADERSHIP

*“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”
(Mark 10:38)*

1. No one need aspire to leadership in the work of God who is not prepared to pay a price greater than his contemporaries and colleagues are willing to pay. True spiritual leadership always exacts a heavy toll on the whole man and his relationships, and the more effective the leadership is, the higher the price to be paid.

2. This fact was taught by the Lord when He indicated we cannot save others and ourselves at the same time. Spiritual power in spiritual leadership is the outpouring of spiritual life, our life. And those who desire to BECOME a leader may pay the price, and seek the power from God.

3. The cost, the price the true spiritual leader pays are many:

A. Self-Sacrifice. Self-sacrifice is part of the price that must be paid daily. A cross stands in the way of spiritual leadership, a cross upon which the leader must consent to be impaled. Heaven's demands are absolute.

“He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (1 John 3:16)

The degree to which we allow the cross of Christ to work in us will be the measure in which the resurrection life of Christ can be manifested through us in spiritual leadership. Remember, scars are the authentic marks of faithful discipleship and true spiritual leadership.

B. Loneliness. By its nature, the lot of a spiritual leader must be a lonely one. He must always be ahead of his followers. Though he must be the friendliest of men, there are areas of life in which he must be prepared to tread a lonely path. Human nature craves company, and it is only natural to wish to share with others the heavy burdens of responsibility and care. Moses paid the price for his leadership, alone on the mount, and alone in the plain; the crushing loneliness of misunderstanding, criticism and impugning motive. And times have not changed, there is nothing new under the sun.

C. Fatigue. “The world is run by tired men.” The ever increasing demands made on a leader drain the nervous resources and wear down the most robust physique. But, the true spiritual leader knows where to go for renewal. Paul knew this secret,

“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.¹⁶ For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:15-16)

(1) The ministry of the Lord wearied Him, so He rested at the well. (John 4:6)

(2) When the needy woman touched the hem of His garment in faith, Jesus was aware that power had gone out of Him. (Mark 5:30) To overcome in this area, seize every legitimate opportunity for recuperation and recreation, or you will limit your own usefulness and ministry.

D. Criticism. There is nothing else that so kills the efficiency, capability, and initiative of a leader as criticism or a thing that directs one attention toward their inabilities as criticism.

(1) Destructive Criticism. It chips away at his self-respect and undermines his confidence in his ability to cope with his responsibilities. No leader is exempt from criticism, and his humility will nowhere be seen more clearly than in the manner in which he accepts and reacts. *“A soft answer turneth away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1)*

(2) Constructive Criticism. Sets one toward self-examination, heart-searching, and prayer which always leads to a deeper sense of utter dependence in God.

E. Rejection. “No man is ever fully accepted until he has, first of all been utterly rejected. The rugged path of utter rejection is trodden not only uncomplainingly, but with rejoicing. We often times will go through the fire and pruning, but this the divinely appointed way to the wealthy place in God.

(1) God’s way is full of limitations and restrictions leading us in a very narrow way, but ends in a broad place in God, full of life.

(2) Man’s way is broad without limitations and restrictions ends up in a very narrow way, that leads to ruin, loss, and death.

“Often the crowd does not recognize a leader until he has gone, and then they build a monument for him with the stones they threw at him in life.”

F. Pressure and Perplexity. God treats the spiritual leader as a mature adult, leaving more and more to his spiritual discernment and giving fewer sensible and tangible evidences of His guidance than in earlier years. The longer we walk with the Lord, the less we will hear His voice and maybe feel His presence. This perplexity adds to the inevitable pressures incidental to any responsible office. But do not worry, when the time comes to act, God always responds to His servant’s trust in Him.

G. Cost to Others. There is often a very real cost that has to be paid by persons other than the one entrusted with leadership. Indeed, it is they who sometimes pay the heavier price. Right or wrong they follow the leader in the direction He is leading.

H. Reaction to Adverse Opinion. Paul set before us a valuable pattern in this regard. *“For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” (Galatians 1:10)*

To Paul, the voice of man was faint because his ear was tuned to the louder voice of God’s appraisal. He was fearless of man’s judgment because he was conscious he stood before a higher tribunal.