

Essential principles of church leadership

This will be a simple paper outlining the key principles in order to be accessible to everyone. Therefore I do not intend to delve into complex theological or linguistic issues, at least as far as possible; I will also keep my comments to a minimum since the Scripture texts are obvious. What I want to show is what a church leader should be like. Elders should use this as a comparison to check their ministry, while church members can see if their leaders stand up to this scrutiny. It is my contention that the vast majority of leaders in modern churches fail to demonstrate these principles, which is why the flock of God is so confused and blown about by every wind of demonic doctrine.

The commands of the Lord Jesus

Leadership is service like a slave

And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' Mk 9:35

The desire to lead must be consumed by a desire to be a servant of all. The word 'servant' (later applied to deacons) means to serve like a waiter, one who serves food and drink. Jesus makes clear that the idea of leaders being authoritative is out of the question in church affairs. In the world leaders are domineering, but this is not the case in the church.

Jesus' leadership modelled service

But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.' Matt 20:25-28

But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.' Mk 10:42-45

In keeping with his commands, Jesus himself was the perfect example of serving the flock rather than being a domineering overseer.

After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded. ... If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Jn 13:5-15

Jesus did not only teach leadership as service, and didn't just model it in practice, but he also provided telling illustrations of it by demeaning himself and actually working as a house slave in washing the disciple's feet. This was a job done by the lowest of the low in Jewish society.

That the Lord of glory should stoop to do this is shocking, and thus it becomes a notable action that cannot be forgotten. Thus this illustration of church leadership ought to be ingrained upon every person's mind – leadership is service.

Leaders who follow Christ's example will suffer for it, particularly reviling and false witness

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matt 5:11-12

It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *will they call* those of his household! Matt 10:25

Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. Jn 15:20

The people doing the reviling and bearing false witness are those in the supposed church, the one's that should know better and claim to know God. At some point, all true church leaders will be reviled and persecuted, most likely from within the church. This happened to Calvin, Luther, Toplady, Spurgeon and many more. All those who speak out about problems in the church, when it drifts from Scripture, will be reviled.

The commands of the apostles of the Lord Jesus

Authoritarianism is forbidden

Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion 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. 1 Pt 5:2-6

The worldly idea of leadership by the command of a front man based upon a pyramidal, hierarchical command structure is abhorrent to Scripture. The church is not based upon the submission of all to a certain leader, but of all to Christ, elders and members together. We should be submissive to each other. There is no authoritarianism in the church; no compulsion and no 'lording it' over people.

A godly leader does not seek money or put burdens on people

You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by labouring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Acts 20:34-35

We labour, working with our own hands. 1 Cor 4:12

Is it only Barnabas and I *who* have no right to refrain from working? 1 Cor 9:6

What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. 1 Cor 9:18

I preached the gospel of God to you free of charge? 2 Cor 11:7

I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. ... I did not burden you. 2 Cor 12:14, 16

For you remember, brethren, our labour and toil; for labouring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. 1 Thess 2:9

Nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labour and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. 2 Thess 3:8-9

Very few leaders ever need to be full-time. Indeed, Scripture shows that only those engaged in a heavy schedule of preaching and teaching need to do so. Since local churches are led by a team of equal teaching elders, there is rarely a need for a local church to require a full-time man. Indeed, most full-time leaders will have an itinerant ministry which precludes having a job. Furthermore, there is no idea of a regular salary in the NT. Leaders who are full-time must live by faith in God and the generosity of those they teach.

Godly leadership does not seek favours from the world

They went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth. 3 Jn 1:7-8

Believers should take nothing from the Gentiles; in this context 'Gentiles' means outsiders, those in the world [*ethnos* literally means 'race, peoples of the world']. The church should never develop programmes that require the support of the world to succeed. While this particularly means money it also means other sorts of investment, favours or strategies. For instance, the church should not take advantage of tax laws by registering as a charity and getting a tax rebate on gifts. The church is not a charity of the world, it is not to be identified with the world; it is the spiritual body of Christ and needs nothing except what God supplies.

Godly leadership is sacrificial

And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved. 2 Cor 12:15

The model of leadership is always the Lord Jesus Christ, and his leadership led him to the cross to die for his people. Leadership is cross work; it results in the need to lay down your life for the brethren. There will be many sacrifices required of the true leader, and this should be understood from the start. Richard Baxter's aphorism is very apt for leaders, whose ministry should be 'as a dying man to dying men'.

Godly leadership is fatherly

For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. 1 Cor 4:15-16

We exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children. 1 Thess 2:11

Godly leadership is motherly

My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you. Gal 4:19

But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. 1 Thess 2:7

Godly leadership is caring

Our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you. 2 Cor 7:12

But thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. 2 Cor 8:16

Godly leadership results in being rejected, slandered and cast out

Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. 1 Cor 4:12-13

We both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God. 1 Tim 4:10

Here Paul shows that true Christians leaders are reviled, persecuted, defamed and treated like filth. Who would seek genuine leadership?

Character traits of leaders – summarised

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having *his* children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the *same* condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless. 1 Tim 3:2-10

- Blameless or irreproachable.
- Male (husband of one wife).
- Temperate – sober, not addicted to anything.
- Sober minded, self-controlled, of sound mind.
- Good behaviour - modest.
- Hospitable.
- Able to teach; actually ‘skilful in teaching’.
- Not a drinker, a moderate person.
- Not violent, not pugnacious.
- Not greedy, not eager for money.
- Gentle, mild, patient.
- Not quarrelsome, not contentious (this alone obviates many Charismatic leaders who have said extreme things on the Internet).
- Not envious, not avaricious.
- Able to rule his household well.
- Not a recent convert.
- Not a proud person.
- Thought well of by outsiders.
- Reverent, of honourable character.
- Not hypocritical, not double-tongued, not two-faced.
- Having a pure conscience.

For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, 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. Titus 1:7-9

- Blameless.
- A good steward of God (able to distribute from God for the spiritual needs of the saints).
- Not self-willed, or arrogant.
- Not quick tempered.
- Not greedy for drink.
- Not violent, or contentious.
- Not greedy for money.

- Hospitable.
- A lover of the good.
- Sober-minded, of sound mind.
- Just, righteous.
- Holy, undefiled.
- Self-controlled, temperate, strong to control oneself.
- Holding fast God's word; able to withstand attacks on God's word.
- Able to teach and contend for the faith with sound doctrine.

Leadership jobs

Elders

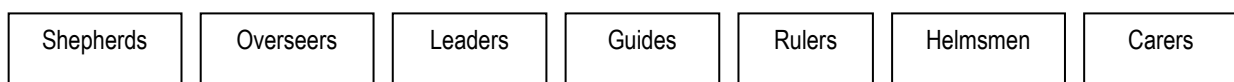
The leadership of the local church is solely in the hands of a team of equal elders. There is no other type of leader in charge of the body. Within the eldership there is no senior pastor or 'the minister'; all elders are equal and all teach the flock.

There is no Scripture showing that a single man may lead the church domineering over other leaders, none whatsoever. But we are told that apostles commissioned elders (plural) when they appointed them in the churches that they had planted [note the plural 'elders' in Acts 20:17, 21:18; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5; Jm 5:14; 1 Pt 5:1.]

Leaders have several names based upon certain illustrative metaphors.

- Elders are also called 'pastors', *poimen*, because they shepherd the flock (Eph 4:11).
- 'Overseers' (bishops), *episkopos*, because they supervise the flock (Phil 1:1).
- 'Leaders', *proistemi*, because they are first in line in guiding the flock (Rm 12:8, 'leads'; 1 Thess 5:12, 'over you'). Taking the lead is guidance by teaching and counsel.
- 'Rulers', *hegeomai* (Heb 13:7); i.e. the ones having the responsibility of care of the flock. 'Rule' here is leading by counsel. The rule results from speaking the word of God.¹
- 'Administrators', pilots or 'helmsmen', *kubernesis*, because they steer the ship of the church (1 Cor 12:28).

Elders are thus:



The most common words used are 'elders' (which had a Jewish background) and 'bishops' (which had a Greek background). The basis of all the words is the provision of care for the flock in feeding them the right food, guiding them in truth, and defending them from their enemies. 'Shepherd' is the best illustration; hence Jesus was the Good Shepherd and the prophets in the OT were called shepherds. Also false leaders were condemned by God in the OT for not being good shepherds but, rather, fleecing the flock for personal gain (Ezek 34).

Evangelists

Evangelists are leaders to lead the way in evangelising the lost and to help train the people to evangelise themselves. Their key role is to equip the saints in learning how to witness to

¹ We must take care not to read modern meanings into Greek root words; this is a common exegetical fallacy. 'Hegemony' meaning dominance, especially of one state over another, is based on the Greek word *Hegemon* ('leader') which is closely related to *hegeomai*. But that does not mean that *hegeomai* means domination. We can be certain of this because the apostles condemned single leader dominance (e.g. 1 Pt 5:2-6) and so would not use a word demanding this meaning.

Christ. Evangelists have no authority in the local church whatsoever, other than leading in the field of evangelism. [Eph 4:11]

Apostles

Apostles are simply church planters; those who are sent as delegates by the home church in order to lay the foundations of new churches elsewhere. Apostles have no authority in the local church at all. More modern parlance would be missionary. Neither do apostles keep any authority (other than trusted respect) over the planted churches once elders have been appointed. [Eph 4:11]

Prophets

In NT times prophets were vital since there was no published Bible and not even any established canon of Scripture. Most churches would have only had a part copy of the LXX (Greek) OT and perhaps some letters from an apostle and some sayings of Jesus. It would have been rare for individuals to have more than a few scraps of some of these. Many Christians were slaves who would have had nothing at all, as copies of documents were hand-copied and very expensive. Genuine NT prophets therefore brought God's word to people who needed it.

When the canon of the Bible was established by the mid-second century (formalised a bit later), and as manuscripts began to multiply, there was less need for prophets and this aspect of prophetic ministry died out. But what remained was the main side of prophetic ministry that had always been needed in the church, the ability to preach with spiritual power to establish, edify, admonish, encourage and exhort God's people – 'logic on fire'.

He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. 1 Cor 14:3

Thus prophetic ministry is not the didactic teaching of an elder-teacher to give doctrinal instruction to the people; it is the powerful application of Scripture to encourage and exhort; to inspire and envision. The best preachers in history had this prophetic edge, such as Calvin or Luther, men who changed nations.

The foretelling aspect of prophecy is a rare gift that occurs in history whenever it is really needed, such as the early days of the church; but there are examples throughout history of a genuine expression of this gift. It is not commonplace and not at the whim of men but only for dire circumstances, such as the 'killing times' in Scotland when certain men experienced this to save lives.

So, there is no modern inspired prophecy, such as the prophets who wrote the NT and only very rare examples of any foretelling. In general, prophets are spiritually powerful preachers given to the church to envision and encourage.

All forms of leadership will evidence the characteristics of leadership demonstrated in this paper. There is no leader powerful enough to be able to command and dominate the church by his personal authority.

Leadership tasks regarding feeding the sheep

Demonstrating the Spirit's power not intellectualism

And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. 1 Cor 2:4-5

Speaking wisdom

We speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory. 1 Cor 2:6-7

Passing on Biblical truth – the full orbit of the Gospel

I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Acts 20:27

I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. 1 Cor 15:3

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim 1:13

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing [cut straight] the word of truth. 2 Tim 2:15

Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. 2 Pt 3:2

Presenting the fulness of Christ

[I] do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ. Eph 1:16-20

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height -- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Eph 3:14-19

Speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ . Eph 4:15

Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this *end* I also labour, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. Col 1:28-29

Edifying the saints

Let all things be done for edification. 1 Cor 14:26

For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification. 2 Cor 10:8

We do all things, beloved, for your edification. 2 Cor 12:19

The authority which the Lord has given me for edification. 2 Cor 13:10

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. Eph 4:29

Teaching

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing. Col 3:16

Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 2 Tim 4:2

Preaching the Gospel

Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. 2 Tim 4:2

Instructing in doctrine

God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. Rm 6:17

If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. 1 Tim 4:6

Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ... Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. 1 Tim 4:13-16

Speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine. Titus 2:1

Admonishing

We urge you, brethren, to recognise those who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you. 1 Thess 5:12

Leadership tasks regarding defending and protecting the sheep

Giving warnings

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Matt 7:15-16

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. Col 2:8

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! Phil 3:2 [Spoken of Judaisers.]

Reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. 1 Tim 4:7

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. From such withdraw yourself. 1 Tim 6:3-5

Shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. 2 Tim 2:16

Avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Titus 3:9

Beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked. 2 Pt 3:17

Bringing correction

A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth. 2 Tim 2:24-25

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. Titus 1:9

Contending for truth

Wage the good warfare. 1 Tim 1:18

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of

whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words. 2 Pt 2:1-3

I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. Jude 1:3

Rejecting false teachers and unrighteous leaders

Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. Rm 16:17

And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. 2 Thess 3:14

For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 2 Tim 3:2-5

Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned. Titus 3:10-11

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. 2 Jn 1:10-11

Disciplining the ungodly and heretical

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Cor 5:4-5

Therefore 'put away from yourselves the evil person.' 1 Cor 5:13

Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. 1 Tim 1:20

Common modern leadership practices that contradict Biblical commands

Ungodly leaders who teach heresy and exploit the people

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words. 2 Pt 2:1-3

The danger of false teachers is that they bring heresy and heresies always bring destruction – they destroy the faith of people and make them succumb to temptations and sins. The false teaching in the church will not stop short of even denying the Lord Jesus. There are many modern teachings which blaspheme the name of Christ, such as by suggesting that he did not have a human nature, that he was not divine, or that he does not know the future.

Be warned – here we are told that many follow these destructive ways and also that the false teachers exploit gullible people with deceptive words, usually to gain money. Just because a certain teacher or doctrine has a large following does not mean that it is safe.

Selfish, proud, manipulative leaders

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. 3 Jn 1:9-11

Note that John is not afraid to name and expose a false leader who clearly had a significant following. Diotrephes was arrogant, seeking the first position and authority, and did not receive apostolic teaching. Indeed, he spoke maliciously against John and rejected his colleagues. John declares that his actions are evil.

Those who seek pre-eminent authority in a church organisation and who speak maliciously against those who uphold apostolic teaching should beware. They will be condemned at the Last Day along with Diotrephes.

Greedy leaders

Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame -- who set their mind on earthly things. Phil 3:17-19

Paul set an example of leadership by not accepting money from most of the churches he planted; indeed he paid for his own expenses on his apostolic journeys and even paid for his colleagues. In contradistinction, he points out certain leaders who did not follow his example but whose god was their own selfish appetites. As such they had fallen from grace and had become enemies of Christ's cross, and would be destroyed. Far too many modern church leaders put their own interests first and make excessive demands of the flock in order to live an affluent lifestyle. This will receive God's judgment.

Blasphemous leaders

Wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. 1 Tim 1:18-20

It seems incredible that a Christian leader could become a blasphemer, and yet Paul tells us of two who fell into this sin. Hymenaeus, we are later told, got worse. The cause of their blasphemy was ignoring their conscience and not living by faith, and thus succumbing to temptation. The result was that they were excommunicated from the church; would that more false teachers these days were thrown out for their sins.

Any leader who teaches false doctrine regarding God, Christ or the Holy Spirit is guilty of blasphemy. This is not just serious error, such as rejecting the human nature of Christ or denying his divinity, but restricting his glory or demeaning his powers. If you state that Christ died for all men and that God loves all men you stray very close to blasphemy since God's word denies both these ideas. Christ gave his life for those loved by God who were given to him; it is blasphemy to say that the precious blood of Christ was given for reprobate sinners. Likewise it is blasphemous to suggest that God's love is upon the wicked and the demons in hell, an inescapable result of saying that God loves everyone.

Leaders who have fallen from the truth

But shun profane *and* idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. 2 Tim 2:16-18

So many teachers rant about empty discussions ('idle babblings'); they speak but actually teach nothing of spiritual use. Even worse are those who include profanity in their babbling; i.e. words that should be trodden underfoot. An example of this is given in two former co-workers, whom Paul is not afraid to expose, who had denied the future general resurrection as Hyper-Preterists do today.

There are those in the church who are not teaching outright heresy like these two but whose teaching is just blessed thoughts loosely adapted to a certain text which form nothing but empty and vain discussion. Paul tells us that this is not just useless, but will increase ungodliness. Teaching must be solid, Biblical, doctrinal, edifying and challenging.

Leaders who fleece the flock

And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, *but* you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because *there was* no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.'" Ezek 34:1-5

Fleeing the flock is taking from the people their fat and their wool, that is their money and their resources, such as time, loyalties, and future. This is the result of being in a cult where the leader has authoritarian power over the people and continually makes demands of them.

Many Charismatic churches are places where the flock is not fed with spiritually edifying teaching and the people continue as spiritual dullards from one year to the next. They are not protected from wolves either and thus they fall prone to all sorts of false teaching. The sign of poverty of spiritual instruction is that the sheep cannot tell good from evil. Yet these same people (who are given nothing of real spiritual value by the leaders) continue to respond to demands for money, both in the form of a constant tithe paid directly to the elders and also in multiple gift days for this or that supposed need. Demands for more money are even shamelessly presented when many outsiders are present, such as at baptisms. This is fleecing the flock and God will judge such leaders harshly;

Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: '*as* I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock -- therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.' Ezek 34:7-10

This is fearsome indeed! God is against shepherds who live affluent lives based upon gifts from the Lord's people. He is set against them, which means that they will be condemned.

Conclusion

We need no further exposition! The principles of leadership are clearly laid out in the examples of Christ and the apostles, the teaching of Christ and the apostles and the

illustrations used by Christ and the apostles. Furthermore, the actual names of leaders in the NT spell out the sort of people leaders should be.

The principle characteristic of a church leader is caring and the principle job of a church leader is teaching that ensures growth and protection from error. Those who do this will do well; those who fail will know God's displeasure.

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