

Jon Payne

Shepherding Your Leaders: Reflecting Christ in our Leadership

I. The Standard of Christ-Reflecting Leadership

A. Summary: All Leadership in the local church should reflect the care of Christ for his people.

- Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1.
- This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
- Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Hebrews 13:7

B. Observations:

- Our leadership should be based on our relationship and imitation of Christ.
- Our leadership is accountable to Christ and therefore should fulfill the standards of his own example for the care of his people.
- Paul is the best and most thorough example we have, after Christ, of Christ-reflecting leadership.

II. The Principles of Christ-Reflecting Leadership

A. Lead Your Own Heart First

- Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. John 15:4
- Communion with Christ in his Word and Prayer
- Watchfulness over the motives of our heart and the passions of our life

[T]he keeping of the heart is the great work of a Christian, in which the very soul and life of religion consists, and without which all other duties are of no value in the sight of God. John Flavel

Many splendid services have been performed by men, which God will utterly reject: they will not stand on record in order to an eternal acceptance, because the performers took no heed to keep their hearts with God. This is that fatal rock on which thousands of vain professors dash and ruin themselves eternally; they are exact about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. John Flavel

B. Lead from Scripture

- Notice the pattern of Christ quoting the Old Testament (“have you not read”), Christ’s extensive teaching ministry, and the teaching ministry of his chosen witnesses.
- Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God...Hebrews 13:7
- The goals or “vision” of every team in the church should be defined by Scripture.
- Be cautious of goals derived from the business, the military, the political, or the athletic world.
- A Word to Pastors and Worship Leaders: Both the integrity and the manner of our leadership is prescribed by Scripture and reflective of Christ.

C. Lead With Courageous Faith

- Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2

The main difficulty, therefore, is not in our work, but in ourselves; in the conflict with our own unbelief, in the form either of indolence or of self-dependence. When faith is really brought into action, the extent and aggravation of the difficulty (even were it increased a hundred-fold) is a matter of little comparative moment. Difficulties heaped upon difficulties can never rise to the level of the promise of God. To meet the trembling apprehensions—"Who is sufficient for these things?" the answer is ready—"Our sufficiency is of God." Charles Bridges

- Faithfully view others from the perspective of God's power and promises. Be more aware of God's grace than their deficiencies and sins. (1 Corinthians 1:4-9)
- Demonstrate a confidence that God chooses to use us in our weakness as a demonstration of his power.

D. Lead with Humble Honesty

- For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. 2 Corinthians 2:17
- Honesty is not a chance to vent the sinful feelings of our sinful nature.
- Honesty is speaking redemptive truth in the fear of the Lord to people who need to hear it.

- We cannot serve two masters—we cannot ultimately serve both the Lord and our reputation.
- For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. Galatians 1:10
- Be willing to have hard conversations for the good of the others and the good of the church.

E. Lead with Sacrificial Love

- And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:42-45
- Our leadership must be defined by sacrificial service if we are to reflect the Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep.
- The absence of condescending, demanding, or self-serving leadership.
- We lay down our desire for praise through encouraging others and receiving critique.
- We lay down our desire for ease through working hard for our team.
- We lay down our personal preferences by deferring to others wherever we can for the good of the church.
- We lay down our leadership position if we are asked to or if it seems clear to us that someone else can serve the church more effectively.

III. Conclusion: The Freedom and Glory of Christ-Reflecting Leadership

- A. When we are seeking to reflect Christ, we are free from the idol of pleasing people, the cravings of selfish ambition, and the anger and hopelessness that pride produces in response to criticism. We are free to focus on pleasing Him.

- B. When we are seeking to reflect Christ, we are giving people a small glimpse of the Great Shepherd, whom we are all truly following.