

Responsibilities of Leadership

Often people think that everyone wants to be a leader but in my experience, I have seen just the opposite. The reason for this is that leadership brings with it great responsibility. One key responsibility that comes with leadership is the ability to be self-disciplined but also to properly and lovingly discipline others. Another important responsibility a leader has is to be willing to guide others down the right path. To do this a leader is required to take the initial action. Yet, all that the leader executes must be done with a heart that desires to serve others. In this manner, the leader honors God by imitating His Son Jesus Christ.

J. Oswald Sanders mentions in his book *"Spiritual Leadership"*, that "Jesus defined leadership as service" (Sanders, 151). This includes being concerned for the well being of others and empathizing with them while taking them to the Lord to do what only He can do. Jesus tells his disciples in Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many". Demonstrating that serving is done better from an elevated position and not reserved only for those in a lower position. John 13:16 says, "Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him". Jesus communicates clearly that He has given us the prime example and if we desire to imitate Him we are to give our lives for others as He has given His life for us (1 John 3:16).

However, wholehearted and sacrificial service to others involves the need to correct and redirect followers when they are not living out (or violating) the standards of God for every believer. This can be a challenge for many leaders because it requires that the leader be disciplined first. In addition to this much wisdom and tact must be applied. Sanders warns that

the leader must not be led by hearsay or assumptions but get down to the facts of the situation before making any final decisions. But most of all, the leader must be motivated by love and confidence that the action taken will benefit the person. Part of doing this will include an attitude of humility on behalf of leader because he/she can recognize their own shortcomings (Gal.6:1). The leader's main goal must be the desire to see the person restored. All this must be done through Spirit-led prayer.

As a leader is guided he can guide others. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death". Therefore, it is a leader's responsibility to make sure that he/she can provide a plan or resolution to people when they are at a crossroads that could change their life forever. It is at moments like these that the leader can use influence, and not force, as a powerful tool to impart God-given wisdom to followers. At times the guidance provided will not be accepted but this should not deter the leader but instead compel the leader to continue to pray. At the same time, the leader cannot wait or count on people to come to him/her for help, he must move towards them.

The leader is expected to take the initiative, if not, people, situations or the church can remain "stuck". The leader is to seek ways to be creative and be willing to take chances. Although at times this will be met with resistance, if the leader demonstrates passion, courage, and confidence, followers will be inspired. If procrastination takes over this can result in discouragement and slothfulness. Sanders quotes Archbishop Benson and shares some principles that can help leaders maintain a productive atmosphere (155-156). He states it starts with eagerness at the beginning of the workday, using time wisely, and complaining or exaggerating. By not focusing on the little things that don't matter but rather being well informed when dealing

with things that do matter graciously and lovingly will also help. He suggests to not gossip or seeking recognition nor feel offended when it is not given is important. Also, it is recommended that leaders not compare themselves to anyone but be content no matter the situation. Finally, he advises leaders to take full responsibility and be grateful when others get credit for their hard work. These principles seem impossible but they are not. The leader will be able to achieve these things through the essential qualities that Sanders previously mentioned.

To be able to genuinely serve and lead people, God must fill leaders with His love and Holy Spirit. I recall times when people would ask me how I did all the things I did in ministry, home, and work. Or how I could deal with people that were “difficult”. I would be at a loss for words to answer those questions because I had not even thought about it! Looking back it took a lot of prayers, humility, and pure desire to do God’s will. Reading the Word of God was essential to remind me of what was right, good, or best. Knowing what is wrong usually comes easier because I was either convicted, feeling guilty, ashamed of my thoughts or told by others what I did wrong. But more importantly, the Word stands as a mirror and if we obey we are then able to take responsibility for ourselves. Only then we can take responsibility to lead others.

If Christ’s love compels us, we desire to serve, we are burdened to exhort and willing to lead others in the right direction. We don’t wait for someone else to want to do it. I learned that if God put the weight, concern, or desire in my heart, it's because I’m the one He wants to use to get it done. Therefore, I cannot ‘pass the buck’ to someone else. Jesus says, “So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'" Luke 17:10. Therefore, we are to take up our cross and the responsibilities that come with being a leader.