

Church Leadership 1

The Character of a Godly Leader

An SIM Ethiopia TEE Course



Church Leadership 1 -

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by Tim Fellows

SIM



TEEnet Press

Church Leadership 1 - The Character of a Godly Leader (An SIM Ethiopia TEE course)

© SIM ETHIOPIA, 2025

Published 2025 by TEEnet Press

An imprint of the Theological Education by Extension Network

TEEnet Press

PO Box 30048, Blantyre, Malawi

www.teenet.org



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Cover Design: Luis Miguel Paulo

Printed on Demand

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
WHAT IS BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP? (PART 1).....	10
VARIOUS DEFINITIONS OF A LEADER	10
ALL BELIEVERS ARE LEADERS	11
LEADERSHIP ACCORDING TO THE WORLD'S UNDERSTANDING	12
EVERY CULTURE DEFINES LEADERSHIP IN A DIFFERENT WAY	13
PRESUPPOSITIONS ON LEADERSHIP HELD BY THE WORLD.....	14
JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP	15
LEADERSHIP ACCORDING TO OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS	17
A COMPARISON BETWEEN SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND WORLDLY LEADERSHIP (Part 1).....	18
WHAT IS BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP? (PART 2).....	21
A COMPARISON BETWEEN SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND WORLDLY LEADERSHIP (Part 2).....	21
WHAT IS BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP? (PART 3).....	27
FURTHER EXPLANATIONS OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP	27
LESSON TWO	33
GODLY CHARACTER, THE FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP	33
GODLY LEADERSHIP ALWAYS STARTS WITH GODLY CHARACTER.....	34
HOW TO DEVELOP GODLY CHARACTER.....	35
HOW TO DEVELOP THE GODLY CHARACTER NEEDED FOR LEADERSHIP	40
SUCCESS IN LEADERSHIP IS BASED MORE IN A PERSON'S CHARACTER THAN SKILL OF LEADERSHIP	40
BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP IS PRIMARILY BASED UPON GODLY CHARACTER	41
GOD DESIRES THAT CHURCH LEADERSHIP BE BASED UPON SPIRITUAL MATURITY	43
HOW A PERSON BECOMES SPIRITUALLY MATURE (PART 1).....	45
HOW A PERSON BECOMES SPIRITUALLY MATURE (PART 2).....	48
LESSON THREE	58
HOW A PERSON BECOMES SPIRITUALLY MATURE (PART 3).....	58
KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 1)	68
BACKGROUND TO THE LEADERSHIP SITUATION IN THE EARLY CHURCH.....	71
BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHURCH ELDERS.....	72
KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 2)	77
LESSON FOUR.....	87
KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 3)	87
CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: CHARACTERISTICS ORIGINATING IN A LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD (PART 1)	88
KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 4)	96
CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: CHARACTERISTICS ORIGINATING IN A LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD (PART 2)	96
CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: CHARACTERISTICS COMING FROM THE LEADER'S INNER LIFE (PART 1)	100
KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 5)	105
CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: CHARACTERISTICS COMING FROM THE LEADER'S INNER LIFE (PART 2)	105
LESSON FIVE	116

KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 6)	116
CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: THE LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PEOPLE.....	116
KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 7)	125
CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: THE LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO WORK.....	125
SINS OF WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 1)	129
SINS OF THE HEART AND PURPOSE OF THE LEADER (PART 1)	132
LESSON SIX.....	141
SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 2).....	141
SINS OF THE HEART AND PURPOSE OF THE LEADER (PART 2)	141
SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 3).....	147
SINS OF THE HEART AND PURPOSE OF THE LEADER (PART 3)	147
SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 4).....	161
SINS IN HOW LEADERS RELATE TO OTHERS (PART 1).....	161
LESSON SEVEN	173
SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 5).....	173
SINS IN HOW LEADERS RELATE TO OTHERS (PART 2).....	173
SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 6).....	183
SINS IN HOW LEADERS LEAD IN THE CHURCH (PART 1).....	183
SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 7).....	198
SINS IN HOW LEADERS LEAD IN THE CHURCH (PART 2).....	198
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	210

LESSON ONE

FIRST DAY

INTRODUCTION

*Key leaders from all of the evangelical churches gathered together for two days to evaluate the condition of their churches. The major topic of discussion was "What is the biggest challenge we are facing in our churches today?" One church leader stood up and passionately said "The problem in our churches is the spread of false teaching. We need to address these false teachings which are leading so many of our believers astray." Another church leader said "The major problem we are facing is that our members are not taught. They do not know how to live as believers and how to withstand false teachings." A third leader countered "The major challenge we face is a growing deadness in the church. We have many who attend our churches, but few demonstrate a vibrant walk with God or changed lives. People say they are believers because their parents are believers. They come to church because that is what is expected of them. But their lives show little power from the Holy Spirit. And we are not having an influence on our nation." Still another church leader said "The greatest challenge we face as a church is the need to reach our nation with the Gospel. Religious groups like Islam are growing. There are millions who have never heard about the freedom from sin they can have in Jesus. But there are few of our members who are witnessing and who are willing to go as evangelists to reach these unreached people. And because we are spending all of our money on new church buildings and musical instruments, there is no money to send evangelists." "I think our biggest challenge is the division we are facing in our churches. In many of our churches there are fights among the elders or between the elders and the youth. Much of our time in our fellowship meetings is spent on what to do about disagreements we face between our denominations. Think how many new church groups were formed in the last 10 years because leaders could not agree and so one leader started his own church" said still another leader.

Q. 1. "What do you think is the biggest challenge we are facing in our churches today?" Explain why you think it is the **greatest** challenge the church is facing.

After much discussion of all of their challenges, an old man who had been an elder for a long time stood up. "In all of my years of church leadership I have noticed that the root problem of all challenges that we face is that we do not have the type of leaders that the Bible says that we need. It is because we leaders do not know God's Word and are not teaching the people properly that false teaching is spreading and our people do not have a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ. It is because leaders do not actively share their faith with the unbelievers or teach the members how to boldly share their faith with Muslims and other unsaved people that these other religions are growing. We are not making evangelism a priority in our personal lives or for the church, so no wonder people have little concern for sharing their faith with the lost. It is the church leaders who are the forefront of most of the divisions in the church as we push for our own plans to be accepted and create division in the church. If humble godly leaders would lead our churches like Jesus taught, most of our troubles would go away" shared the old elder.

**(Unless noted, all stories in this book are fictional examples illustrating key truths that church leaders generally face.)*

MOST PROBLEMS IN OUR CHURCHES ARE BECAUSE THERE ARE FEW GODLY LEADERS WHO ARE TRUE SERVANTS OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE

The old man wisely understood the root of most problems facing our churches. Not only the church, but the whole world is facing a leadership crisis. Around the world few people trust the politicians who are leading their countries. They make good sounding promises, but their personal lives and their leadership are filled with lies and selfishness. Power hungry leaders stir up their people so that civil wars abound with millions being killed. Business leaders use their money and influence to gain favors for themselves, making life more difficult for the common person who grows poorer and poorer. The leaders borrow money from the banks or from the company, use the money for selfish purposes, and then run away to another country so that they do not have to return the money. People throughout the world long for a just leader who will help them overcome their personal problems, but such leaders are rare.

Q. 2. a) Make a list of problems facing our nation. b) Explain how poor leadership is at the root of many of these problems.

We expect this problem of poor leadership to be found in the world, for most political and business leaders do not know Jesus and do not honor God. Their understanding of leadership is driven by selfish, worldly values. But unfortunately similar problems are found in our churches. Few church members trust their leaders. They are suspicious of the church leaders' ambitions. "Do leaders use our tithe money for themselves?" the members wonder. They watch church leaders fight for leadership positions. And seemingly godly men are corrupted by the power of leadership and begin to rule as dictators over the church. The believers long for godly church leaders who will demonstrate how to live in God-honoring ways.

Q. 3. a) Make a list of problems facing your local church and denomination. b) In what way is poor leadership in your church at the root of many of these problems? c) What needs to change for there to be godly leadership in your church?

It is not as if our churches are unaware of this leadership problem. All around the country, if we ask people "What is the greatest need in your church?" the most common answer is "We do not have trained leaders." But there are hundreds of Bible schools throughout Ethiopia which were started to solve this need for trained leaders. And in recent years different denominations have started diploma, degree, and second degree theological schools. "Surely the answer is in better trained leaders," they say. Many students graduate every year from the various Bible schools and yet the churches still complain "We do not have any leaders."

The problem is not only that we do not have any trained leaders. There are thousands of Bible school graduates in our churches. Rather, the problem is that for some reason the leaders we do have are not the type of leaders who provide godly leadership for our churches. Where are the leaders who preach with authority, who confidently and selflessly lead God's people? Where are the people like Moses, David, Nehemiah, Paul, and Peter to lead our generation? The very schools which we expect to produce humble godly leaders graduate those who often focus upon getting good paying jobs and positions of authority. So the solution does not seem to be in more education for people, either secular or theological, to turn them into spiritual leaders.

Plus leading the people of God has become more difficult. Our world is getting more complex. Rural

societies are changing as people move to the towns. Expectations of the church members for their leaders has increased. So it is not enough to produce church leaders who can lead the church of twenty years ago or even now. Will these leaders be able to lead the churches in the future? Unless church leaders continue to grow to lead in our generation in a way that not only meets the changing expectations of the church members but also impacts our society, the church will not be the salt and light that God calls us to be.

So it is very important for the church to understand what a godly leader is and how spiritual leaders are developed. Unless our churches are led by godly leaders, we will not have the spiritually powerful churches which will make a difference in our world. We will be overcome by false teachings and other religions. And we will not be able to take the Gospel to the world as Jesus commanded. Perhaps the most important thing a church can do is to develop a proper understanding of spiritual leadership, and learn to identify, train and use leaders as God desires.

What type of person does God want to lead his church? How will that person lead the church? What type of character must they have? What must they do to be effective leaders? Lord willing, this study guide will help answer some of the questions about leadership which our churches need to ask.

SUCCESSFUL CHURCH LEADERS LEAD WITH INTEGRITY OF CHARACTER AND SKILLFUL LEADERSHIP

Q. 4. Read Psalms 78:72. a) What two words describe David's leadership over Israel? b) Why is it important for all leaders to lead with these two characteristics? c) List illustrations of how these two characteristics are important in the church. What happens when either one of them is missing?

In our days, the church is turning to the world for solutions in how to lead. Churches ask big successful companies "Why are you successful?" As a result, churches use training programs adapted from the world of business to teach church leaders how to lead their churches and church denominations. Although we can learn a lot about leading our churches from the lessons taught in business and management schools, as believers we must be very careful when we follow this method. Jesus told his disciples that leadership in the world is very different from leadership over the church. (See Mt. 20:25-28) So we should not expect the world to provide the solution to the leadership crisis that the church is facing.

Interestingly, the world of business is turning to the Bible and to the life of Jesus and asking "Why was Jesus a successful leader?" As a result business leaders are changing the way they understand leadership. In our study we will examine leadership in the church. What makes it different from the world? And how does that impact how we lead? Is there a difference from leadership in a church and leadership over a church denominational structure or leadership in the government or a company?

King David was Israel's greatest king. As the writer of Psalms 78 thought about David's successful leadership, he pointed out two things as the basis of his greatness. First, he said that David led with integrity. The author realized that at the root of success was David's godly character. The dictionary defines integrity as "the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles that you refuse to change or compromise." A church leader of integrity has firm convictions of what God wants him to live like and to lead like. And no matter if it is to his advantage or not, or if people are watching or not, he lives by those convictions. He has no hidden motives or actions. And he does not change how he acts when he is with different people. David was the same person in private that he was in public. In private, he was a man who loved God. And in public he was a man who served for the interests of his people, because he knew that they belonged to God and not to him. You will remember that God chose David for leadership because he had a heart (character) that honored God. (See 1 Sam. 13:14, 16:7; Acts 13:22) David himself was even

willing to die if that would keep his people from facing the judgment of God. (2 Sam. 24:17)

In our study we will see that Biblical leadership is based upon character. No one can lead the people of God if he is not a godly person who has a vibrant relationship with God and who has developed godly character. **The most important ingredient in successful church leadership is developing a godly character so that we are men and women after the heart of God.** In our study on church leadership we will examine what are the unique characteristics that church leaders must develop in order to lead people in the way God wants them to. And we will also study the things which destroy a leader's character of integrity, the pitfalls where many leaders fail in their leadership.

But there are people who love God and have godly character, but after they become leaders, they are not able to lead effectively. Second, the author of Psalms 78 knew that David's leadership ability also rested on his ability to lead with skill. Just like a skilled carpenter can make a table that is beautiful as well as functional, so also a skilled church leader can make life beautiful for God's people. A skilled leader is able to generate excitement and a sense of purpose. He encourages peace and harmony among the people. People and churches and nations change when a skillful leader leads. In our study on church leadership, we will also examine some of the key skills needed for church leaders to lead God's people in a more effective way.

But skill by itself is not enough. Church leaders who are highly educated and skilled in leadership but who do not have godly character will cause problems in the church. They will lead in a worldly way, the very thing that Jesus said should not happen in the church.

Q. 5. Think about the most godly and gifted church leader you know. In what way does the person's "integrity" and "skill" have a part to make the person great in your eyes?

Both godly character and skill are needed in our churches today. Then we will have dynamic leaders like King David who are able to lead the church in this generation. This type of leader will influence not only themselves and their church, but their country as well. To be such a leader is not easy. It takes courage so that we will lead as God wants us to lead, not like our culture teaches us to lead. It takes hard work to learn the skills of leading and managing. Above all, it takes the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Are you willing to give yourself totally to God to be used by him to lead his people? If so, this study guide is written to help you understand Biblical leadership so that you can lead those for whom Jesus died.

Why don't you pause now and ask God to open your mind and your heart to learn what he wants to teach you so that you can be used by God in a mighty way in leadership.

This study guide on church leadership is divided into three major sections. In part 1 (Book 1) we will examine the **personal life** of a leader. We will look at spiritual characteristics which God desires in his leaders. And we will study the sins that leaders tend to commit which limit their ability to serve God successfully. In part 2 we will study different **skills** which leaders need to develop in order to lead effectively. Finally, in part 3 will examine various **specialized issues** about church leadership. And we will examine briefly different responsibilities which elders, evangelists, and pastors have in the church.

PART 1: THE PERSONAL LIFE OF A LEADER

In the first seven lessons we will study the most important truth about leadership which is the need for godly character. Both in the world and in the church, greatness in leadership ultimately finds its source

in the character of a person. People like Abraham Lincoln, the president of the United States who stopped slavery, are remembered more for their character than their skills of leadership. And it is the lack of honorable character among most leaders which brings the problems in the world.

GOD SEEKS TO DO HIS WORK THROUGH A FEW LEADERS WHO LEAD IN HIS WAY

Q. 6. Read Ezek. 22.30-31. a) What did God look for but he did not find? b) What was that person supposed to do? c) What resulted because God did not find that person? d) Do you think the same thing could happen in our days? Explain your answer.

During the days of Ezekiel, the people of God had wandered away from God's path and were following their own ways. Even though God repeatedly warned them that he would punish them if they did not return to him, the Jews continued on in their path of rebellion. What was the major problem? God pointed to the leaders. He said that he had looked for just one leader whom he could use to return the heart of people to God, but he could not find any. Therefore, judgment was about to fall upon God's people and in a few years God would send them into captivity. We can see several important truths in these verses:

1. God is not looking for hundreds of leaders before he can change the people so that they will follow him. All it takes is one person with the right requirements. Amazingly, in the Bible we see that God rarely brings major change through groups of leaders. Rather, he chooses "a leader," an individual. It is through that one individual that God changes all of his people. So today God is not looking for hundreds of well trained leaders before he will change the waywardness of his people. Rather he is looking for one person who gives himself to God totally for his service, who has the spiritual requirements God demands in leaders before he uses them, and who is willing to pay the personal price of suffering. When God finds such a person, he uses him far beyond everyone's expectations. Are you willing to be that person?

2. For God to work mightily, this person has to be willing to "*stand in the gap*." To stand in the gap means to provide a temporary solution to the rebellion of God's people. Usually alone, he has to have the spiritual ability to see where the moral and spiritual gaps are in the church. And then he has to have the courage and commitment to stand up and address the problems of the church. When cows want to go through a gap in the fence into the neighbor's field, if the owner stands in the gap, sometimes he can get hurt as the cows run over him. But it is only when he stands in the gap that he can keep them from going through the hole in the fence. In the same way, it is a lonely and often painful experience to be that person who is willing to stand up against all of the people who are wandering away from the truth and not living as God would have them. Are you willing to count the cost, to stand up even if all reject you, in order to be used by God?

3. For there to be long term change among the people of God, this leader must "*repair the walls*." He must know what a healthy, godly church is to be, and over time he works to turn the church into a godly church which wholeheartedly fulfills the will of God. This takes vision in knowing what God wants from his people. It takes patience, for God's people do not quickly change. Are you willing to commit yourself to the long and difficult task of working in your church to bring true lasting change?

4. If God does not find a person willing to sacrifice himself on behalf of God's people, the results are fearful. There comes judgment upon God's people. God punishes them. And as he warned the church of Ephesus, continued rejection could mean that he removes them from being "his lampstand." (Rev. 2:5) This means that Jesus will no longer be present with the church and use it to be the light of the world. Could this happen to your church?

WHY THERE IS A LACK OF GODLY LEADERS IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY.

As mentioned earlier, most of the problems in our churches are rooted in a problem with the leaders of the church. Troubles with divisions, the increase of false teachings, the lack of vision in evangelism, the lack of giving to the Lord's work, and the lack of impact upon our society- these can all be traced to the leaders of the church. The problem is not just a lack of church leaders, for even the well established churches are struggling with having the right type of leaders. Nor is the reason a lack of trained church leaders because those churches with more educated church leaders struggle as much as those churches with uneducated leaders.

Q. 7. Think through the leadership problems of your local church or church denomination. a) What are the main reasons there seems to always be a crisis in leadership? b) How would you solve this leadership problem in your church?

There seems to be four basic reasons for the leadership crisis that we face.

1. People are not willing to sacrifice themselves to serve God and his people as leaders. Being a leader of God's people is not easy. There is little or no pay to make church leadership desirable. Church members often do not appreciate their leaders and spend more time criticizing them than praying for them and thanking them for their service. Often church leaders are busy in their own work of farming, trading, or working in the government. So fewer and fewer people willingly give of themselves and their time to serve God's people as leaders. This means that in many churches, when people are asked to be church leaders, often they refuse.

2. The most obvious problem is that most churches do not have leaders who are adequately trained in how to lead. There are thousands of rural churches where elders and church leaders are barely able to read. They have never had any training, either secular education or Biblical education. But even in urban churches, the majority of church leaders are government employees who have never had any Biblical teaching. Their secular education does not adequately prepare them to lead God's people.

Church leaders must know God, his Word, and what God expects from his people. How can church leaders expect to lead God's people in God's way if they do not know God's Word? How can they protect the people from false teaching, establish Biblical goals for the church, etc. unless they know God's Word? Since most of our churches have non-biblically trained church leaders and the evangelists and pastors are accountable to them for their ministries, the elders must also be trained in God's Word.

We will see later in our study that one of the major qualifications for any church elder is the ability to teach God's Word. (1 Tim. 3:2) Elders are also responsible to guard the church from false teachings. (Acts 20:26-31) The only way people can do these two major ministries of elders is by knowing God's Word. In order to have good elders and leaders in the church, they must have adequate secular training, but especially Biblical education. (Note: By saying that an elder must have Biblical education, this does not mean that they have to go to a formal Bible school, although if possible that is a good option. But it means that elders must learn to study God's Word for themselves. This can be through Bible study programs like Mekihima, or T.E.E., Sunday school classes, etc. There are many different ways to learn God's Word besides in a formal Bible school.)

Q. 8. a) 1) Do most elders in your church have adequate secular education? 2) If not, what problems are caused in the church from not having adequate secular education? 3) What can your church do to

encourage the leaders to continue their education? b) 1) Do most elders in your church have adequate Biblical knowledge to lead in a godly, Biblical way? 2) If not, what problems are caused because they do not have enough Biblical education to lead the church? 3) What can your church do to encourage its leaders to gain a better Biblical education? 4) List different programs in your church or in other churches that could be used to increase the elder's Biblical understanding so that they can lead better.

In preparing leaders, training is usually the easiest problem to solve. With the increase in government schools, with night study programs and new colleges opening up in most cities, the opportunities to study are easier than they have ever been. Rather than just looking at education as a way to get a better job, church leaders need to understand that getting secular education is important for church leadership as well. We need to view education as a tool for better leadership rather than a way to gain better status or pay.

It is also easier to get Biblical education today. In many cities there are now Bible schools available for those whom God has called to full time church leadership. There are training seminars, Bible study groups, T.E.E., B.T.C.P. (Biblical Training for Church Pastors), and evening Bible schools which can help church leaders grow in their knowledge of God's Word. There are also hundreds of theological books which leaders can read and learn from. Any church leader who wants to lead as God would like him to lead should make use of these training programs so that he will continue to grow in his ability to lead God's people.

Q. 9. a) What are you doing to improve your secular education? b) What are you doing to improve your theological education? c) If you are not improving yourself in both of these areas, why not? What do you need to do to grow in effective church leadership through better education?

3. There are not adequate godly leaders in many churches because often the existing church leaders do not become church leaders because of a sense of God's call into leadership. Few church leaders lead God's people because they have a clear personal command by God to lead his people. We expect pastors and evangelists to have a call from God into full time ministry. But elders too need to know God's calling into church leadership. This is as important as evangelists being called into their ministry for God.

Often church leaders are forced to accept a position as a church leader when they do not want it. Or they might want to be church leaders but do not have the time to fulfill the responsibility of being a church leader. Or sometimes they become church leaders because of wrong motives, seeking things like the honor and power which leadership brings.

Often members force people to be leaders when they do not want to be leaders. Paul told Timothy in 1 Tim. 3:1 "*If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.*" This means that becoming a church elder must be agreeable to the person who is chosen to be the leader. And Peter said in 1 Pet. 5:2 that elders are to shepherd the members of the church "*willingly.*" If the person is not willing and does not want to be a leader, then it is wrong for others to force him into leadership. A person who is forced to be a leader will usually hold the position of a leader, but not do the work of a leader. As a result, much of the work is left undone. It is better to have a less gifted person as a leader who feels the call of God and is willing to minister than a gifted person who does not want to lead. God empowers a willing leader whom he has called to minister. But God cannot work through a leader who does not want to be in that position and therefore does not try to do the work of leadership.

Or sometimes people are willing to work as a church leader, but they are already too busy in other

ministries and they cannot give adequate time to minister in the church. If they are so busy in their jobs or at home that they cannot give sufficient time to ministry in the church, they also will not be able to lead as God wants. This type of church leader simply holds a position or title as an elder or church leader, but does not fulfill the ministry of leading God's people. Again, it is better to have a less capable church elder who can give a lot of time to lead God's people than to have a church leader who can only give a little time to ministry.

Jesus said that before we make a decision, we should always count the cost first. (See Lk. 14:25-33) Otherwise, we will agree to something and then after we learn the cost of that decision, we either quit or do not work with all of our might. The same is true about leadership. Although leadership in the church might seem like an easy ministry which we can do in addition to our other work, it is very demanding of our time. And it might seem like a position of glory and honor, but church leadership has few earthly rewards that make it pleasurable for us. Rather, it usually involves sleepless nights as we struggle with difficult church issues, being misunderstood by the people who do not like our decisions, and the hard work of taking care of each believer's spiritual needs to make sure they are growing, etc. Most of the rewards for being a church leader come only when we stand before Jesus in heaven to receive our eternal reward. And so if a person does not feel God's call into leadership telling him to become a church leader, then rarely will he lead in a godly way. At best, he will serve when it is convenient, but not put in the long hours needed to take care of the people of God. The result is that he holds the position of leader (elder) but does not do the work of a leader.

God always holds us responsible for what we agree to do. If a person agrees to be a church leader, he is responsible to fulfill the work of a church leader. If we agree to be a church leader, we are accountable to God to do our best to lead. And one day we will stand before Jesus Christ who will judge us according to the quality of our work in leadership. (1 Cor. 3:11-15) Excuses like "I did not have enough time" or "They forced me to be a leader; it was not my choice" will not be enough of a reason to help us escape judgment.

Q. 10. a) Read 1 Cor. 10:31. What does Paul say about how we must do all things, including leading in the church? What problems develop when a church leader does not give his best for the glory of God? b) Read Malachi 1:12-14. What do these verses teach about doing something for God that is less than the best?

It is an important biblical principle that we should do everything to the best of our ability. It is only then that we honor God. So whether we preach, or teach, or lead, God expects us to do it to the best of our ability. We are not accountable for what is beyond our ability. But we are responsible for what we are able to do. Malachi 1:12-14 also teaches us that when we do something for God that is not our best, it is an insult to God. It is better not to do it at all. It is the same as sacrificing an animal to God that is blind or lame. We should respect and honor our great God. We show our fear and honor of God by doing something to the best of our ability. So, it is only when we give our best effort as leaders, using our mental abilities, our spiritual gifts, our time, and our skills for God's people that we honor our heavenly Father properly.

To have the right type of leaders in our churches, they must hear God's call. Every leader must want to serve God by serving the people of God. And they must make time available to serve God. Anything less than this will never bring the right type of leaders into the church who will lead God's people in humility and with skill. Training people who are not willing or do not have a call or do not have the time to lead is a waste of time. And it actually brings greater judgment upon those being trained or who have accepted the role of church leader. Jesus said "*for those to whom much has been given, much will be required.*" (See Lk. 12:42-48)

Q. 11. a) Describe how you have seen people become a church leader without a call from God to be a leader. What problems in leadership did this cause? b) Describe how you have seen people become church leaders who are forced into leadership rather than do so willingly. What problems did this bring to their leadership? c) Give examples of people you know who have agreed to be leaders who do not have enough time to lead. What problems did this bring into leadership? d) How would people change in their willingness and reasons for being a leader if they understood that God will hold them accountable for what they agree to do?

4. The fourth reason there is not the right type of leaders in the church is that people do not understand what it means to be a godly leader in the church. They are willing. They freely give of their time. They know that God called them to serve in the church. But they do not understand what they should do as a leader of God's people. They only know how the world leads. They know how tribal leadership works. Or they know how people lead in the government or in a job. So they bring that style of leadership into the church. And soon problems like division results between people of different tribes or between the elders and the youth.

God's work must be done God's way and for His glory if it is to be effective in God's kingdom. This is true about leadership. Godly leadership must be done God's way. As we will see, how we lead in the church is often opposite of how leadership takes place in the community or government. Therefore it is important for church leaders to understand how the Bible portrays leadership over the people of God. Often well meaning church leaders bring problems into the church because they do not know the difference between worldly leadership and godly leadership.

Q. 12. Describe how you have seen well-meaning church leaders cause problems in the church because they lead like seen in the government rather than as taught in the Bible. What problems resulted in the church?

This book is primarily written for this fourth type of leader. The goal of this TEE book is to help leaders who sense God's call to serve God by leading his people (as elders, deacons, Bible study leaders, choir leaders, etc.) understand how to lead in a biblical way. Then the cry that there are no leaders in our churches will be silenced. And God's people and our nation will enjoy the blessings of God as never before.

Brothers and sisters, we must take leadership in our churches very seriously. Every day people are going to hell who need to hear the Gospel. How we lead in our churches impacts whether or not they will hear the Gospel and have the opportunity to be saved. Our churches are filled with untaught, immature believers who are easily overcome by false teaching. Our leadership will impact whether or not they will remain firm in their faith and overcome the temptations of Satan. And we are dealing with the most precious thing that God has. Believers are called the "people belonging to God." (1 Pet. 2:9) They are God's "treasure." (Ex. 19:5) Jesus died for each person in the church. They are his sheep. He has given their care into our hands. How can we be careless and indifferent in taking care of God's inheritance, God's sheep?

Q. 13. Review the teachings in this day's lesson. a) Write a short summary of why there is a lack of godly leaders in the church. b) How would leaders of integrity and skill provide the answer to most of the problems in our churches? c) Make a list of suggestions how you would change the peoples' understanding of leadership in the church so that this leadership crisis could be solved.

SECOND DAY

WHAT IS BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP? (PART 1)

Before we begin our study of what makes a person a successful godly leader, we must ask the question "What is leadership? What is a leader?"

Q. 14. a) Write a definition on what a leader is. b) How would your definition change if you were talking about a leader of a church rather than a government leader?

One of the questions people around the world are asking today is "What is leadership?" All people grow up with a certain understanding of what good leadership is like. As soon as they hear the word "leader" they have a certain image in their minds. For some, they think of someone who is in control, telling people what to do, someone who gets the job done. For others, they see someone who coordinates ministries. He gets people together and after discussing the matter, they come to a mutual decision. Some people see leadership as a position of honor and glory. Others believe leadership is a position of serving the people. Some think the right to be a leader comes with age. Others say the right to be a leader comes from education. Some think a leader is one who can sway people with his words. Others think a leader is someone who gets a job done quickly and efficiently.

So the world is filled with different understandings of what good leadership is like. It becomes even more complex when talking about leadership in a church. Does church leadership resemble how a person leads in the government or in a school? Is a church elder to resemble a tribal elder? Or should he be like a government worker, the head of the kebele or awraja? (Kebele is a unit or neighborhood and Ethiopia's smallest administrative unit, while the awraja is a "county" or "sub-province" containing a few administrative districts.)

Jesus said that leadership should not be like the world's. But in what way is leadership different in the church? Christians throughout the world struggle with these questions.

Usually what ordinary people think a church leader should be like is determined by what their culture says is ideal. So if their culture tends to look at leaders as being those in power, those who pass on commands for the people to obey, then church leaders lead in the same way. The elders make the decisions and tell the members what to do. But if the culture encourages leaders to listen to and involve all people in decisions, then the church leaders tend to lead by finding out what people want and making their decisions accordingly.

But as followers of Jesus Christ, we are to form our understanding of church leadership from what the Bible teaches, not what our culture says. Therefore one of the most important questions church leaders must ask is "What is leadership?" What is leadership in the world and especially what is leadership to be like in the church? The world might define leadership one way. But as followers of Jesus Christ, we are to lead the way Jesus wants us to lead. Our definition of leadership must come from our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Example. Our leadership style must not come from the world.

VARIOUS DEFINITIONS OF A LEADER

There are many different definitions of a leader. Below we have listed some definitions from different sources. Some of these definitions present the world's understanding of leadership. Others agree with what the Bible teaches about leadership. Each definition presents a different aspect of leadership.

- A leader is "one who controls a group of people." A leader is "the person who makes the decisions, the most important person in a group, one who shows the way, one who guides, or who influences someone to think or do something in a particular way."
- Leadership is "the art of getting others to want to do something the leader is are convinced should be done, using persuasion or force." The leader guides the activities of others and encourages others to fulfill what the leader thinks should be done. He is the man of vision with the ability to organize others to fulfill the vision.
- A leader is "one who directly (through having a position of authority over the person) or indirectly (through providing an example which others follow) influences one or more people to be or do something which by themselves they would not be or do."
- Leadership is "the ministry of deliberately influencing a group to move it towards goals that fulfill the group's real needs."
- A Biblical leader is one who "uses his spiritual gifts to coordinate, enhance, and focus the spiritual gifts of others toward a common vision of the kingdom of God."
- Spiritual leadership is "moving people on to God's agenda for their lives and for the church."
- Spiritual leadership is "being the greatest servant; rendering the most selfless, unwearied service to the kingdom of God."
- Spiritual leadership is the "process of enabling God's people to become all that they can become and do all that they can do through the grace of God."

Q. 15. a) Which of these definitions, or which part of these definitions do you think best illustrates how people in Ethiopia understand leadership? b) Which of these definitions best illustrates how you think leadership should be in the church? c) Compare how people would lead differently based upon each definition. d) Write your own definition of leadership using ideas found in the above definitions.

ALL BELIEVERS ARE LEADERS

For the rest of this lesson we will study what it means to be a leader. We will look first at how the world understands leadership. Then we will study what the Bible teaches about church leadership. We will study the implications of these definitions a little later as we study what Biblical leadership consist of.

All of us should realize that we are leaders in some way. If leadership is influencing others to be different or do something which they would not do by themselves, almost every person in the world is a leader. An older child is usually the "leader" of his younger brothers and sisters, for he gives them commands which they obey and they often follow the example of their older sibling. In many cultures, the husband is the leader of the home, having authority over his wife and children. But the wife is also a leader because she influences and guides their children. In the church, Bible study leaders have "leadership" positions since they influence others in the Bible study group. In fact, in one way the most powerful "leaders" of a church today are the choir members, because all of the youth of the church look to them as examples and follow their lifestyles. Older believers are often unknowingly the "leaders" of new believers because they influence the new believers by their words and actions.

So in reality, all of us are leaders to someone. We might not think of ourselves as leaders since we are not in an assigned position of authority. But since each one of us has those whom we influence, we are leading them. In fact, we are often leading in several different realms at the same time. We can lead in our family, at work or in the school, and in the church at the same time.

Q. 16. a) Make a list of different roles you have (e.g. child, older brother, student, father, Bible study leader, etc.). b) List people whom you influence in each of those roles. c) List people who influence you and are therefore "leading" you.

Since all of us are leaders because we are influencing others, the major question we need to ask is not "Am I a leader?" but "Am I leading in the way Jesus wants me to lead?" We can influence another person or a group to grow in godliness. Or we can influence them away from God. It is a great responsibility to influence others. Jesus warns us that if we influence people, especially new believers (spiritual children) or physical children, away from God, we will face great judgment. (See Mt. 18:5-6) One of the purposes of this study book on leadership is to help all of us think through how we can be the type of people who will influence people towards God's will for their lives, even if we are not formal church leaders. If we have the godly character and the skills needed to influence others towards godliness, then God will use us in a mighty way. And most likely he will elevate us into a formal position of leadership. If we are faithful in the smallest levels of leadership; in our home, or the choir, or a Bible study, often God raises us up to be leaders in his church. (See Lk. 16:10-13; 19:11-27)

LEADERSHIP ACCORDING TO THE WORLD'S UNDERSTANDING

Q. 17. Read Mk. 10:42-45. a) What did Jesus say the leadership of the Gentiles is like? b) What part of the definition of leadership in the previous section "as the one who controls a group of people" reflects how the world views leadership? c) What did Jesus say leadership in the church should be like? d) What other definitions of leadership listed above best resemble how Jesus defined leadership?

In Rom. 12:2, Paul writes " Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." He tells us that we are no longer to pattern our life according to the way the world thinks and acts. Rather, we are to know God's perfect will. The way we know God's will is by changing how we think. We automatically understand leadership according to what our cultures have taught us. But as followers of Jesus and as those who have God's Word to guide how we are to understand how to live in God-honoring ways, we must seek to adjust our ideas to what God teaches us about leadership. We are not really "Christians" or "followers of Jesus" if we continue to knowingly follow the pattern of the world rather than following what God tells us to do.

As we look at the first two definitions of leadership above, we see that they primarily focus upon leadership from the perspective of the world. And so the definitions use words like "controls," "makes decisions," "is the most important person," "influences people to think in a certain way," or "getting others to do something the leader is convinced should be done." Worldly leadership seeks to control others, to bend their will and convince the people so that they will do what the leader wants. The leader is the one with the knowledge, power, and authority to make the ordinary people do what he requests. That desire might be good, like getting them to plant trees or send out evangelists. Or it can be evil, like getting them to kill people from another tribe, steal from someone, or divide a church.

But there is an idea that is missing from many definitions on leadership. That is the idea of being a

"servant" and of "serving." A servant is hired to meet the needs and desires of his master. He seeks the best for the master, not the servant's personal good. The world rarely imagines leadership as a person being a servant of others. "I am here to lead, and to tell others what to do. I am not here to take care of the needs of people" is how most church leaders think in their hearts. And yet, Jesus defined leadership as being a SERVANT of others. In fact, he said the greater the servant, the greater the leader. And so from a Biblical perspective we would say that a leader is someone who serves God and others by working for their good. He desires that they receive the benefits so he focuses upon their spiritual growth, their economic growth, etc. He wants people to become all that they can as followers of Jesus. And a godly leader gives of himself to serve others so that they will grow.

Q. 18. Think through your "leadership" at home, work, and in church. a) Is it more like how the world sees leadership or how Jesus taught about leadership? Explain your answer. b) How would your actions change if you understood your role to be a "servant" rather than a "leader?" c) List 2 things that you will do differently this week to follow Jesus' example in leadership. Then take time to prayer right now and ask the Holy Spirit to help you become a Christ-like leader.

Q. 19. a) Do you think most church leaders understand their role in the way the world understands leadership or how Jesus defined leadership? Explain your answer. b) How do you think church leadership would change if elders wanted to serve others rather than lead others?

EVERY CULTURE DEFINES LEADERSHIP IN A DIFFERENT WAY

All of us grow up understanding leadership from the "world's" perspective. We cannot imagine a leader who does not have a lot of power and authority, and who does not give commands and demand that others fulfill them. It is hard to imagine a leader who does not gain financially or receive honor because he is a leader. Each of us has in mind a worldly understanding of leadership that does not agree with what Jesus taught about leadership. Until we relearn Jesus' example of leading and forget what the world teaches us about leadership, we will not be godly SERVANT leaders.

Every culture has a different understanding of what makes a good leader. First, there are those who assume a leader is a "dictator" with total power and control over others. He may be the king or the president or the chairman of a church. What he says is law, and people must obey him or face punishment. This type of leader is above the law. No one can punish him or tell him what to do. He might have advisors, but his word is the final authority. Second, some cultures honor age. So the older people, the elders, are those who discuss issues together and make decisions for the rest of the people. Those who are not the elders, the young people, and the women, or those not on the eldership have little say in how things function. The elders decide and the others obey. Third, there are those cultures that focus on participation in decisions (democracy). The people choose their representatives; those whom they want to speak and make decisions on their behalf. The people have a say in the rules or decisions that are made. Leaders discuss their thoughts with the people and make decisions which the people like.

There are other types of leadership, but these are the three basic understandings of how people are to be led. Interestingly, various churches have chosen each one of these three models of leadership. The pope is the final authority over the Catholic Church. All Catholics must obey what he says. (Note: The leadership structure of the Catholic church developed as it copied the structure of leadership of the Roman government with an emperor as leader during the years of 200-300 AD.) The Presbyterian Church (e.g. Bethel Synod Makene Yesus) and other elder run churches (e.g. Kale Heywet) follow the elder run model of church government. The church members choose the elders, but then the elders make the decisions on behalf of the church members with little input from the congregation. (Note: The Presbyterian

church structure was patterned after the Swiss governmental style of leadership during the 1500s when this church developed.) Many of the Baptist churches (Metemekaweyan, Addis Kedan, etc.) follow the third type of leadership where the congregation has a major voice in what happens in the church. They vote on the suggestions of the elder's board, etc. (Note: This structure is patterned more after democratic procedures in the West.)

Our church structures do impact how every church member understands the place and role of a church leader. Therefore we should examine our structures to make sure they communicate and enable a Biblical understanding of church leadership. But the major problem we face is not the structure of leadership which we have in our churches. Rather, it is the understanding of what it means to be a leader that causes problems. Before we can understand leadership from God's perspective, we must first understand what view of leadership we have received from our culture.

Q. 20. Read Lk. 22:24-30. Make a list of how people lead and their attitude towards leadership that differs from how Jesus wants church leaders to lead.

PRESUPPOSITIONS ON LEADERSHIP HELD BY THE WORLD

For 3 ½ years Jesus lived with the 12 disciples, teaching them a radically different way of life in the kingdom of God and in the church. Rather than focus upon external things, Jesus taught them to focus upon internal character. (See Mt. 14:15-20) Rather than seek immediate rewards as promised in the Old Testament, the disciples were encouraged to look to heaven for their rewards. (Mt. 6:19-21, 24) Rather than look for retribution against their enemies, Jesus taught them to love their enemies, to pray for them, and forgive them. (Mt. 5:43-48) But one of the most radical statements Jesus made was about how to lead. Jesus did not focus upon what name we should use for our leaders, or what structure we are to have in our churches, but on the attitude of leadership which is so different from how the world leads.

Like all of us, the 12 disciples grew up with an understanding that to be a leader was a place of great honor and blessing. The world was divided up between the "few" who led and enjoyed the power and blessings of leadership and the "many" who had to obey the leaders, working hard and paying their taxes so that the leaders could get richer and enjoy life more. So naturally these disciples wanted to be among the privileged few in Jesus' kingdom. Several times over the 3 ½ years these disciples sought to become part of the new leadership in Jesus' kingdom. Once as a group they asked to be leaders. (Mk. 9:33-37) At another time, two of the disciples, at the encouragement of their mother who was a relative of Jesus, tried to get the most honored positions of leadership. (Mk. 10:35-45) This request caused jealousy and a fight among the disciples just like the pushing and shoving of people seeking leadership in the world and in the church causes many fights today. And then on the night when Jesus was betrayed and crucified the disciples once more argued among themselves about who would be the most honored leader and the most powerful of the 12. (Lk. 22:24-30)

In all three instances where the disciples wanted to become leaders Jesus' teaching on leadership was the same. The attitude of Jesus' followers towards leadership, and the reason people were to become leaders, is to be opposite of how the world understands leadership. Rather than talking about "leadership," Jesus focused upon "serving." How hard it was for the disciples to change their thinking about leadership. Often what they had been taught by the world overpowered Jesus' teaching about leadership. Only after the death of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit did the disciples finally understand how different leadership should be in the church versus in the world.

Notice how Jesus described the world's understanding of leadership:

1. The world treats leaders as though they are "*lords*" who "*exercise authority*" over the common people. A lord is someone who is in charge of others. He gives the orders and the people must obey or be punished. The lord leads from a position of power over people. He controls others and gets them to do his will. We see this in governments around the world. The leader of a nation makes a decision and writes a new law. He tells people that they cannot do something. And then he tells the people that if they do not obey, they will be fined or thrown into prison. Sometimes this same attitude can be found in churches as well. The leader (or the elders) makes a regulation. The people of the church must obey, or they will be put under church discipline or expelled from the church. Those who lead as "*lords*" always see themselves as having power and authority over people so that they can control them.

2. The leaders see themselves as "*benefactors*" and expect people to treat them with honor, and look to them for solutions to their problems. Among the Greeks and the Romans, the leaders often demanded that people call them "*benefactors*," or those who meet the needs of the common person. Hidden in the heart of these leaders is the attitude "I know what is best for you. You common people are not able to make good decisions yourself. So I will decide for you. And I will meet your needs as long as you do what I say and honor me properly." And the people themselves, rather than look to God or do what they can do themselves, learnt to depend upon others to make all of the decisions, to provide the money to meet their needs, etc. Today we have politicians who tell us to choose them and they will meet all of our needs. We give them the right to make decisions. And in return we demand that they meet our needs. The same is often true in the church. "We are here for your good. Trust us. We will make the decisions and you will obey us. And we will see that things go well" say the elders. With this attitude, leaders maintain a position of pride over people. They allow themselves to be thought of as the solution to the people's problems. And they create a sense of dependency among people. The sad thing is that when people get used to depending upon leaders, they do not turn to God who is the only one who can meet all of our needs. The leaders do not empower their people, encouraging them to trust God for the solution to their problems or use what he has given them to meet their own needs.

Q. 21. a) Illustrate how these two attitudes towards leadership is often found in church leaders. b) What problems do these types of attitudes bring to the church?

JESUS' TEACHING ABOUT BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP

Q. 22. Reread Lk. 22:24-30 and Jn. 13:1-17. What is the major difference between Jesus' attitude towards leadership and how the world understands leadership?

Jesus wants leadership in the church to be very different from the leadership in the world. Jesus said that leadership by power and authority has no place in the kingdom of God. Rather, service for God and others is how "*greatness*" will be defined. The one who selflessly serves God and his fellow man by sacrificially giving of himself so that others can benefit is the greatest leader. Jesus meant that the person who does not want honor and glory, and does not think about himself and his tribe, but only of giving of his life for others is a great leader. Therefore someone like Mother Theresa who served the lepers in India far away from any type of honor and glory or financial pay was a greater leader in God's eyes than the president of the United States. This means that the woman who cleans the church every Sunday morning when no one is looking, or makes the wafers for the elders' meeting could be a greater "*leader*" in Jesus' eyes than the elders who are supposed to be leading the church.

How different this is from how we understand being a leader! If we are going to lead like Jesus wants, we must examine our motives and actions to see if we are serving God and others or whether we are following the pattern of the world. We must replace anything that is worldly with Christ-like thoughts and actions. This means that we must look at leadership in the church in a new way.

In Lk. 22:24-30 Jesus uses two cultural examples to illustrate how different leadership should be.

First, he used the illustration of a servant in a house. According to the perspective of the world, the rich man and woman of the house are the greatest, not the servant girl who cooks the food and cleans the house. They sit down and eat while the servant girl waits on them. But in the eyes of Jesus, the servant girl is greater, since she is serving others and meeting their needs rather than her own. And she is like Jesus who came to earth to serve others rather than himself, even if it meant doing things which the world taught was below the status of a leader. Jesus had just demonstrated this by taking the place of a slave and washing the feet of the disciples. (Note: In Jewish culture, only non-Jewish slaves could be made to wash the feet of another person. No Jew could be forced to wash the feet of a person because it was seen as too demeaning to do this. This is similar to how a country person would understand asking a male to wash the feet of a woman.)

Second, Jesus used the illustration of an older and younger child. Like Ethiopia, in Jewish cultural the oldest son received great honor. He got special food, the best clothes, and the first opportunity for education. But the youngest child had little honor in the family. He got the leftover food, used clothes, and if there is not enough money available, he did not go to school. Everyone in the family, even the older children gave orders to the youngest child. So humanly speaking, the younger child had little honor and glory. But, since he is the one serving all of the others in the family, in God's eyes he is more honored.

Jesus uses these two examples to show that godly leadership is not about having power over people, or enjoying honor and respect from people, or gaining benefits from others. Rather, Jesus views leadership by the amount of service given for others which is often not noticed or rewarded.

Jesus ends his teaching by pointing to the most important example of all. Jesus uses himself as the model leader of the church. Jesus is God's eternal Son. He lived in heaven which is a place of unimaginable beauty and blessing. All of the angels served him. We would see this as proof that Jesus is a great person, a great leader. But in God's eyes Jesus is a great "leader" because he left all of the glory of heaven and came to earth to live as a poor person. He was born in a stable to peasant people. All of his life, his primary concern was to help people. He helped those who were sick and hurting as well as pointed them to the way of eternal life. Even jobs like washing a person's feet were not too low for him, even though culturally this was not seen as an inappropriate action since he was the leader of the group. And then Jesus gave his own life so that people who were in bondage to their sin would be released. That was the "climax" of Jesus' leadership, for the ultimate service is giving one's life on behalf of another person. His greatness was not what Jesus did in heaven before he came to earth, but in how far he willingly lowered himself to serve others. Paul says that it was because he was willing to become a "slave" that God honored Jesus with the highest name in heaven and earth. (Phil. 2:5-11) In the same way, if we want to be great leaders, Jesus tells us that we must lower ourselves and live to serve others. God's honor will come in heaven when those who lower themselves the most on earth will be the most honored in heaven. God's pattern of leadership is to lift up those who lower themselves the most by serving others. **Greatness in the kingdom of God is not how many people a person leads or how large his church might be. Rather, it is how well a person serve God and his people.**

Q. 23. a) What differences would there be in how we usually understand leadership if we looked at leadership like Jesus did? b) Make a list of changes in how church leaders would act if they really followed Jesus' example of being a servant leader.

LEADERSHIP ACCORDING TO OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS

Q. 24. Read 1 Cor. 1:26-31, Phil. 2:3-11, 1 Pet. 5:1-4. a) What can we learn about church leadership from what Paul wrote? b) What can we learn about church leadership from Peter?

As we study the New Testament, we see that the Apostles understood leadership in a very different way from the world as well. Nowhere in the New Testament is there an emphasis upon the power and authority of church leaders. There was no mention of external qualifications like education or riches which we often think are important today. And there is no evidence of complicated church structures which set up a few people with power over the people of God. In fact leadership is always seen as taking care of others, never as power over others. We could look at many verses. However, the verses above provide for us adequate illustrations on how Christians are to understand leadership in the church.

1. God often chooses people for leadership whom the world does not respect. (1 Cor. 1:26-31) He prefers to use those who are uneducated, or not wealthy, or with little respect in the eyes of the world. He does this for two reasons. First, when people are aware of their inadequacies, they are more likely to trust God to work through them than if they think they are capable to lead. People who know they cannot do the ministry are more apt to pray for God's help and realize that if anything is done it is because God worked rather than because they are gifted. As Paul said in 2 Cor. 12:9-10, it is when we know that we are weak that we are strong. Those who have education and riches or are respected by the world tend to rely on their natural abilities more than God when leading. Second, by using those the world despises, God receives the honor and glory and not the person. By using the uneducated and poor, God demonstrates to all that he is working through people, rather than the work being done by the natural abilities of people. And so people focus upon God's enabling and praise him for what has been done rather than praise the people.

Q. 25. a) Illustrate from the history of your church how God tends to use those the world considers insignificant to do his work rather than focus upon those who are educated and rich. b) What dangers do you see today when we focus more on education or wealth or natural ability when choosing our leaders?

2. God desires leaders and all believers have the attitude that Jesus had when he came to earth. (Phil. 2:3-11) That attitude gives up personal glory and personal benefits for the greater good of others, even if it means lowering ourselves below others. Just as Jesus left all of the glory of heaven and the honor of being God's eternal Son and became a poor peasant in a backward part of the world in order to better serve people, we too are to consciously put aside all semblance of personal glory, honor, and benefit in order to serve God and his people. Only this attitude will bring the peace and unity in the church that God desires.

3. Leading is primarily seeking to serve others by taking care of their needs and providing an example for them to follow. (1 Pet. 5:1-4) Peter and Paul never focused on their honorable positions of being apostles. Nor did they seek to benefit from such powerful leadership positions. Rather, they gave their lives for the benefit of others, just like a true shepherd will give his life for the sheep when thieves or wild animals come to destroy them. And rather than using their authority as apostles, they tried to encourage believers to copy the example of their lives.

Q. 26. Illustrate how church leadership would change if these three teachings about church leadership were followed in our churches.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND WORLDLY LEADERSHIP (Part 1)

Jesus and the Apostles taught that the way of leadership in the church is radically different from how the world understands leadership. If we begin to lead in the way Jesus and the apostles taught, which is the path of giving and serving rather than leading as the world does, what would change? The difference is not primarily in the governing structure that we use in our churches. Rather, the change will be in our attitudes toward leadership. And it will influence how we as leaders do certain things.

In Lessons Three and Four we will examine what Biblical leadership consists of in more detail. However, following is a brief comparison between how the world understands leadership and how leadership would change if we sought to lead according to what God's Word teaches us about servant leadership.

1. Leadership according to the principles of the world limits leadership positions to a select group of people. It does not matter whether it is a king who wants the power to go to his son, or a certain party in the government who wants to make sure that their party stays in power- the major goal of worldly leaders is for them and their friends or tribe to stay in power. Church leaders follow the world's example when they no longer let God choose those who are leaders or trust people to choose who should be the leaders. Rather, they work so their friends, their family, and their tribe will maintain the power and authority. Existing leaders often work to keep others out of power who might threaten their positions.

Servant leaders, however, seek the best for God's kingdom, not what is best for themselves or their tribe. Therefore they will open the door for ministry and leadership to all who are spiritually qualified, no matter how the world views them. Rather than trying to control who becomes leaders (e.g. our children, our extended family, our tribe, our friends) or seeking to stay in leadership ourselves through whatever means (e.g. chasing away gifted young people, defaming the reputation of another person) we will joyfully allow God to raise up anyone who meets the spiritual qualifications for leadership. It does not matter if they are educated (like Paul) or uneducated (like many of the apostles), rich or poor, from our tribe or not- everyone God chooses is welcomed into ministry. We will have the attitude of Moses who wanted any or all of God's people to be used by God. (See Num. 11:24-30) And when it is time for us to step down from leadership and turn over leadership to someone more gifted than us or younger than us, we will praise God for having had the privilege to serve him. And because our desire is for God's people to grow to their greatest potential, we would happily turn over our ministry to someone else and support them to the best of our ability.

Q. 27. a) List illustrations of how church leaders often try to get their friends and their family members and their tribal people into church leadership. b) List illustrations of how many church leaders try to stay in power rather than let others into leadership? c) What problems does this cause in the church? d) How would the election of people into leaders change if people were only interested in having spiritual leaders who were best for God's kingdom no matter what their education level or tribal affiliation is?

2. Leadership according to the principles of the world motivates people to become leaders for the personal benefits that they will receive. So worldly leaders serve because they enjoy the dignity and status with leadership brings them. Or they lead because of the power they have to control others. Or they seek positions of leadership because of financial benefits and good lifestyle they will enjoy as leaders. When

asked to serve the church as a pastor or evangelist they ask either out loud, or at least in their hearts, "How much is the wage? How much per diem do I get? What type of house will I live in?"

However, servant leaders serve God because they want to please him and serve his people. Their motive for being leaders is a deep desire to honor God and fulfill his call upon their lives. They want to serve him, and the main way they serve him is by serving his people. And so they want to help people as much as they can. These leaders want to see people grow in their knowledge of God, in their spiritual walk, and in their economic life. The leaders will want to help people grow in their love for God and be what God wants them to be. In order for this to happen, the leaders will give of their time, money, and energy to help them to grow. Christ-like leaders give their lives for the benefit of others.

Q. 28. If leaders in your church had this understanding of leadership, how would their attitudes and ministries change?

3. Leadership according to the principles of the world emphasizes the gap between those who lead and those who follow. Those in leadership often think that they are better than the common person. They are the educated and therefore know what is best. Others need to listen to them for the solutions. Leaders often show that they are better by how they dress and wear expensive clothes or fancy robes. And they separate themselves from the common person. Not only do they sit in special seats that are separate from where the ordinary people sit, but they rarely invite the common people to eat with them or bring them into their homes. In fact, some leaders do not even want to shake hands with those who are poor and common. All of these actions say "Look, we are different from you. We are better." In their hearts leaders often despise or look down upon others. "If I wasn't here, everything would fall apart" is their attitude. They see the common person as a "tool" to fulfill the goals and desires of the leaders.

Church leaders may be guilty of this same attitude. They can glory in their being the "educated" elite of the church. Or they can wear special clothes to show that they are somehow more holy or special than the others. And often the leaders think that they know what is best for the people- who are often poor, less educated, etc. How easy it is for church leaders to also quietly despise the common church members. Notice how often church leaders seek to honor those who can help them and overlook those who cannot help them. This means that they favor the educated or the rich and the men, but look down upon the women, and the uneducated and the poor.

Culturally we often focus upon the "dignity" of being a leader. "I will lose the respect of people if I lower myself and be one of them" we think. So we maintain a respectful distance from people, asking that they honor us for we are the "leaders." We do not seek to get close to people or treat them as brothers and sisters equal to us. We think that if we lower ourselves to be like others and serve them will lose the dignity of leadership.

Servant leaders, however, will view all believers as having equal worth and honor to them and serve them equally. They do not allow there to be a difference between what they expect in life and what the members of the church are able to get. (See 2 Cor. 8:13-15) Rather than allow a gap to grow between ourselves and those whom God has asked us to lead, we will make sure that people see us as one with them. Are they going through persecution? Then we will not try to hide from persecution but allow ourselves to face persecution as well. (e.g. See Rev. 1:9 for how John said he was a fellow sufferer rather than one who sought to escape the suffering which the members faced.) Are they poor farmers who struggle to find enough food to live for day to day? Like Paul we will learn to live with them in poverty. (See

Phil. 4:11-13) This could mean that we accept less salary from the church or give away some of our salary so that we are not living better than the members of our church are. Are there cultural differences between us and those we are serving? Then we change so that we resemble them to keep a gap from developing. (See 1 Cor. 1 Cor. 9:19-23) We will be careful that how we dress or live or eat or the benefits we gain for our family will not make us live better than those whom God has asked us to serve.

Especially in our hearts, we will know that we are no better than anyone else in the church. If God chooses to use us or raise us up into leadership, we know that it is only because of his grace that we serve in this way. We remember that all of God's children are equally loved by him and important to him. It does not matter if a person is educated or uneducated, rich or poor, male or female, adult or only a small child. A godly leader will treat all people as important and worthy of his time and attention. Godly leaders have no special people whom they favor over others. They do not favor themselves, their family, their tribe, or their friends. Rather, they treat everyone equally because they are responsible to meet the needs of all, even the poorest member of the church.

Servant leaders also know that being humble and being like the common member does not take away from the real dignity of leadership. Jesus knew that he was God's Son. And yet he was willing to wash the feet of the disciples. (See Jn. 13:1-17) It was because he knew who he was that he did not feel he had to protect his dignity. In the eyes of Jesus, true dignity comes from an awareness that we are all children of God. And we know that God has called us to serve others as leaders. It is when we demonstrate humility in service that we are showing the dignity of being like Christ. If we lower ourselves like this, initially people will be shocked and might resist it. But it won't be long until they will respect us even more for serving them in humility.

Q. 29. a) Make a list of practices in the church which tend to emphasize the difference between leaders and the common church member. b) What do you think Jesus would say about these things if he were teaching about being servant leaders who are one with the people?

4. Leadership according to the principles of the world believes that the leaders are entitled to special privileges which the rest of the people do not enjoy. They live in special houses. They have cars, get rent-free lodging, are given special food at the meetings which the ordinary person does not enjoy, a salary that is greater than the other common people, send their children to better schools, etc.

However, servant leaders will have no expectation to personally benefit from their position. They are primarily concerned with obeying God and helping people growing spiritually. They do not want to grow financially better than the people they serve. They don't expect to have the best house or get the best education for their children. In fact, they do not do anything that might hinder their integrity in leadership.

Q. 30. Read 1 Thes. 5:6-11; 1 Cor. 9:1-18. a) How are the attitude and expectations of Paul different from when many people get a job as a church minister today? b) Make a list of ways church leaders tend to manipulate things to gain financial or other benefits for themselves and their family. c) What do you think Jesus would teach about these things?

Servant leaders are very careful not to serve with the motive to benefit from the Gospel at the expense of others. They are concerned that people not think that the only reason they are elders or ministers is to get money. They don't want to appear to be "peddling the Gospel." (2 Cor. 2:17) Therefore if high pay makes people think that they only serve God and people because of good wages, they will accept less pay.

Christ-like leaders also refuse to manipulate leadership to get special treatment. When going to seminars, they don't complain that they are eating a poor quality of food or sleeping on the floor like others. They don't expect the church to provide a house for them to live in rent free. Even if it is within their rights, they don't take their "per diem" when church members are feeding them and giving them a place to sleep. And they do not delay trips so that they will get more per diem. They know that the money is God's, not theirs to be manipulated for their benefit. And they know that the money is given generously by God's people to be used in the most efficient way for God's work. They want as much of God's money to be used for the spread of the kingdom of God as possible, not for their own betterment.

Q. 31. Review the first four comparisons between how the world understands leadership and how the Bible teaches about servant leadership. a) Which of these four do you find most easy to live like Christ wants? b) Which of these four do you personally struggle with the most in maintaining a servant-like attitude in leadership? c) Make a list of at least four things that you want to change in how you understand leadership. Spend time asking the Holy Spirit to help you change. d) During the next week, keep a record of how your actions as a leader reflects the world's understanding or how it demonstrates servant leadership.

THIRD DAY

WHAT IS BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP? (PART 2)

As church leaders we often think that we are doing a good job serving God. We generously give of our time for long meetings. We help people when they come to us with their problems. But how easy it is to look at ourselves as leaders from the perspective of the world. How hard it is for all of us to carefully examine our attitudes towards leadership to make sure we are in line with what God wants from us as servant leaders.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN SERVANT LEADERSHIP AND WORLDLY LEADERSHIP (Part 2)

In today's lesson we will continue our comparison of the world's understanding of leadership and the Bible's teaching on what it means to be a servant leader.

5. Leadership according to the principles of the world demands respect from ordinary people. Leaders sit on special chairs or at the front of the church. They ask people to call them with honorable titles. So they want people to say "Ato so and so" or "Doctor so and so" or "Evangelist so and so" or "Pastor so and so." These titles force others to acknowledge that leaders are different, special, and worthy of extra respect. Worldly leaders want the status of being known by others. So the leaders make sure that people know their name. Or when invited to speak, their educational degree is announced (e.g. "so and so has a doctorate from America"), their position of authority named (e.g. "so and so is the chairman of his church in Addis Ababa"), or their ministry described. (e.g. "so and so is a missionary who came all the way from England.")

Servant leaders, however, will focus on being spiritual brothers and sisters with all believers. They will not stress their positions of authority or education to show they are different and better. As Jesus said, they will focus upon treating others as brothers and sisters rather than being known as a teacher, evangelist, or elder. (See Mt. 23:8-11) They have no expectations of special respect or honor as leaders. They do not expect to sit in special places or try to distinguish their lives from how others live by the way they are dressed or called.

In servant leadership, the leaders' holy life brings honor and respect. They do not expect people to honor them just because they are educated, or from a certain tribe, are hired to do a certain ministry, or have a certain leadership position. Rather they "earn" respect from people because of having a godly life or doing a job well.

Q. 32. Some say people won't listen to a speaker unless we tell them the person has special qualifications. a) Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? b) How do we apply what Jesus taught to our situation today?

6. Leadership according to the principles of the world emphasizes the position of a person as the basis for leadership more than character or proven ability. "I am the chairman, therefore you must listen to me" they say. There is little emphasis on character or being worthy of leadership by rite of having proven oneself a godly person before being given the position of leadership. There is even little emphasis on having to prove our capability as leaders through having demonstrated that we can lead by having a fruitful ministry. So we have people who are called "pastor" simply because they have a degree from a school. Often they do not pastor the church. They seek to lead by rite of their position as pastor, not by their ability to do the work of being a pastor or having a pastor's heart which other people see and honor. Or they are "elders" and they try to force decisions because they are "elders" rather than because people look up to them because of their godliness and wisdom.

Servant leaders, however, emphasize godly character, spiritual maturity, and proven ministry effectiveness as the basis for leadership. They are not overly attracted to external qualifications like education, family heritage, wealth, etc. When people are chosen for leadership, they make sure people emphasize people's spiritual qualifications. They honor people's godliness, not external things like tribal allegiance, etc. And they look for previous experience of having faithfully served God and his people. They know that God's way of preparing people for ministry is by first demonstrating faithful effective ministry in smaller responsibilities before being given a major leadership role in the church. (Mt. 25:14-30)

7. Leadership according to the principles of the world focuses upon the charisma of the person, his ability to sway people by his words. It focuses on being popular with people. But often those who are good at swaying people through words are not able to lead people toward the goal that God has for them. And if they do not have godly character, often such leaders sway people away from God's path. When a church is built upon a gifted speaker, often that church will face ruin when the person leaves. When Christians look to a gifted speaker like the world looks to sports heroes, they are forgetting that their eyes are to be upon Jesus and not on people. (Heb. 12:2-3)

Servant leaders focus upon being godly examples which people can follow. They do not want to be known as a charismatic leader who can get people excited by their emotional words. They do not seek to be popular because of benefits which they bring the people. All they want is to be godly leaders who daily demonstrate to people what it means to be a follower of Jesus. They want to faithfully fulfill their responsibility of taking care of God's people so that they grow in spiritual maturity. Whether or not they are popular and honored by people does not matter to them. Rather, they want to hear their Lord say to them "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Mt. 25:21)

8. Leadership according to the principles of the world seeks to control things from a central location. It is assumed that an organization needs to be run by a few leaders in the main office. Those few leaders will decide for the organization how all churches should function and tell their decision to all churches. It

presumes that these leaders are the most educated and therefore know what is best for all people. And it believes that these leaders are the closest to God and therefore better know his will for the members of the church. These few leaders are seen to speak on behalf of God. The structure does not allow freedom for individual churches to do things as they wish and as they believe God would like them to function on a local level.

Servant leaders, however, seek to empower people to make their own decisions and do their own ministries rather than trying to control things from a central location. Godly leaders believe that the Holy Spirit speaks to each believer and to each church. They know that the Holy Spirit has given each believer in a local church a spiritual gift by which to serve God. And they know that God's focus is upon the local group of believers, not a structure. They know that no structure will go into heaven, only people. Therefore they trust the Holy Spirit to move in the hearts of each local church member to do what is best. And they see themselves only as servants of others, not the controllers of others. They offer suggestions. And they offer resources which could be beneficial. But there is no sense of centralized control.

9. Leadership according to the principles of the world views leaders as having the right and power to make the decisions. The common people are supposed to accept the decision which those in authority have made. Most of the decisions are made in offices where the common person cannot come and participate. People are told the result of the decision, but not the reason for the decision which is hidden from the people. If a person questions the reasons for a decision, they are viewed as being rebellious. Some leaders do not think any suggestion coming from common people is worth listening to.

Isn't this how most of our decisions are made in church? The elders secretly make their decisions with little input from church members. And if church members try to make suggestions, they are reprimanded by the leaders for interfering and accused of having a rebellious attitude.

Servant leaders, however, involve the church members in all important decisions concerning the church as much as possible. Godly leaders remember that the church belongs to God and not to them. And they remember that God has placed the Holy Spirit in each believer, so each believer has the ability to provide godly wisdom to a decision. And they remember that each believer is part of the body and therefore has a right to participate in decisions.

Q. 33. a) Make a list of decisions your church elders have made on behalf of the church this past year.
b) How would their decision process change if they were to make decisions like servant leaders?

10. Leadership according to the principles of the world uses the communication of the decision as a way to reinforce the authority of the leader. To show their power, the leaders hide things from the common people. The leaders do not share how the money is used, how much salary or benefits leaders get, etc. Leaders often do not tell people the reason for their decisions. They only tell people what they have decided and tell the people to obey them. The leaders often make decisions in meetings which are kept secret. Ordinary members are not allowed to see the minutes of the meetings. They are often not even allowed to share their perspectives with the leaders when the matter being discussed involves them. When leaders do share information with the common members, they only share part of the truth, that which will cause people to agree with their decision. They hide from the church members the things that they know the members would not agree with.

Servant leaders, however, will make all of the information for decisions and the reasons for decisions

available to people. They will be careful not to manipulate people by withholding information. As Paul said in 2 Cor. 4:2, they have no reason to hide things because they do not seek to deceive people or do anything which people would not appreciate if they knew. Every decision will be clear to all to be for the benefit of all members. What they have decided and why they have decided something will be open to all. People will know how their tithe is being used, how much money is being spent for food for the elders' meeting, etc. This openness builds trust for the people know that every decision is made with the good of the people in mind, not the good or the glory of the elders. Even when dealing with matters which are private to a few people, they will involve those who are impacted by their decisions to be part of making the decisions. And even if the people are not happy with what was decided, they will explain why they made their decision.

11. Leadership according to the principles of the world uses the authority and power of leadership to force people to obey them. Rewards are promised if you obey. You may get the chance of a job or being sent to Bible school or an increase in pay. But if you do not obey, financial punishment, withholding ministry, being expelled from the church, or God's judgment are threatened. This often works for awhile. But it only encourages selfishness in those who do things for rewards or fear in those who do things because they are afraid of punishment. Eventually these people will leave the church, or they will not participate in the ministry of the church from their heart. The leaders will try to do something, but the people won't cooperate by giving their money or their time.

Servant leaders, however, will lead people by the example of their lives and through the clear teaching of God's Word. Like Paul, they will say "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1) They will not ask people to do anything which they are not doing themselves. Through their godly lives the leaders will cause others to want to change the way they think and act. And they will emphasize the clear teaching of the Word of God, trusting the Holy Spirit to change the thinking and the lives of people so that they willingly seek to do what God wants them to do. And they will wait patiently for the Holy Spirit to work to bring the people to the place of joyfully serving God. They will encourage people to do things because they love Jesus, rather than use threats of punishment or emphasize their "authority" as elders by giving commands.

12. Leadership according to the principles of the world seeks to force all people to do things the same way. They seek to control people with many rules and regulations rather than give people the freedom to make their own decisions. Just like people during the years of the derge were taught to all march in step, such leaders expect all believers to believe exactly the same in all matters, act the same, etc. They do not like giving people the freedom to make up their own minds on things. They forget that all believers have the Holy Spirit who will lead and guide them into truth. They also forget that God does things in a variety of ways.

Servant leaders give people the freedom to listen to the Holy Spirit and be different from others. Except for the major doctrines, they allow people to study God's Word for themselves and come up with their own views. And they trust the Holy Spirit to show people how they are to live out their faith in matters which are not clearly taught in God's Word. Servant leaders will seek to get people to desire to follow God with all of their hearts and bring joy to him with their lives. They will seek to get people to love people so much that they will do nothing that will hurt their spiritual growth or hinder their testimony or the spread of the Gospel. And they will seek to get people into the Word of God and show them how to apply it to situations that are different from the New Testament times. But once they have done this, they will graciously allow each believer to make up his or her own mind.

13. Leadership according to the principles of the world focuses upon growth in size. It does not focus

upon the growth of quality. So we boast about how large our country is, or our military, or our denomination, or our church building, or our church membership. But we are not concerned whether our members are mature believers, whether there is unity and peace, whether there is equality, etc. It is assumed that large churches are best and small churches are inferior. And in order to be large, there is competition between churches with the churches seeking to take members, especially the wealthy and educated members, from another church in order to be successful according to the world's standard of largeness and greatness.

Servant leaders, however, focus upon quality more than quantity. For them success is not the size of their church, the size of their building, or their fancy choirs with musical instruments. Rather, success is that church members are spiritually mature. They will stress not just reaching out to the lost, but helping each believer to become a mature man or woman of God. (See Eph. 4:11-12; 2 Cor. 11:2; Col. 1:28) Servant leaders are concerned that everything be done in a way that honors God. They will focus upon making each ministry of the church one which is of good quality up to the ability of the church.

14. Leadership according to the principles of the world focuses upon getting results rather than upon whether or not things are done in a Biblical way. "If it works, then it must be good" they believe. Therefore, if lying to the government and saying that we are going to do a major development work when we only want property for a church gets us the property, then it must be right. It is not important if we have to lie a little to get it. What matters is getting the property. "As long as our churches are filled with people, that is what is important. It does not matter if we take members away from other churches, or do not teach them, or if we allow them to worship in a way that we believe is unbiblical in order to keep the youth" they believe.

Servant leaders do all things with integrity. They want to do everything God's way, no matter whether or not the results bring immediate success or approval. They refuse to compromise in order to get something that is beneficial for the church. They trust God to overrule in situations to bring what is best for the church. Godly leaders will not make false promises to the government, or do things like bribing which will bring disrepute to them or to the church. They will not take advantage of other churches in order to gain members. They do everything in a way they know Jesus would be pleased with.

So which type of leader are you? Do you lead according to the philosophy of the world? Or are you a servant leader like Jesus wants?

Q. 34. a) Illustrate how world leaders usually lead according to the fourteen principles of the worldly leadership. b) Illustrate how many church leaders also lead according to the fourteen principles of the worldly leadership.

Q. 35. Prayerfully look through the following chart which compares the philosophy of the world with the thinking of servant leaders. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you which side of the chart most accurately resembles your style of leadership. This will help you to see if you lead like the world or like Jesus taught.

a) On a piece of paper, write numbers 1 through 14. For each number, write "like world" or "like Bible" to show which type of leadership best describes you b) Make two suggestions for each number of a way that you can lead more like a servant rather than like the world.

	WORLDLY LEADERSHIP	BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP
1	Limits leadership to a special group of people based upon external qualification	Leadership open to any spiritually qualified individual
2	Motive for leadership is because of benefits he	Motive for leadership is seeking to please God

	can get from ministry.	and help others grow.
3	Emphasizes that leaders are different than others creating a gap between leaders and members	Leaders view themselves as no better than any member and maintain a similar lifestyle as regular members.
4	Believe they and family are entitled to special treatment and better life style than the common person.	Do not seek personal benefit from leadership, willing to give up good life style in order to serve all people better
5	Focus on external titles to cause people to respect a leader	Focus on earning respect of people through godly life and effective ministry
6	Emphasizes position as the basis of leadership.	Emphasizes godly character and proven ministry ability as the basis of leadership
7	Influence people by their charismatic personality and emotional words	Influence people by their godly lives
8	A few leaders seek to control decisions from a central location	Empowers all believers to use their gifts, listen to God and make decisions on local level
9	Decisions are only made by leaders	Decisions made for the benefit everyone with input from all church members
10	Controls information so much is hidden from members; communicates commands or results of decisions only	Open communication with all members about decisions and reasons for decisions
11	Use authority (rewards or punishment) to force people to obey decisions of leaders	Use the example of their lives and the authority of God's Word by teaching to cause people to want to obey God
12	Force all believers to believe and act the same	Gives freedom to the Holy Spirit to work differently in each believer
13	Success in ministry is based upon size- number of members, size of building, etc.	Success in ministry viewed as quality of work and depth of spiritual maturity
14	Focus on results no matter how they get them, even if it means manipulating a situation or shading the truth	Focus on doing things God's way, with integrity, no matter what the results

How do we know if we are leading like the world or if we are leading like Jesus [taught] *wants us to*? As Jeremiah said, our hearts are wicked and often deceive us. (Jer. 17:9) It is sometimes difficult to know because the major difference is not in our actions, but in our motivation for leadership which only we can know. Perhaps in answering the following questions our motives for leading will be revealed.

Do I see my role as the leader or as the servant of God's people?

Do I serve the church or do I think that the church should serve me?

Do I expect my co-workers should do my bidding or is my goal to make them more effective?

Do I use my position to enhance my personal glory or personal gain?

Do I want my co-workers to show me respect by using the polite form of speech or calling me "evangelist" or another title?

Do I treat all people with the same type of respect I would want if I were in their place no matter what their sex, educational level, or economic level?

Am I willing to say I made a mistake or do I make excuses or seek to blame someone else for things which are my fault?

Do I give credit to others for what they have done or seek to take credit for their work?

- Do I seek the advice of others or do I give the impression that I know everything?
- Do others see me as a caring person or indifferent to their problems?
- Do I offer to help people rather than waiting for them to ask for help?
- Do people think that I only relate to them when I want something from them?

WOULD JESUS BE PLEASED WITH HOW I AM RELATING TO OTHERS AND MY ATTITUDE TOWARDS THEM?

Q. 36. a) Spend 10 minutes prayerfully going through these questions and evaluate yourself. If your answers to these questions reveal that you have been leading like the world and not like a servant, ask God's forgiveness. b) Make a list of ways that you can change so that in your relationship to others and your attitude towards leadership, you are more like a servant than a leader.

FOURTH DAY

WHAT IS BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP? (PART 3)

At the beginning of our second day's lesson, we asked ourselves the question "What is a leader?" We listed several definitions which different authors used for explaining what a leader is. How we answer that question depends upon how we understand leadership. If we understand leadership like the world, usually the definition focuses upon controlling and guiding people to do what the leader thinks should happen. But as we saw yesterday, there is a major difference between how believers understand leadership and the world understands leadership. Rather than focus on leading, the Bible always focuses upon a leader serving God's people.

FURTHER EXPLANATIONS OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP

What is a leader? Let us look again at the definitions about leadership which we saw previously in the second day's lesson. Each of these definitions explain a different aspect to Biblical leadership.

1. A leader is "one who directly (through having a position of authority over the person) or indirectly (through providing an example which others follow) influences one or more people to be or do something which by themselves they would not be or do." From this definition we can see three important truths:

a. Everyone is a leader. Some are formal leaders with a leadership position and have the responsibility to work to bring change in what people think and do. But most of us are informal leaders with others who are looking to us for guidance. What we think and do influences them. The major question we must all ask "Do my words and actions help others to become more like Jesus and follow him in purity and love? Or am I leading people away from what it means to follow Jesus?" Jesus warns us that if our actions cause others to stumble, we are responsible and will be judged. (Mt. 18:1-6)

Q. 37. a) List ways that you are influencing people to change so that they are growing into the image of Jesus. b) Explain ways that you might be influencing people wrongly so that they are not becoming what God wants them to be. What do you need to change so that you are a positive model for people to follow?

b. A formal leader is someone to whom God has given the responsibility in the church to influence how church members think and act. His job is not to keep the structure going as is. Unlike the world, godly leaders do not use force and threats to keep people growing and changing. Rather, they live a Christ-like **example**. They think and act differently from the world. Godly leaders live in purity and give their lives in sacrifice to God and others. They walk in humility. Christ-like leaders forgive others rather than fight for

their position and they seek to create peace. They give of their money generously for God's work. Faithful leaders are active in sharing their faith. They reach out to help those who are hurting.

Godly leaders also **teach** people what God desires of us. They use every opportunity possible to share God's Word and tell people how God asks them to be a unique, different people and that they are to be different in how they think and how they act. As Paul said, he taught the believers night and day. Over a two year period, he could say he had taught them all of the will of God. Therefore he is without blame before God. (Acts 20:26-31) Unless a leader is teaching people what God wants for them, the leaders is accountable for the wrong thinking and wrong actions of the people. But if leaders clearly teach the truth, then the people are accountable for their own lives.

Q. 38. a) List ways you are seeking to influence people to be more godly through your example. How could you live differently to make the example of your life more clear? b) Explain ways you are consistently teaching people all of the will of God for their lives. How could you be more active in doing this?

c. Effective leadership always changes how people think and act. The goal of the leader is to keep an organization like a church or denomination growing to a clearly defined objective. The tendency in leadership is to take the easy path of just keeping the existing ministries going in a church. So everything in the church remains the same from year to year. Or the leaders spend all of their time solving problems. They work to resolve the disagreements between members of the church. Or they work at solving the financial needs of the church. But this is not leadership. If elders or pastors are to be leaders, they must encourage people to grow. And growth always involves change. It involves changes in thinking and changes in action. So unless the elders are actively working to bring change in their church, they are not leading. When there is no change, most likely that church or that person is in the process of spiritually drying up and dying. A tree that does not grow usually is dying. Its roots are dead and soon the branches will be dead as well.

Q. 39. a) Think back over the past five years in your church. List five positive changes that you have seen in your church. Did the elders plan these changes or did they just happen? Explain your answer. b) List three negative changes that have taken place. Do you think the elders are aware of these negative changes? What are they doing to address these negative changes?

2. Another definition says that leadership is "the skill of deliberately influencing a group to move it towards long lasting beneficial goals that fulfill the group's real needs." From this definition we can see the following truths:

a. Leadership is a learned skill. Although there are people who are born with the natural ability to lead others, all people can learn how to lead better. It is a skill which they can learn.

b. Leaders are responsible to influence church members towards spiritual growth. Although all of us are leaders in a small way, when we are chosen to be leaders in the church, this means that God wants us to make a difference in the lives of people in the church. It is a deliberate choice that we make. We choose to use our lives to influence people in spiritual growth. We are acknowledging that God wants us to guide the church using our spiritual influence, our wisdom, and our experience to help the members of the church become what God wants them to become and do what God wants them to do.

c. Church leaders earn the trust of members and influence them through their lives and decisions.

Church leadership does not seek to force others to change or obey the will of the leader. A godly leader does not use force, or bribes, or fear as a basis to cause others to do what he wants. Rather, he seeks to influence the church members to change and obey God by developing trust between the leader and the church members. Because of this trust and respect, people follow the example of the lives of the church leaders and listen to their advice on how to grow and obey God's will.

d. Leaders are responsible for a clearly defined group who look to the leader for guidance and work together to fulfill the purposes of the church. A godly leader is spiritually responsible for a specific group of people who know each other and are committed to encourage and work with each other—whether in the home, a local church, or a group of churches. For there to be effective leadership, all of those who are under the spiritual authority of a leader must belong to the group. They must know each other and understand the purposes of the group. Each person must understand that they are responsible to work together with others in the group to fulfill the purposes of the group. This means that those who only come to the church to worship on Sunday but do not work with others to fulfill the purposes of the church are not part of the group and therefore cannot be led. One of the key things which church leaders must do is to get all those who attend the church to become involved in a "group," or participate in ministries in the church. They join together with other church members to grow together and to fulfill what God wants from that specific church. They know the leaders and the leaders know them and all work together to fulfill God's will in the church.

e. Godly leaders have a clear understanding of what to do to help people grow as followers of Christ. Leadership moves people towards something. As one of the other definitions of a leader says "spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda for their lives and for the church." There must be goals toward which the leader is seeking to influence people. If leaders do not have a clear understanding of where God is leading the church to grow and a ministry that he wants that church to fulfill, then they are not really leading. And so to be a godly leader in a church means that we must understand what God is seeking to accomplish in our church. We must have a vision of what God wants each member of the church to become as a disciple of Christ. And we must have a clear vision of what God wants each church member to do in order to fulfill God's desire for the church. This vision must not only be understood by the leader, but he must communicate that vision to the church. Then together the leader and the church members must work on ways which turn that vision into a reality in the church. No one is leading if there are only good ideas of what God wants from us. Nor is it enough for the leaders to have good ideas but not change. Leaders are responsible before God to understand and clarify the will of God for the group. They must make sure that the church members all understand and commit themselves to following God's leading for the church. And they must be working together to make the vision God has for the church become a reality.

f. Godly leaders make plans which bring long term spiritual growth rather than focus on things which bring little change to God's kingdom. We are living in a fast changing world. Every month there are new songs. Different styles of worship are popular for a little time and then change. But godly leadership does not focus on these things which change quickly. Rather it emphasizes the things which bring long term spiritual growth. Often new leaders treat all that has been done before by other leaders as wrong or unimportant. They make radical changes. "Unless they see us doing something very different, they will not think that we are leading" is often their fear. But godly leadership build on what God has been doing and seeks ways to keep people growing. Godly leadership looks for permanent changes in how people think and live. As still another definition of leadership expresses this idea "spiritual leadership is the process of enabling God's people to become all that they can become and do all that they can do through the grace of God."

Q. 40. a) Which of the parts of this definition of leadership do you think most elders are aware of and fulfill well? b) Which do you think they do not understand or do not fulfill well? c) Why do they not fulfill this definition of leadership? d) What would change in church leadership if this definition was put in practice and more elders were true godly leaders over their churches?

3. Still another definition of leadership is "A Biblical leader is one who uses his spiritual gifts to coordinate, enhance, and focus the spiritual gifts of others toward a common vision of the kingdom of God." From this definition we can learn the following:

a. Basic to this definition is the understanding that the real leader of the church is Jesus, not the elders or the pastor. Jesus is the head of the church. (See Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18) The elders are not the head of the church. As the head of the church, Jesus gives the commands to the people of God. Although often he gives directions through the existing elders, he has the right to speak directly and guide each member of the church. So leaders should not be protective of their leadership. They should have the same attitude as Moses who refused to reprimand those who did not attend the meeting but still spoke prophetically. (Num. 11:24-30) Leaders should encourage their members to listen to Jesus their head rather than only listen to human leaders. And godly leaders must be willing to listen to what Jesus, their head, is saying through any member of the church.

The Holy Spirit gives different spiritual gifts to each member of the church. Paul says that he gives those spiritual gifts "as he wills." (1 Cor. 12:11) So leadership in the church is not limited to certain individuals chosen by the members of the church. God the Holy Spirit is always gifting each new member of the church. The members might choose some to be the formal leaders (elders, pastor, or evangelist) of the church. Others will remain informal leaders. But all should know that the Holy Spirit has appointed them and gifted them. (Acts 20:28) This means that none of the leaders should become proud in their position of leadership. And others should not struggle to be chosen as the leader or disappointed if they are not chosen. And it means that leaders should not struggle to stay in leadership. If we really believe that God is the one who gifts, chooses, and appoints leaders, then we must trust the Holy Spirit to put into formal leadership those whom God wants for that ministry.

b. Biblical leadership recognizes that God has designed the church much like a body. (1 Cor. 12:7-27) Although the body is one, it has many different members. Each part of the body has an important role to play. Even a small finger is important. For instance, without a thumb it is impossible to hold a plow and difficult to work on a computer. To be healthy, every part of the body must be doing what it was created to do. In the same way, each believer is an important of Christ's body. The Holy Spirit has given a spiritual gift to each member of the church. The purpose of that spiritual gift is to fulfill an important function or ministry in the church. Godly leaders know that for their church to be healthy, every member of the church must know the gift he or she has received from the Holy Spirit. And each member must be using their gift in a way that benefits the church. So a major role of the leader is to help each person know their gift and then work so that each person in the church is using their spiritual gift in a coordinated way with others. Like a coach of a football team, godly leaders do not just work on strengthening the skill of each individual player on the team. Rather, the coach teaches them how to work together to win the game. In the same way, the Biblical leader must encourage the church members to work together so that they are fulfilling all of the roles of the church as God has designed it. The members work together so that everyone is actively witnessing, people are being taught, the needs of hurting people are being met, etc.

Q. 41. Read Eph. 4:11-16. a) How does this passage describe the role of the leaders (apostles, prophets,

evangelists, teachers/pastors)? b) Describe the goal of the ministry of the leaders. What is to be the impact of their leadership? What will happen to the ordinary members of the church? c) How well are your church leaders doing in getting people in your church active and working together so that they are unified and spiritually mature?

c. Biblical leaders help the individual members of the church focus upon a common vision. Usually these leaders have a clearer idea of what God wants in the church. They know the Word of God more deeply than other members. They take more time praying, asking God to reveal his specific will for the church. They discuss together how the church can more effectively minister in their community and help believers grow. Knowing that the Holy Spirit talks not only to them but to all members of the church, they involve the church community in seeking to understand how to build the kingdom of God. And then the leaders make a plan together with the church members and communicate that plan to everyone so that people will use their various gifts toward the goal of bringing growth and change.

Q. 42. a) Do you think that the leaders of your church have a clear understanding or a clear vision of what God wants the church to become? If not, why not? b) What steps would you take if you were an elder to develop a unified understanding by all church members of how we are to grow to become the spiritually mature church Paul described in Eph. 4:11-16?

4. A final definition of Biblical leadership is "being the greatest servant, rendering the most selfless, unwearied service to the kingdom of God." This definition looks at the heart of a leader. No matter how gifted a leader is in getting people to follow a vision, unless all he does comes from a heart of a "servant" than it is not Biblical. A servant leader has turned his whole life over to the service of God, his Master. He is not concerned about what happens to him, only with how he can please his God. And a servant leader knows that he pleases his God best when he selflessly gives of himself to serve God's people. He puts his needs and his conveniences aside so that God's kingdom will grow as people come to faith in Jesus Christ. And he works day and night so that God's children grow so that they honor his God in how they think and how they live. No matter what it takes, he tirelessly works to spread God's kingdom.

Q. 43. Review this week's teaching on what it means to be a Biblical leader. a) Do you think most elders understand what leadership involves in the church? Explain your answer. b) Do most elders follow the world's example or Jesus' teaching about leadership? Explain your answer. c) What do you think the key differences in church leadership and the world's leadership consist of? d) What changes would you anticipate in your church if the elders of your church would lead according to the definitions of Biblical leadership explained in this lesson? e) What resistance to this type of leadership do you anticipate from other leaders or from the members of the church? How would you respond to that resistance to bring about a more Biblical understanding of leadership?

No church is able to develop and grow to be what God wants it to be without the guidance of godly leadership. If the leaders are not godly, then they will lead the church in ways that are not Biblical and therefore do not have God's blessing. Many churches today suffer from leaders who are not godly in character, who seek to lead in the world's ways.

But other churches suffer from church leaders who do not lead. If the leaders do not lead at all but simply hold the position of leadership, they too bring harm to the church. There is no such thing as neutral leadership. Either we are helping the church grow to become like Christ or we are being used by Satan to guide the church away from God's will. And one way that leaders unknowingly guide the church away from

God's blessing is by not leading as God tells them to lead. All churches, if left alone without clear guidance and influence from leaders, will begin to deteriorate. The members will lose their sense of oneness as a church. They will no longer grow in spiritual depth. The people will not do the things which God wants them to do. Church members will become attendees rather than participants. And soon the members will begin to fight each other rather than function as part of the family of God. People will leave the church seeking another church of which they can feel a part. They will look for a church where God is working through the leaders to help people grow and do exciting things. If we aren't being led by godly leaders who show us how to be godly, if the leaders aren't seeking the will of God and leading us to grow in our knowledge of God and what we are to do to have God work through us, then it won't be long until we fall apart as a church.

May God grant us in our generation godly, wise leaders who know the will of God and lead others into that will. Why not pray daily that God will raise up leaders in our days whom he can use to guide his church to fulfill our calling as the Body of Christ?

WEEKLY MEETING

DISCUSSION

a. 1) What is the biggest challenge we face in our churches today? Why do you think it is the **greatest** challenge for the church? 2) Make a list of problems that your local church and denomination have. In what way is poor leadership in your church at the root of many of these problems? What changes need to happen for there to be more godly leaders in your church? 3) What are the main reasons there seems to always be a crisis in leadership in your church?

b. Review the different definitions given on leadership in the second day's lesson. 1) Which of these definitions, or which part of these definitions do you think best illustrate how people in Ethiopia understand leadership? 2) Which of these definitions best illustrate how you think leadership should be in the church? 3) What can we learn about church leadership from these definitions?

c. Read Lk. 22:24-30 and Jn. 13:1-17. 1) What is the major difference between Jesus' attitude towards leadership and how the world understands leadership? 2) Look at the chart comparing worldly leadership and servant leadership. Discuss each of the fourteen points. a) Do your church leaders tend to follow the way of the world or the way of servant leadership? b) What would change if they led as servant leaders? c) Discuss ways your church can change how leaders view leadership to be like Jesus wanted. 3) What resistance to this type of leadership do you anticipate from other leaders or from the members of the church? How would you respond to that resistance to bring about a more Biblical understanding of leadership?

LESSON TWO

FIRST DAY

GODLY CHARACTER, THE FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP

One day the leaders of a town in America decided to build a beautiful building. They wanted to show visitors that their town was special. So they chose a place on a hill at the edge of town. They hired a contractor and built an expensive building with marble floors, fancy windows, attractive painting, etc. When it was done, all of the people of the town were proud of their building. The rich merchants rushed to rent space in the building for their offices. For a year, everyone was happy. Visitors commented on how beautiful the building was. But one day a small crack appeared on the top floor of the building. No one paid it much attention. The painter was called and he repaired the crack. But the next year people noticed that the crack came back, and now some of the windows and the doors did not open and shut properly. Carpenters were called in to fix the problem. By the third year, the cracks in the building were large, and most of the doors and windows would not open. Finally, on the fourth year, the building was too dangerous to use, and the government closed the building and declared that it had to be destroyed. People wondered why this beautiful building fell apart so quickly. So they called an expert who dug deep down into the ground, past the foundation of the building. He found that deep underneath the foundation were piles of garbage. In the past, the people of the town used to take their garbage to this place and dump it. But the town leaders had made them stop and throw their trash somewhere else. The town covered the garbage with dirt and forgot about it. As the garbage was rotting, the ground started sinking, the foundation of the building cracked and eventually the building had to be destroyed.

The same is true in leadership. If there is a lack of spiritual maturity and godliness hidden in our lives, if there is no humility or a servant-like spirit, then no matter how beautiful the externals of education, riches, or natural ability, eventually cracks and then major problems will develop in the person's leadership. What determines the quality of leadership is not mainly the skills that a person has. It is not his education, or his ability to speak well, or plan well, or gain a lot of respect and riches for the church. The foundation upon which leadership is built is the character of a person. Many leaders seem to have all of the external qualifications of leadership. Like King Saul they start well, but it is not long before problems arise. Their lack of spiritual character comes out and much is destroyed. The key to good leadership starts in the character of a person. It is his heart. As God told Samuel when he went to anoint David who would become the greatest king of the nation of Israel *"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."* (1 Sam. 16:7)

Q. 1. a) List some examples of how you have seen church leaders start well, but because of lack of godly character, they end up bringing problems into the church. b) List some examples of how you have seen people demonstrate themselves to be leaders because of their godly character.

Like the house built upon garbage, too often our leaders have not developed the foundation of godly characters which makes a leader great in God's eyes. Any time our churches struggle with tribalism, injustice, false teachings, struggles for leadership positions- these all indicate that the leaders still have the "garbage" of the world underneath their leadership causing problems. If we want to produce the type of leaders that the church needs, we must start by asking "What characteristics make a great leader?"

GODLY LEADERSHIP ALWAYS STARTS WITH GODLY CHARACTER

God is more concerned with what happens in our hearts than with our actions. It is often easy to get believers to change their actions like to get them to stop drinking or to stop committing adultery, or to get leaders to delegate or manage their time efficiently. But it is much more difficult to get believers to love God and others with all their hearts, or to be gracious and joyous and compassionate. It is easy to sing songs of praise to God, shouting out loudly that he is Lord. But it is much more difficult to live with Jesus as Lord of our lives when others make fun of us, or when our friends or fellow elders do not follow God. It is difficult, but we must allow Jesus to establish the goals of our life.

Godly leadership starts with the heart. And the condition of a person's heart is evidenced in their character. As we saw last week, David's greatness in leadership was because of his "integrity." If you and I want to be leaders like David who lead with integrity, we must start by working on our character to make sure that our hearts are as God wants them to be.

If God sees our hearts and our character as the most important part of us, then it is important for us to focus our energy to make our hearts and character like God wants. Because godly leadership is based upon our character in which things like integrity, humility, faithfulness, courage, justice, patience, hard work, love for others, etc. are evident, we must work hard to develop these traits as part of our character. These are important and cause people to respect and trust us. If we want to be godly leaders whom people will follow, we must first become the leaders of godly character.

Q. 2. a) Why are peoples' respect and trust of a leader important? b) What do you think a leader must do to earn the respect and trust of the people?

No matter how much education he has, if a leader does not have a godly character, he will not be successful in leadership for very long. He will use threats or rewards to get people to do things he wants. He won't listen to others but will try to force his views on them. As a result the people will not listen to him. Or the leader will not trust others and will not delegate responsibilities to them. He will not be able to discipline himself enough to control his time or do the work which should be a priority. Therefore he will not get the work done as an effective leader.

We are foolish if we think that we can solve the leadership problems in the church by helping people be more effective in leadership without addressing their character. Character is the foundation for us to be successful leaders. Conditions in our churches and country will change for the better only when the leaders of our nation or the leaders in our church have the type of character that creates respect and trust. Only when leaders serve their people rather than themselves will things begin to change.

Q. 3. a) If someone who knows you well would honestly describe you to another person, what characteristics do you think he would focus on? b) If you died and people stood up at your funeral to testify about your life, what would you like 1) your wife, 2) your children, 3) church members, 4) people where you work, and 5) people in your community to share about your character and life? c) If you stood before Jesus for judgment today, what would you like him to say about your character?

Very few of us think about our character. We live from day to day doing the things we want to do. As leaders we are busy in the church serving God. But rarely do we really stop and evaluate ourselves to see how we are growing in godly character. Paul reminds us in Rom. 12:3 and 2 Cor. 13:5 to examine ourselves and evaluate ourselves. Perhaps the best way to do this is to think about all areas of our lives and think

through how we would like others to think about us. And as followers of Jesus, we should think through whether Jesus would be pleased with our character in these areas of our lives. If we are honest, all of us would realize that we fall far short from what Jesus and even what we ourselves would like to see in our lives. So how do we develop godly character?

HOW TO DEVELOP GODLY CHARACTER.

1. What is character? The inner hidden qualities which cause a person to act in a certain way is their character. Included in a person's character are traits like honesty or seeking to trick people, helping others rather than helping self, doing as little work as possible or working very hard, etc. Character includes the following:

a. All people consist of many different characteristics which when combined form their personality. When we try to describe what a person is like, we list their characteristics. So we say "so and so" is kind or cruel; generous or stingy; selfless or selfish; courageous or fearful; trustworthy or untrustworthy, etc. This does not mean that a person is always one or the other. Rather, our character is what we normally are. It is these character traits that cause people to act in a habitual way in situations. When we see a person's usually respond in a certain way, we generalize these into character traits like loving or cruel, patient or angry. Our personality is made up of many good and bad character traits. So someone can be loving, fearful, generous, and untrustworthy. Or they can be cruel, selfish, and honest. Our personalities, therefore, consist of good and bad character traits. As believers, we are to work with the Holy Spirit to get rid of our bad characteristics and grow in our good characteristics.

Q. 4. Read Col. 3:1-17; Eph. 4:20-32; and Gal. 5:16-26. a) Make a list of good character traits that we are to have as believers. b) Make a list of bad character traits we are not to have as believers. c) Look at your own life. Which good character traits do you normally display? What are your bad character traits? d) Since you accepted Christ, how have your character traits changed? e) What can you do to develop more good character traits?

b. Our character forms the basis of how we act. If we frequently give to people who have needs, we are described as having the character of generosity. If we often reach out and help someone who is suffering, it is because we have the character of love and compassion. If we see leadership as a way to gain status or financial benefits, it shows our selfish character. Every action we do comes from our character. Jesus expressed this truth when he said that what is in our hearts determine who we are. (Mt. 15:16-20)

We cannot see the character of a person. Rather we see their actions which flow out of their character. So we don't see a person's love, but we see the actions that come out of their loving heart. We cannot see the person's character of suspicion. Rather we see a person questioning the motives of others and hear them gossip about others, assuming that they are doing something wrong. This means that if we are going to change how we act, how we lead, or our relationship to others, we must work on changing our character, not primarily our actions.

Paul says that when we believe on Jesus, we are a new creation. (2 Cor. 5:17) This means that God works in us to change our character so that we will act in a different way. Often church leaders try to change the actions of a person without changing their character. Usually this fails or is only partially successful. We tell people to tithe. But we do not address the reason they do not tithe, which may be their stinginess or their lack of trust in God to meet their needs. If we want people to tithe, we must help them

grow in their dependence upon God and their generosity. Then tithing will naturally result. Or we tell people to stop fighting each other. But if we do not change the root of the problem which is selfishness, tribalism, lack of love, etc. then any solution to change their behavior is temporary. Without changing the heart, no external solution will work long term.

Q. 5. a) Illustrate how you have seen church leaders try to change church members' actions without changing the character that causes the actions. b) How successful were they to bring lasting change? c) Illustrate how you have seen a change of character automatically bring a change of actions.

c. We usually do not think about our character which leads to our actions because our character usually causes us to act in an unconscious way in different situations. These unconscious actions are our habits. For instance, when we are in school and have the chance to cheat, we do not think "I want to be an honest person. So I will not copy the answers." Rather, if we have developed the character of being honest, we automatically resist the temptation and refuse to cheat. But if we have not developed the character of honesty, then when we are tempted to cheat, and if it is to our advantage, we will cheat.

Most of our actions are habits which we have learned over time. And habits are things we do without thinking. If our habits are bad, then we will automatically respond wrongly. (e.g. If we have a habit of gossiping about others, every time we are with people we will gossip without realizing we are doing it.) But if our habits are godly, then we will automatically respond in a godly way. (e.g. If we habitually tell the truth, we will normally accurately fill our reports even when it embarrasses us.) If we want to change and grow, we must learn to focus upon our character, which is the basis for why we act in certain ways. Then with the power of the Holy Spirit we can change our character. And we can overcome bad habits and replace them with godly character and godly habits

Q. 6. Take an honest look at your character. a) What are some positive traits that others like about you? Explain how these characteristics cause you to act in a godly way towards others? b) What are some negative things in your character which you know God wants you to change? How do these characteristics cause you to act in a negative way?

d. We know what character traits are important to us by thinking through what we would like people to testify about us to others or at our funeral if they were to speak truthfully. For instance, we would want our wives, who know us well, to say that we were a loving husband. We would like our children to say that we were a caring father. We would want church members to share how they were impressed by our godliness, our prayer life and knowledge of God and His Word. We might want to have people at work testify how we were always dependable, faithful to the work, doing it well with all of our abilities. We would like people in the community to share how they were impressed by our concern for them, our wisdom when people had problems, etc. But ultimately, we want to please God who will be our judge. (1 Cor. 3:10-15) Don't we want him to testify that we were holy, faithful, obedient, etc.?

All of these testimonies from people deal with our "ideal" character, things we wish we were but often aren't. None of these positive character traits come naturally. Rather, we must work on them to grow to become the type of person that pleases God and which people respect. If we want to die without regrets, we must work hard at developing godly character traits which define a truly successful life.

Q. 7. a) Review Q. 3 again. What characteristics would you want people to describe about you? Add to your list there. b) Ask a close friend you trust to tell the truth how they would describe your character; both the

good and the bad things. c) Ask the Holy Spirit to also reveal your character traits to you and then ask the Holy Spirit to help you to change to be more Christ-like.

2. We change our character when we change our habits. Our personality is the combination of all our character traits. And each character trait is made up of our habitual ways of thinking and acting or patterns of behavior which we do without thinking. So for us to change our character traits, we must work on changing the way we habitually think and act.

Many of our habits we learned as a small child. For instance, as a small child, we were told not to shake someone's hand with our left hand. "That is wrong because it is our dirty hand. Always shake with the right hand" we are told by our parents. Initially, before the habit forms, we have to think about it. So when we shake hands with a visitor, we have to think "Don't shake with the left hand. It is wrong." So we make the conscious decision to give greetings with our right hand. But offering our right hand soon becomes a habit. We no longer think about how to shake hands or even why we shake hands with our right hand. We automatically do it.

From this simple illustration we see that for something to become a habit three things must be involved:

a. Normally we are taught that something is good or bad, right or wrong. As we are growing up, our parents, teachers, the pastor, and friends teach us thousands of things which cause us to think that something is good or bad. For example, our culture says that it is good to be light skinned and bad to be dark skinned. Our culture teaches us that it is alright for us to take advantage of a stranger in the market by overstating the price of our goods. If they pay too much, it is their fault. In our country those who are older or those in authority always sit in the best seats and should be treated as special. Our culture teaches us to be suspicious of those in authority, especially if they are from a different tribe.

If we want to become more like Christ, we have to unlearn things which our culture has taught us is good but is not right in the eyes of God. (See Eph. 4:17-18) And we must learn new ways of acting that are Biblical. We are told in Romans 12:1-2 that it is through the renewing of our minds that we will no longer be conformed to the world. In other words, it is by changing how we think that we can begin to change how we act.

b. There must be the desire to change. For something to change from a head knowledge into a habit, the individual must agree to do something. There are many students who are taught in school that boiling drinking water is necessary to maintain good health. But they don't boil drinking water at home. Why? They don't have the desire to change their lives since doing so is costly and difficult to do. Therefore, they don't ever form the habit of boiling drinking water. In the same way, there are many leaders who know that the Bible teaches to treat everyone equally. But to do that will cause their family and friends to get angry because they expect special favors from the leaders. The leaders do not lead with impartiality because they choose not to change. Usually the battle to change our character so that it is godly takes place in our wills. Until we determine to do something because we know it is right and what God wants us to do it, no matter how inconvenient, we will not change our habits. And without changing our habits, we cannot change our character. And if we do not change our character, then we cannot change how we lead.

c. There must be a change in behavior. For an action to become a habit and become part of our character, we must act on what we know and desire to do. If we are to form the habit of starting each day meeting with God in prayer and listening to God speak through the Bible, it is not enough to hear in a sermon that it is good. It is not enough to want to pray and study God's Word. We must begin to do it. And

when we repeatedly do an action, it becomes a habit. Once it is a part of our routine, then we no longer have to struggle forcing ourselves to do it.

Q. 8. a) Describe a habit you have which your culture says is good but which God says is wrong. b) Describe a habit which your culture says is good and which the Bible supports. c) Why is it important as followers of Christ to evaluate our culture and habits to determine what God approves of and what he disapproves of?

3. How we change our habits will lead to a change of character. If we are going to be the type of people God wants us to be, and if we are going to be the type of leaders who will make a difference for good in our churches, we must learn to change our habits and our character. How do we do this?

a. We start to modify our habits when our understanding changes about something. The disciples had to alter their understanding about leadership before they could change their character so that they would be the type of leaders Jesus wanted in his kingdom.

Q. 9. Read Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 4:8, Eph. 4:22-24, Col. 3:1-2, 2 Tim. 2:15. a) What do these verse tell us about the need to change the way we think so that we will change the way we act? b) What role does the Word of God have in changing the way we think?

There are two major sources for where we get our understanding of what is good or bad. First, there is our culture in which we grew up. We get our understanding about life from our parents and friends, or from the school which we attended. Second, in the Bible God tells us what is right and what is wrong.

Before we are saved, all we know is the understanding we received from our culture. So we develop ways of thinking and ways of acting, habits and character of which the world approves. (e.g. Men plow and women cook.) After we are saved, we must go through the difficult task of changing how we think and act. As a follower of Jesus, we are to be committed to changing so that we resemble Jesus Christ. The Bible is primarily written to help us change how we think which impacts how we act. That is why Paul told Timothy that if he wanted to be a leader who was approved by God, he had to study God's Word. That is the only way that Timothy would change so that he thought and acted as God wanted. Otherwise, he would always think and act like the world, and would never be a worthy workman for God.

Q. 10. a) Make a list of how things differ between what the world teaches is acceptable and what God's Word teaches is acceptable. (e.g. view of women, understanding of work, view about potters or dark skinned people, purpose of education, understanding of leadership) b) Which of these do you normally or habitually do and is part of your character? c) How has your view on these actions changed since you became a follower of Jesus?

b. We must desire and determine to change what our culture teaches is right to align our lives to what God's Word says is right. We must make a choice. Jesus said no one can serve two masters. (Mt. 6:24) We cannot follow both the thinking of the world which formed our initial habits and character and claim to follow Jesus. Either we listen to the world or we listen to God. Occasionally someone will say "I know that is what the Bible says. But that is not how we do it in our culture." Such a statement means that we refuse to change and follow what is right.

If we are going to change our habitual thoughts and actions to honor God, then we must make the difficult decision to act differently. Every day when a similar situation arises, we make the same decision

to follow Christ's way. Paul calls this decision to reject the thinking of the world "putting off" the world and "putting on" Christ. (Eph. 4:22-25) It is like the decision we make to change clothes before we go to the town. We first have to take off the old clothes we use to plow or work in. And we have to choose from the clothes we have and pick one to wear to town. Choosing to obey Jesus and changing our habits is the only way to develop a new character.

Most times when we sin, it is not because we do not know what is right, but because we do not determine to do what is right. Satan uses whatever he can to keep us in our old habits and keep us from choosing to change. So although we know we should be leaders who serve the needs of others, because our culture has taught us that a leader is always the boss and because Satan does not want us to follow Jesus' example of being a servant, he gets us to make excuses so that we stay the same. "I know that this is not right, but just this one time I will do what my family wants even if it is based upon favoritism and tribalism. Next time I will change." Satan encourages us to think. Or we begin to reason "Everyone is doing it, even other leaders. Therefore it can't be wrong." So we keep reinforcing our ungodly habits and character by still doing what the world wants.

For a habit and then a character to change, there must be a difficult decision to act in a different way from how other people act or how we used to act. The Bible teaches that we cannot make this decision ourselves. In our flesh, we are powerless to change in ways that really matter. But as followers of Jesus, God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us change. The Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and shows us where we are not living in a way that God wants. He then causes our hearts to be disturbed by our sinful actions. And then he gives us the power to make the decision which will help us act differently and develop habits that honor him. Then we will have a character that God can use greatly in leading others. In Phil. 2:12-13 Paul describes this joint process of our deciding to change and God helping us to change like this; "*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*"

c. We must change what we are doing. We can never develop a new habit or a new character by knowing it is right or by determining to change. Rather, we must act based upon what we know is right. And as we begin to repeatedly act based upon the truth in God's Word, slowly we develop a new habit and a new character. Then we become the type of leader that honors God and brings a change in our world and church. (e.g. We become people of prayer by meeting with God in prayer every morning. At first it is hard, but then through repeated action it becomes our habit which makes us people of prayer.)

The Bible says our relationship with God is based upon "sowing" and "reaping." (Jms. 6:7-10) By sowing, we mean as humans we do something. Reaping is the results that our actions bring into our lives. God has given us the right to sow, to make choices and determine our actions. But God determines what the results of those actions will be in our lives, how we will reap. (e.g. We can "sow" by seeking sexual pleasure and committing sexual sin with someone. The "reaping" is when we get AIDS.) There is a proverb in English which says "*Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, and reap a character. Sow a character, and reap a destiny.*" This proverb teaches that what we think leads to an action. (e.g. Sow the thought: "I need money to pay my house rent. It does not matter how I get it." Reap the action: "I will take money from the offering." Sow the action: "When in need, I take money from the offering in church." Reap the habit: "I begin to take a few dollars, then more, and more. No longer am I worried that I am stealing from God and others." Sow the habit: often taking money from church that does not belong to us. Reap the character: We are not dependable or trustworthy. In money matters, in our word, in our leadership, we will choose things which benefit us even though we know they are not right. Sow the character: being a thief and lack of trustworthiness. Reap a destiny: Eventually it will be found out,

we will lose our place of leadership, people will never trust us again, and God will judge us.)

Summary: All believers have both Biblical and non-Biblical habits. Many of the things we believe and do without thinking find their source in what our culture told us we should do. But some of these go against what the Bible teaches. This truth is especially seen in habits which relate to how we lead. Because our culture has taught us to understand leadership in a certain way, many of our ideas about leadership and habitual actions which we do in leadership which are not Biblical. We are like Jesus' disciples who wanted to lead from a selfish position of power. But Jesus said that godly leadership required a different way of thinking (i.e. serving and not power over.) This will then lead to different types of behavior (e.g. like Jesus washing the feet of the disciples in humility). Once we have determined to be a servant of God's people, we then must consciously make choices to act in ways which are in line with being a servant leader (e.g. helping move the benches in the church). Over time as we consciously make choices to graciously serve in this way, it becomes a habit and we begin to act like a servant leader without thinking. It becomes part of our character and our personality.

We have seen that leadership is about character. All of the great men and women of the Bible were known as great leaders because they had developed a character that was honorable. People followed them because they trusted them and respected their character. But no one is born that way. We all have to make choices to change our character-- to become honorable, fair, honest, respect others, live to serve others, do things with quality to the best of our ability, grow spiritually, etc. Until we make these changes and until we align our character to what God desires, our leadership will always be like the world's, which brings destruction.

Q. 11. Look at your answers to question 6. a) If there are things that you are doing because your culture says it is acceptable but you know that is not what God wants, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the will to change. b) Then list specific ways that you will act different this next week and month until your habits and character changes.

SECOND DAY

HOW TO DEVELOP THE GODLY CHARACTER NEEDED FOR LEADERSHIP

A famous church preacher, having listed all of the problems facing the church concluded by saying "I have found the source of the problem. It is me." It is easy for us to blame others for the problems we are facing in our churches. We blame other leaders, or we blame our lack of finances, or we blame tribalism. But as long as we are blaming something or someone else, things will never change. This church leader understood that change in our lives, in our families, in our churches and in our nations always starts by acknowledging that the problem starts with us. Division in the church starts with my pride or my favoritism. Lack of tithing in the church always starts with me not giving to God as I should. If people do not trust my leadership, it is because I have not shown myself to be trustworthy. Satan always tries to get us to blame others for our problems so that we do not look into our own hearts, see the sin that is there, and change our actions and character.

SUCCESS IN LEADERSHIP IS BASED MORE IN A PERSON'S CHARACTER THAN SKILL OF LEADERSHIP

Secular scholars are not only asking the question "What is leadership?" But they are also asking the question "What makes one person a successful leader, but another person does not become a leader?" In their study, secular people have noticed several interesting things.

First, some people are born with the tendency to be leaders. Even as little children play together, often one child will soon be organizing and leading the rest of the children into doing something. So it would seem that much of leadership is a natural ability which God gives certain people, something inside of them which others do not have.

Second, education by itself does not make a person a leader. Good education or proper training in leadership can provide a person with some of the skills of leadership. But just being educated does not turn a person into a leader. Many uneducated people are able to influence people in a great way. And some highly educated people cannot lead well. Some of the most successful business men in the world today dropped out of college to do what they wanted to do. And studies of university graduates with the best grades have shown that usually they are not the most successful ones in leadership. So education alone is not the answer to providing successful leaders for the church.

Third, the greatest leaders are not the best because they are skilled at leadership, but because they have the type of character that causes others to respect them, listen to them, and follow them. When church members know that a leader is genuinely concerned about them, and that they have integrity and honesty they will follow that person. When they see a leader's love for God and for people, and when the people understand the vision for bringing glory to God in evangelism or other ministries, then the people willingly follow that kind of leader.

Success in leadership starts with success in our personal lives, in our character. If as leaders we want people to love God more, then we must love God more. If we yearn for people to have Biblical marriages, then we must have a model marriage where we love our children and wife as God wants us to. If we desire our children to be godly, we must be godly in how we relate to God, to them, to others, etc. If we want to be trusted and given greater leadership roles, then we must demonstrate that we are trustworthy in what we are doing now. If we desire to be trusted by others and known as an individual who always keeps our promises, we must start by keeping all of the promises we make to ourselves (e.g. "I will pray for 20 minutes every day and read the Bible for 15 minutes") and others. (e.g. "I will pray for you. I will meet you at the church tomorrow at 9 AM and then be there as we promised.) Our leadership flows out of our character. And our character is shown by our habits which reinforce what we want to be.

BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP IS PRIMARILY BASED UPON GODLY CHARACTER

Q. 12. Read 1 Tim. 3:1-7. a) List the criteria for elders which reflect character. b) List the criteria which demonstrate their need for skill in leadership. c) What can we learn from this comparison about what God sees as the most important in leadership? d) List 10 of the greatest leaders found in the Bible. What made each of those leaders great?

God is not concerned whether or not we are natural leaders. He often uses the natural ability in leaders for his glory, but it is never a pre-requisite for leaders. In fact, often God prefers to use those whom we might not consider naturally gifted. As Paul said, when God works this way, it becomes clear to all that the reason the leader is successful is because of the power of God and not the ability of the person. (1 Cor. 1:26-31) And God does not focus upon skills of leadership, things like time management or delegation, or leading meetings, or the ability to have a clear vision statement. These skills are good, but they are not the foundation of leadership. Rather, God focuses upon godly character as the basis for leadership. That is why Paul's list of criteria for leadership in 1 Timothy 3 focuses on character. Paul mentions being above reproach, self-controlled, hospitable, gentle, not loving money, good reputation,

etc. Great men of the Bible like Noah, Abraham, David, Isaiah, Peter, and Paul, are heroes because of their characters, not because of their skills in leadership.

So if we are to be God's type of leaders, we must start by changing our character into what makes a person great in God's eyes. As we focus upon becoming godly men and women of faith and obedience, love and purity, and serving others, then automatically people will look to us for guidance. We will be able to serve them by helping them grow in their spiritual lives. And we will lead God's people in the way that God desires. And if we have leadership positions outside of the church; in our homes, at work, or even in the government; through our godly characters we will influence others and our nation far beyond our expectations.

The spiritual authority flowing out of our character needed to lead God's people does not come easily. It takes much commitment and long hours of searching God's Word and our hearts. It takes many tears as we weep over our sinfulness and weaknesses. We must learn to so hate sin that we examine our hearts for even the hidden sins and confess them. It takes long hours of prayer as we plead with God to change us. It demands that we totally surrender our lives to God to be used in any way he wants. We must get rid of the self-centered idols of the love of money, or status, or power, or popularity, or convenience. We must embrace the way of the cross- dying to ourselves and giving our lives to others even if it brings personal pain. Above all, it means that we seek great things for God, but never for ourselves.

Q. 13. Spend time in prayer asking God to prepare your heart to become the type of person through whom God can gain glory and build others up in their faith.

Q. 14. a) Think about the Christian who has impressed you the most. What was it about that person impressed you? b) Read 1 Tim. 3:1-7. What requirements does Paul give about someone being chosen as an elder? Why do you think he gave these requirements? c) Make a list of characteristics which evidence a mature believer. d) Why are these characteristics important for a leader?

There are three important reasons why godly character is foundational to church leadership:

1. People impact us more through their character than their skills. When we think about those who have impressed us the most, those who have been models to us of how to serve God, invariably it is their character that has impressed us. We are not so impressed by their skills of leadership, their ability to make good decisions, run an organization efficiently, delegate responsibility well, or communicate effectively. Rather, people impress us most through something in their character. That character could be humility, a servant-like spirit, generosity, or love, etc. This demonstrates to us that ultimately, the most important part of leadership is our character.

When the author of this TEE book was a new missionary, he met an old man called Ato Shigute. Ato Shigute was relatively uneducated. He could read and write, but it is unlikely that he had even finished fourth grade. By the time I met Ato Shigute, he was very old and could not hear very well. The author had heard how Ato Shigute had suffered greatly for his faith during the Italian occupation. But what most impressed me as a new missionary was how this old man would frequently loudly ask "Is there love in there?" as he pointed to my heart. In spite of all he suffered, Ato Shigute knew that love for Jesus and others was the most important thing, so he would ask me every time he saw me about the love in my heart. Although I was more educated, Ato Shigute's love for God and for others taught me that more important than education is character which can be seen in our love for God and love for others.

Q. 15. a) Make a list of the major problems facing the world today. b) What do you think the root cause of each problem is?

2. Most problems in the world today are caused by a lack of godly character. Our world today is filled with tribalism, wars, stealing, murders, divorce, adultery, AIDS, famine, poverty and the lack of economic growth. What is the cause of all of these problems? Is it lack of education or a lack of money? Is it lack of food? Often we think that if we could only teach people more then everything would be better. But education rarely solves problems or changes situations. Educated people steal and lie as much as uneducated people. Often education enables people to be more tricky in their sin. It does not change the heart. A close look at the root cause of all of these problems shows us that the problem is in lack of godly character. The Bible teaches that the heart of man is terribly wicked. (Jer. 17:9) Until the heart is changed, and until we conquer our selfishness and pride, nothing good will happen in us or in society. As the heart and character of people change by transforming their understandings and actions, many of the problems in society disappear.

Q. 16. a) Make a list of the major problems found in your and other evangelical churches. b) What is the root cause of these problems? c) Who is causing the majority of these problems, ordinary believers or the leaders?

3. Most of the problems in our churches today are caused by the lack of godly character of church leaders. The Bible shows that the spiritual character of the leaders determines the spirituality of the ordinary people. King David was holy and loved and obeyed God, therefore the people also followed God. But when a king like Rehoboam worshipped idols, soon the ordinary people also followed other gods. People tend to follow the example of their leaders and be holy or sinful like their leaders. If the leaders love God and openly witness about Jesus, the people imitate their example. If the leaders are selfish, focusing on personal glory and riches, then the people also will focus upon personal things and a comfortable life, not on spiritual things. Perhaps the reason God judges leaders so severely is because their lives impact others so much. (James 3:1)

Church leaders not only determine the general spiritual character of the church, but leaders are often the source of most of the problems in the church. Is there division in the church? Usually there are leaders struggling for power. Is there tribalism? Usually leaders have shown favoritism to their tribe or certain people. Is there lack of tithing by the people and little money to pay church workers? Usually it is because the leaders do not give generously or do not use the money with integrity. The people do not trust the leaders to do what they promise they will with the money. When there is lack of trust, it is often because the leaders have not shown themselves trustworthy.

So if we are going to solve the many problems in our world and especially in our churches today, we must focus on the character of believers, and especially the character of church leaders.

Q. 17. List examples of how you have seen church leaders determine the spiritual level of their church. b) Illustrate how you have seen church leaders at the root of most of the problems a church is facing. c) Read Acts 6:1-7. 1) Describe the problem facing the church. 2) What was the solution the apostles proposed? 3) On what basis were the men selected?

GOD DESIRES THAT CHURCH LEADERSHIP BE BASED UPON SPIRITUAL MATURITY

In Acts 6:1-7 we read that the church in Jerusalem was facing a crisis. A disagreement had arisen

between two groups in the church. This disagreement threatened to weaken the church, stopping the quick growth as the Gospel reached out to various groups. The apostles took quick action. They immediately asked that people choose leaders to handle the matter which had caused the disagreement in the church. What type of people were they to choose for leadership to resolve the problem? They had to be people of "*good standing, filled with the Spirit and wisdom.*" (vs 3) The apostles knew that God's work must be done God's way in order for there to be God's blessing. Leaders who were filled with the Holy Spirit and were known to have the character necessary to address the problem and find a fair solution were needed. And they had to be wise, able to apply their knowledge in a way that brought a solution and an end to the disagreement.

The phrase "filled with the Holy Spirit" here does not mean having a special ability to speak in tongues or do miracles. Rather, this phrase is used for someone who is spiritually mature. To be spiritually mature a person has to have lived his life under the control of the Holy Spirit as a pattern of life over a period of time. When submitted to the Holy Spirit, a person changes in how he thinks and acts. In other words, his habits and his character change, which leads to changes in behavior. This does not happen in a day or a year. It takes time. The apostles knew that character, or spiritual maturity, or "being filled with the Holy Spirit" was the most important requirement in leadership in the church.

Being a leader in the church is a "spiritual" ministry. The church is a spiritual organization not a political or social organization. The New Testament clearly emphasizes that the church consists of those called out of the world into a spiritual kingdom. Believers are therefore called a holy nation, a spiritual priesthood, etc. (1 Pet. 2:5, 9) This means that leadership in the church is not based upon natural abilities, but spiritual abilities. Paul said that the things of the Word are hidden from those who are not spiritually sensitive. Only those who are spiritual can understand and apply God's Word. (See 1 Cor. 2:6-16) Therefore, a church leader must be a spiritually mature person to lead a spiritual organization.

Q. 18. a) Describe how you have seen leaders try to manage the church as if it were like a government organization. What problems did this cause? b) List some differences between the government and the church which makes the leadership different from one to another.

Godly character and spiritual maturity is so important that usually it is better to have too few leaders than to have many leaders who are spiritually immature or worldly Christians. The negative impact of having an ungodly or spiritually immature leader over the church is great. Repeatedly throughout history, many churches have been torn apart by having the wrong leaders.

Developing spiritual maturity takes time. That is why in his list of qualifications of an elder, Paul insists that an elder not be a new believer, but rather have demonstrated spiritual maturity in his life. (1 Tim. 3:6) The reason Paul said that a new believer, even though zealous for God, should not be a leader is because in many areas of his life he has not gained the understanding of how to live like God wants him to live. New believers often still think like a person of the world. And when brought into leadership, they still think of leadership like the world understands leadership. There is a great danger that such a person will selfishly use the power of leadership over people and become proud of being a leader.

Paul gives no time limit that a new believer has to wait before becoming a leader. That is because the issue is not time (e.g., six months, one year, five years). Rather, Paul is concerned that the potential elder have demonstrated a consistent, godly life. And some believers grow faster spiritually than others. The New Testament uses the word "elder" for those in leadership over a church, reflecting that those who are

suitable for church leadership are men of proven moral quality and spiritual maturity which often takes time to develop. But Paul does not give any indication of how old a person must be for leadership. Timothy had an important position of leadership even though still a young man. (1 Tim. 4:12-14)

The issue is not so much age, but proven spiritual maturity and godly wisdom. It is important for an individual to have time to grow in his faith and to demonstrate a consistent walk of godliness. Only then is he qualified for leadership. Some believers who submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ grow quickly into spiritual maturity. Other believers struggle for many years to submit their lives to Jesus Christ and become spiritually mature. Some young people are more sensitive to the Holy Spirit and walk in more godly character than older people who have been believers a very long time. Paul intends that the basic requirement for all leaders is godly character, or spiritual maturity.

Q. 19. a) Explain how you have seen some people stay spiritually immature even though they have been believers for a long time. b) Describe how you have seen some new believers (even some young people) quickly become spiritually mature and therefore able to lead in the church. c) What is the difference that causes some to mature spiritually quickly and others not to mature quickly? d) Illustrate things which you have done to mature spiritually whereas others have not matured in the same way.

In 1 Tim. 3:1-13, Paul lists qualifications for those who will be leaders as elders and deacons in the church. We will study these in more detail in a later lesson. It is important to realize that most of these qualifications are the goal for all believers. The characteristics demanded for leaders are found throughout the Bible expressing what God wants all of his children to be like. For instance, all believers are to be above reproach, to not love money, or not get drunk, to be hospitable, etc. Paul does not intend that only the elders live holy lives. But he insists that the elders are to be the examples for the members of the church. And so all elders **must** meet these requirements in character if they are to be elders. At the base of all of these requirements that he gives for eldership, Paul is saying that church leaders must be godly and spiritually mature.

HOW A PERSON BECOMES SPIRITUALLY MATURE (PART 1)

Before we examine these characteristics for eldership in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1, we will look at basic teachings throughout the Bible about what makes a mature believer.

1. Spiritual maturity starts with a person becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. Growing in spirituality begins when a person becomes a follower of Jesus. Until a person becomes a follower of Jesus, he cannot be spiritual and therefore cannot lead in the church. When Jesus called Peter, he told Peter to "follow me." (Mt. 4:18-20) Peter left all and followed Jesus. (Note: Today we often people "believe on Jesus." But Jesus wanted people to follow him as disciples, so he always said "follow me." Perhaps our churches would have more people willing to change how they think and act if we too challenged them to follow Jesus, not just believe on him.) Peter became a disciple of Jesus, going where Jesus led him, living like Jesus wanted him to live, and obeying Jesus his Master in all things. Peter later became a leader of the early church. In order to be a follower of Jesus, there were several things which all leaders and all believers have to do.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus starts with an individual trusting Jesus to save them from their sins. Unfortunately, there are some church leaders who have never made this most important decision in their lives. For instance, there are some church elders who have been elders for many years. But one day they hear a clear presentation of the Gospel and realize that they have never personally made a decision to

trust in Jesus as their Savior and follow him as their Lord. Some think that they are Christians because they have been born in a Christian home. They have grown up in a church, but have never personally decided to follow Jesus. "My parents started this church. Therefore I should be a leader" they say. They think that they are followers of Jesus just because their parents were followers of Jesus. This is not true. Others think they are Christians because they are not part of another religion like Islam. "Of course we are Christians, we aren't Muslims" they say. They think that they are Christians because of their cultural heritage. Still others have been wrongly taught as to what it means to believe in Jesus. "Stop drinking, put away your extra wives, start going to church and tithing and you will become a Christian" they are told. These church leaders work very hard trying to please God, trying to be good enough to be saved. But none of these examples above bring salvation to a person. No one is born a Christian, or is a Christian just by cultural heritage, or becomes a Christian by somehow being good enough. A person must choose to become a Christian by personally putting their faith in Jesus Christ.

So what does it take for person to become a true believer in Jesus Christ so that he can begin to grow spiritually? Briefly, the following are the most important things which a person needs to realize before they can be saved.

a) The individual must know that he is a sinner, worthy of the judgment of God his creator. The Bible says that all of us are sinners. (Rom. 3:23) In our thoughts and attitudes and actions we are not what God wants of us. We are selfish, often wanting our own way. We are rebellious and resist the control of God over our lives. No matter how much we try to live a good life, we still are sinful. And God has said that the one who sins is worthy of death. (Ezek. 18:4) Because God is holy and righteous, he must punish sin.

b) Each person must know that Jesus came from heaven to earth to pay the penalty of our sins by dying on the cross. Although Jesus never sinned, God put our sins on him and he died in our place. The Bible says that there is no other way, no other name, on the earth that brings salvation. (Acts 4:12) All of the judgment for sin, the death that we were to experience, Jesus experienced on our behalf. (2 Cor. 5:21)

c) As the Holy Spirit makes the person aware of his hopeless position as a sinner before the righteous God, the individual must acknowledge his sinfulness in repentance before God. "Lord, I am a sinner. I know that I deserve eternal judgment. But God, you sent your Son, Jesus, to die for me. He paid for my sins on the cross. I renounce all other attempts to be saved. I renounce all other religions. I renounce my personal attempts to be good enough to be saved. I now realize that Jesus alone can save me. According to the promises in your Word, I trust his death on the cross for my sins. Cleanse me, forgive me. Make me your child" he cries. (Jn. 1:12) The person must commit himself to ending his rebellion against God and determine to submit to Jesus as his Lord. When a person does this, he is immediately saved and cleansed of his sin. Although he may have to live with the consequences of his sin (e.g. pregnancy, AIDs, etc.), the eternal punishment of his sin is taken away. The person becomes a child of God. Salvation is not because there is anything in us that makes us worthy of forgiveness. Rather, God pours out his grace to us. He gives us salvation as a free gift. (Eph. 2:8, Jn. 3:16)

d) Knowing that Jesus is his Lord, the individual no longer tries to control his life in selfish independence. Rather, in love because of what Jesus has done for him, the person willingly seeks to submit to Jesus in all things. He seeks to be a disciple of Jesus- thinking like Jesus did, making the things that are important to Jesus important to him, and doing the type of things which Jesus did. No longer does he live for his own selfish pleasures. No longer does he resist the control of God over his life. Instead, the person submits his life to God. God then begins to reveal his will to the individual through the Word. Jesus begins to show him things which he has been doing which are not pleasing to God. And with the help of the Holy

Spirit, the person begins to change. And because he is now spiritually alive, he is able to listen to God speak and lead him.

But it is important to note that he does not change his life in order to be saved. Rather, he changes because he is saved and willingly follows Jesus whom he loves. And it is important to remember that Jesus is seeking the change of the whole person- his attitudes, his motives, and his actions. He is not just concerned about a few laws which a church teaches the person must change if he is a believer.

Only after someone has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as their Savior, is a person able to start to grow spiritually. Having become alive spiritually, the individual grows into spiritual maturity and is then able to minister in God's church. Only a spiritually alive church leader is able to lead in a godly way, with the attitude and manner that Jesus requires of his leaders in the church. How can a leader help people become spiritual if he is not spiritual? How can he guide them in holiness if he is not holy? No education in the world will help him lead people to follow Jesus if he himself has not chosen to follow Jesus.

Q. 20. Write briefly about when you put your faith in Jesus Christ and began to follow him.

2. After we decide to follow Jesus, we are given the Holy Spirit to help us grow in spiritual maturity. (Jn. 14:26) God does not tell us to try our best to live in a way which honors him and then leave us to struggle to change alone. Rather he gives us the Holy Spirit to live in us and help us change. Through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can overcome sin. The Holy Spirit changes our attitudes towards sin, causing us to understand how hurtful sin is in the eyes of God. He changes our commitment, so we want to do God's will. And the Holy Spirit gives us power to overcome the sins that once used to control us. While we are responsible to use all of our strength and abilities to obey Jesus, we must realize that it is God who will help us to overcome the sin and grow spiritually. It is God who will enable us to change our habits and character so that we resemble Jesus. We should not trust in our own abilities, but in God giving us the power to change. (Phil. 2:12-13)

3. Being a disciple means that we follow and obey what our Master, Jesus Christ says. When Jesus told Peter "Follow me" Peter immediately obeyed. For the next three years Peter followed Jesus, being taught what it meant to be a follower of Jesus. Although Jesus does not physically teach us today like he did Peter, the Holy Spirit teaches us through his Word, the Bible. And so if we are to be a disciple of Jesus, and in order to grow in spiritual maturity, we must read God's Word and ask Jesus what he wants us to do. Jesus said that if we love him, we will obey his commands. (Jn. 14:23-24) Jesus is not only asking us to believe in him. He tells us to follow him. We follow him by changing our lives to be more like him. We change the way we think. And we change the way we act.

Following Jesus is not easy. Jesus said that those who wanted to follow him had to "daily carry their cross and follow him." (Lk. 9:23; 14:27) To carry a cross means that we have to die to our desire to live for our own pleasure. We now live seeking to fulfill the desires of Jesus. (Gal. 2:20) It means that we have to accept the pain that often comes from following Jesus. This pain may come from the rejection of our friends and family who do not follow Jesus. Or it can come from other Christians who are not willing to live their lives submitted to Jesus. It can bring us persecution or cause people to make fun of us. To become a follower of Jesus means that we must be willing to do anything Jesus wants, even when it might not bring us the glory that the world sees as important. It might not bring us education or wealth or worldly honor which is so important to the world.

Q. 21. a) Memorize Lk. 9:23 & 14:27. b) Have you died to yourself? Have you taken up your cross? What difference has following Jesus made to how you live and what your purpose of life is? c) Take time to think about your life right now. Pray and ask Jesus to show you his purpose for your life. Are you willing to follow and obey him?

4. As a disciple of Jesus all of our life changes. Paul said that once we believe on Jesus we are "a new creation." (2 Cor. 5:17) Everything changes. How we think must change so that we begin to think about the things that Jesus says is important. We desire to do what God wants. Paul tells us in Rom. 12:2 that we need to change how we think so that we no longer resemble the world. How we act changes. We "put off" everything that does not glorify Jesus. And we "put on" the character and actions which God wants in us. (Col. 3:5-14) As the Holy Spirit works in us and changes us we begin to develop new ways of thinking which leads to new habits. After a while these new habits become part of our character. As our character changes to resemble Jesus Christ, we become spiritually mature. And it is through our changed character and spiritual maturity that we qualify for godly leadership over the family of God, the church.

Q. 22. a) Have you ever made a personal decision to believe on Jesus? If not, please take time now to confess your sins to Jesus and ask him to cleanse you. b) Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to work in your life and change you? List some ways you have changed since you became a believer so that you are more like Jesus in your attitudes and actions. c) Illustrate how Jesus is Lord in your life. What areas of your life have you still not given to Jesus to control? Pray and submit those areas to him right now.

THIRD DAY

HOW A PERSON BECOMES SPIRITUALLY MATURE (PART 2)

We saw yesterday that church leadership is a spiritual ministry in a spiritual organization and requires godly people. Unless we have personally put our faith in Jesus and are spiritual we will never be able to lead in the church the way that God wants. A decision to believe in Jesus and follow his teachings begins our journey towards spiritual ministry. As we grow spiritually we become qualified for leadership.

But there are some other things that must be in place in our lives before we can become spiritually mature and qualify for leadership in the church.

Q. 23. Read Ps. 63:1-5. a) What was the desire of David's heart? b) Explain how this same desire is seen in your life.

1. We grow in spiritual maturity when we maintain a vibrant relationship with God over a period of time. Every great leader whom God has used evidenced a deep longing to know God and to relate to him in deeper ways. God's Word says that those who know their God do great things. (Dan. 11:32) Every great leader in the Bible made it a priority to know God and to relate to him deeply. [e.g. Moses (Ex. 33:15-23), David (Ps. 63:1), Paul (Phil. 3:4-14)] Church leadership is about following Jesus, the Head of the Church. When we become leaders, we do not begin to hear the voice of Jesus and follow him. Rather, we must have learned to listen to Jesus and follow him before we become leaders. Jesus said that those who are his sheep know his voice and follow him. (Jn. 10:4-5) It is not enough that a person knows about God, they must know God. It is to those who know him well that God gives special power and ability in leadership. It is only those who know God well who can withstand all of the disappointments and problems they will face in leadership without quitting or getting bitter. It is only to those who know God well who hear his voice saying "This is the path, walk in it." (Is. 30:21) It is only those who know how God works, what

pleases him or displeases him, who are able to distinguish what is true or false, and withstand false teachings or imbalanced teaching. Just as light overcomes darkness, it is those who walk close to the light of God that are able to see their sinfulness, their wrong habits and character, their evil actions and change. (1 Jn. 1: 5-7)

Q. 24. a) Is God a stranger to you or a close friend? (e.g. Abraham, friend of God (Is. 41:8); David (1 Ki. 15:3)
b) What are you doing to keep your relationship with God close?

2. Spiritual maturity comes when spiritual disciplines are an important part of our lives. Spiritual disciplines are spiritual habits which help us to maintain our focus upon God and receive the truths of God's Word and the power from God needed to keep growing in spiritual maturity. These spiritual disciplines help us to know God better. This helps us see our bad habits and character which we must change. They also help us walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. Unless we make these spiritual disciplines a regular habit we will never become the type of leaders who lead for the glory of God.

None of these spiritual disciplines comes naturally to people. It is much easier to be like a flea on a dog, being carried from place to place rather than walk. In the same way, it is easier to just be carried along in our spiritual life, doing just enough to stay spiritually alive, but not enough to really grow. We may go to church on Sundays and occasionally attend a Bible study, but that is not enough to be a true follower of Jesus. No one grows in spiritual maturity just by taking the easy road of going to church once a week. Spiritual growth is hard work and it involves the character trait of "self control." We are told in 1 Tim. 3:2 that a church leader must know how to discipline himself, to be self-controlled. It is only a self-controlled person who can put aside what his flesh wants him to do in order to do something that will help him grow spiritually. (e.g. Put aside the desire for sleep in the morning in order to have time to pray and study God's Word.) All of the spiritual disciplines listed today and in next week's lesson demand that we refuse to listen to what we naturally want to do in order to get to know God better and become spiritually mature.

Q. 25. a) List ways that you have learned the self-control of putting aside what you would like to do in order to do something that will help you grow spiritually. b) Describe how this character of self control is the foundation of all true change and spirituality.

What are the key spiritual disciplines? (*Note: In this TEE book we can only introduce you to the key areas which help us grow strong in our faith. It is important for you to study other books that teach you how to pray effectively, study God's Word, etc.)

a. We must be men and women of prayer.

Q. 26. a) Read Ex. 17:10-13. What happened when Moses lifted his hands up in prayer? What happened when he did not lift his hands up in prayer? c) Read Neh. 1:4, 2:4, 4:9, 6:9. What did Nehemiah do before or during times of crisis?

Suppose you were the child of the most powerful man on earth. And your father told you that whenever you want, if you have a problem, or if you just want to talk to him, that you would be allowed to come see him. He promised that even if he was in the midst of a busy meeting, he would stop that meeting to listen to you. What an amazing privilege! How easy it would be to solve your problems with all of his power and authority to help you. And imagine how his great wisdom would help you understand life.

We have that wonderful privilege as the children of God, who is the ruler of the universe. We can

approach his heavenly throne boldly at any time knowing that we will receive his full attention and assistance. (Heb. 4:14-16) The disciples of Jesus never asked him to teach them how to preach and teach like Jesus did. But they asked Jesus to teach them to pray because they realized that Jesus' power to minister came through prayer. There are many things about prayer which remain a mystery to us. We might not know how prayer influences God or why sometimes we get the answer "yes" to our prayers and other times "wait" or even "no." But because there is so much confusion in prayer, we need to remember the following truths.

1) Prayer and God's Word work together to develop spiritual maturity. Both must be kept in balance in order for us to be effective leaders. In the Word we are often told what God's will is so we know how to pray about specific situations. We have promises of God which we can claim in faith as we pray. We have the examples of other saints showing us how to pray effectively. But if we only study God's Word but do not pray, we might know the truth, but we will not have the power of God to make any difference. On the other hand, if we only pray and do not study God's Word, we are filled with zeal, but have no knowledge. (Rom. 10:2) If we do not know God's will, his desires for us and for others, then we cannot know if we are praying according to God's desires. Our prayers are therefore powerless or unbiblical, and will not change our situation. So we need to balance our study of God's Word (Josh. 1:8) with praying continually. (1 Thess.5:17)

Q. 27. a) Do you spend more time praying or reading God's Word? b) What does this show you about balancing these two spiritual disciplines in your life?

2) Perhaps the most important result from our prayer is that it puts us into a proper relationship with God, the Creator and Lord of the Universe. We all tend to get proud, thinking we are important, that we can solve our own problems. But the Bible says that God opposes the proud. (1 Pet. 5:5-6) God opposes the church or person who seems self-sufficient and thinks they are fine when they have many needs which they should be asking God about. (Rev. 3:17-18) But when we pray, we realize that we are dependent upon God. He is the solution to our needs. Our strength comes from him. When we pray about our ministry, we are saying that we depend upon him to work in and through us. As Paul learned, it is when we are weak that God gives us his strength. (2 Cor. 12:7-10) Prayer is God's major tool to keep us in an attitude of depending upon God. Even Jesus, spent hours praying to his Father, depending upon him. (Mt. 14:23) Jesus said that everything he did, his miracles and his teachings all came from God the Father. (Jn. 14:10) He probably got instructions from the Father during his times of prayer to God.

3) The primary purpose of prayer is not to get what we want from God. Although God is pleased to hear our requests, there are two greater purposes in prayer:

a). Fellowship with God: God has always desired to fellowship with his people. After he created Adam and Eve, he would meet with them and talk with them every day. (Gen. 3:8-9) Unfortunately, the first thing that happened when they sinned is that they ran away from God and stopped meeting with him. Later, when God told the Israelites to make the tabernacle, he told them that he wanted to live in their midst and meet with them. (Ex. 25:9) That is why it was called the "tabernacle of meeting." Writing many years later, the Apostle John said that because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we have "fellowship with God the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." (1 Jn. 1:3) And so, when we go to God in prayer, the first thing we should desire is to meet with him and enjoy his presence. Just like we enjoy visiting close friends and spending time with them, if we want to be spiritually mature, we must learn to enjoy talking with God in prayer.

b) Seek the glory of God in your life: Prayer is not intended for us to primarily present many requests to God about things which we want and expect him to give them to us. Rather, it is a time when we ask God to get glory in us, in others we pray for, and in the church. It is asking that God's will be done on earth and then He will get the glory he deserves. Just as we like it when others honor our earthly father, so also we are to get excited when God the Father and Jesus are honored. That is why when Jesus taught the disciples to pray, he started his prayer with "May your name be holy, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Mt. 6:9-10) Jesus prayed for the glory of God and for the fulfillment of God's will, not Jesus' will. (Jn. 17:1, Mt. 26:39, 42) So rather than going to God with selfish prayers, in prayer we should seek his glory, his honor, the spread of his kingdom, etc. We will only know what we should pray for if we are seeking to know and live out God's will in our lives. (Ps. 37:4) The more we grow in spiritual maturity, the more God's desires will become our desires. (Jn. 4:34)

Q. 28. Read Eph. 1:17-19, 3:14-19; Col. 1:9-14. a) List the requests Paul made in his prayers for the believers. b) How are these requests different from how we often pray for ourselves and others? c) In what way would the answer to Paul's requests be the most important answers to our prayers, rather than asking for physical blessing, healing, etc.?

4) Our prayers should include worship, thanksgiving, repentance, and supplication for us and others. In **worship** we praise God's character. During **thanksgiving** we thank God for all of the things he has done for us. **Repentance** includes confessing our sins to God, asking his forgiveness and making a commitment to God to seek to honor him in how we live. Rather than a general confession saying "God, I have no doubt sinned. Forgive me" repentance is confessing specific things that we have done which we know displease God- things like gossip, anger, pride, unclean thoughts, etc. It is only when we confess specific things that the Holy Spirit uses our prayers to help us overcome these sins. **Supplication** is asking God for things which we believe will help us and others to serve God better. Again, we can learn a lot from the prayer Jesus taught the disciples to pray. (Mt. 6:10-14) The requests are limited to forgiveness, deliverance from Satan, and meeting of daily needs. Jesus did not tell us to ask God for everything that we might selfishly want, such as we would ask a rich person to give us something that we wish we had, but do not need. Rather, he taught us to ask God for things that we need to live. He may give us things beyond our basic needs, but we should leave that for him to decide.

Q. 29. This coming week, each day after you pray, make a list of things you prayed for. a) How did you worship the Lord? b) For what did you thank God? c) What specific sins did you confess? d) What things did you ask God for? Were they wishes or real needs? e) Compare your prayer to Paul's prayer items in Eph. and Col. How would you change your prayers in order to pray more like Paul?

5) Although public prayer is good, the power to grow in character and to lead in a godly way comes from private prayer. Many of us get up early in the morning with our families and pray. Or we pray with other church leaders late into the night. But how much time do you spend alone with God? We only hear God speaking to us, guiding us, and changing us when we are praying alone. No doubt Jesus prayed with his disciples. But the source of his power came from his time alone with his Father on the mountain. (Mt. 14:23)

Q. 30. a) Do you spend more in private prayer or public prayer? b) What habits do you need to change or develop in order to meet with God alone as a regular practice? c) Where could you meet so that you would not be disturbed by others?

6) Prayer is not just speaking, it also involves listening. When your friends come to visit, you do not spend all of the time talking while they sit and listen. In true fellowship, people both talk and spend time listening. Prayer is the same way. There is time when we talk to God, expressing what is in our hearts. But we must also learn to sit and listen to God speak through his Word. There are other times when we need to say like Samuel "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." (1 Sam. 3:10) God spoke to the prophet Elijah not in the wind or the storm, but in a quiet voice. If we are too busy shouting our prayers or talking to God, we will miss his gentle voice speaking to us.

7) How we pray is not as important as the condition of our hearts. It does not matter if we stand with our hands toward heaven, close our eyes and bow our heads, or kneel. What matters is that in our hearts we approach God with an attitude of submission. We are praying to our Father God who created us. Therefore, we should come in humble submission, seeking to do his will. Our desire should be to please him. And what pleases him becomes our desire and will be what we express in our prayers.

8) There are times that we should combine fasting with prayer. The purpose of fasting is not to bribe God to do something for us. Rather, fasting is a tool God has given to us where we set aside all other activities, even the common things like eating, so that we can focus on praying for what is in our hearts. It helps us focus on prayer and shows God how serious the issue is to us. Fasting helps us prepare to seek God's face. We need to be careful that fasting does not become a habitual practice for us that is not linked with a specific desire in our hearts to see God work in an unusual way.

9) Prayer and faith: James 1:5-8 says that when we are faced with a situation beyond our ability, that we should ask God for special wisdom. God has promised to give us that wisdom. But James warns us that we must pray "in faith." If we doubt God and his ability to answer, or his willingness to answer, James tells us we will not receive the answer to our prayers. There are some Christians who teach that the reason God does not answer all of our prayers is because we do not have enough faith. So when someone is not healed, they say the individual does not have enough faith. When a Christian prays in a certain situation "if it is your will" they are reprimanded because that expression shows they do not have faith. What does the Bible teach about prayer and faith?

a) Faith by itself does not work, rather what matters is what the faith is in. An unbeliever can pray to a false idol in "faith" but receives no answer from God because his faith is in something that has no power. So for faith to work, it must be in the true God as he has revealed himself in God's Word.

b) Faith must be in the revealed will of God. The Bible promises many things that we can pray for with certainty. For instance, we can pray for forgiveness of sins knowing that God will forgive us. Or we can ask for spiritual growth. Whenever we have a specific situation in which God has revealed his will, faith means that we trust him to do what he has promised to do, even though it seems impossible to us. Throughout the Bible, all men of faith had a "promise" of God which they trusted even though it seemed impossible. (e.g. Abraham leaving Haran (Gen. 12:1-5); birth of Isaac [Gen. 15:1-6]) They did not have to "guess" at the will of God in the situation.

But there are many things for which we have no direct promises from God. Our wife might be sick and we pray for healing. Usually, we do not know for sure if God will heal her. It is in these situations where we pray "If you are willing...not my will, but yours be done." (Lk. 22:42) That is how Jesus prayed, and that is how we should pray when we do not know for certain God's will in the situation. We evidence "faith" not in demanding that God do something for us. Rather we trust him in such cases to do what is loving, just, right, and good- for God's kingdom and for us as his children.

c) God may tell us to "wait" or "no," as well as "yes." He is God. We cannot tell him what to do. Rather, God tells us what he is willing to do. Many times God has a purpose which we do not understand that is greater than our request. If our request is "God I want you to do what is best for me. I would like to be healed, but do what is best. I want your will", then if God does not heal us, we know it is because he has a greater purpose in our sickness. (e.g. Jn. 9:1-5) There are other times he makes us wait, helping us grow in patience as we trust his loving, powerful, all knowing hand. Once we grow, then he gives us our request. God knows that we need to be with him in prayer more than we need the things that we ask of him, just like Moses learned that seeing the glory of God was more important than asking God for a blessing. (Ex. 33:12-23) Unanswered prayer or delayed prayer forces us to spend more time with God, which is often more important than answered prayer.

10) Our prayers should be specific, not just general requests. It is exciting to witness God's answers to our prayers. But often we only pray general requests. We say "God bless so and so." But then we never know if God has answered our prayer. In the Bible, most of the peoples' prayer requests are specific. The people confessed specific sins, and they asked for specific requests (e.g. Give me favor in the eyes of the king. Neh. 1:11) So when praying for evangelism, we should name the tribe that we want God to work in. And we should pray specifically for the evangelists by name, for their spiritual growth and fervor, for boldness in witnessing (e.g. Col. 4:3-4), for health in their family, for the children not to get angry about any suffering they might face, etc. We show our faith in prayer when we ask for specific requests, not just a general prayer.

11) Prayer and shouting: It is becoming common for people to shout out their prayers as loud as they can, perhaps believing that this shows their earnestness. But we must be careful that we are not doing so from a wrong understanding of prayer and our relationship with God. If we think the loudness of our prayers encourages God to listen, we are like the prophets of Baal who were challenged to pray louder to wake him up! (1 Ki. 18:25-29) God knows our every thought before we even express it. (Ps. 139:4) We do not even need to open our mouths to pray. Our heavenly Father hears every unspoken word we think. If we think that we need to shout because God is far away in heaven, we have forgotten that the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts. The Triune God is in us, not far off in heaven. (Jn. 14:23) If we think the loudness of our prayers forces Satan further away from us, then we are mistaken in thinking the power to overcome Satan is in our loud voices rather in Jesus who has conquered Satan. No king or father enjoys it when his visitors or children come and yell in his presence. This is a sign of disrespect. Surely it is also disrespectful for a person to shout at God when standing in his presence. If we have a tendency to pray very loudly, shouting in what could be viewed as an angry voice, we must examine our hearts to see if we are praying with the right motives and with respect and fear before our great God.

12) Public prayer: Satan often defeats us is when we are praying in public. There are several things we need to beware of when praying in front of the church or with a group of believers:

a) Public prayer does not bring the personal strength needed for church leadership. Leadership flows out of our relationship with God which we develop on a personal basis. Spiritual growth and spiritual maturity flow out of our time alone with God. As we each get to know God and he reveals his will, we obey him and depend upon his power.

Q. 31. Read Mt. 6:5-8. a) What warnings does Jesus give about public prayer? b) Describe how some people disobey these warnings when praying in church.

b) Public prayer can quickly lead to hypocritical prayer. Whenever we try to impress those who are listening to our prayers, we have fallen into the sin of hypocrisy. This sin is doing something to receive honor from others rather than praying to God from a sincere heart. Hypocrisy includes when we make our voices waver or cry false tears to impress others. If we change our voices to make them sound more spiritual or if we point our faces toward heaven with the desire to appear spiritual to others, all of these are sins of hypocrisy.

c) Beware of repeating words unnecessarily or without thought. Jesus warned his disciples against "vain repetition." When we frequently say the name of God in an unnatural way, we are repeating vainly. (e.g. I thank you, Jesus, for what you have done, Jesus, for me.) We are told in Ex. 20:7 not to take the name of God in vain. Taking the name of God in vain means using God's name without thought and without purpose. Whenever we use the name of God, it must be with purpose and with understanding. Or when we repeat words like Hallelujah or Amen without meaning, those words are useless to us. God is only interested in our prayers when what we say is done meaningfully, not when we pray out of habit and without thinking.

d) Prayer is a time for us to talk to God, not for us to preach. Preachers often use their prayers to continue their sermon. This is not what prayer is for.

13) Praying in the Spirit: (Eph. 6:18) One of the amazing truths is that we are not alone when praying. The Holy Spirit prays with us. (Rom. 8:26) This does not mean that we are to groan when we pray and that groaning is the Holy Spirit. Rather, it means that the Holy Spirit is praying secretly in our hearts, and since he knows the will of God, he prays what is according to God's will for us. There are three things which hinder the effectiveness of our praying together with the Holy Spirit.

a) A sin in our lives. That sin could be a sin which we have not confessed to God or to someone else we have wronged. (1 Pet. 3:7) Or it could be a wrong attitude like wanting something for selfish reasons. (Jms. 4:3) For instance, we could be asking God to make us a leader in the church. But we are asking so that we can receive glory from others rather than out of a desire to serve God and his people. Or what we are doing is being done in a way that is not honoring to God. For instance, we are asking God to give us property for a church, but we are bribing people so that their answer is favorable. When there is unanswered prayer it is usually because of selfishness in our request, sin in our lives, unbelief in God, or we are praying for the wrong reasons.

b) Ignorance of what is the will of God. We are told to pray according to the will of God. God expects us to know what he has revealed in his Word about his will. So if we don't know what God has said, we can pray things which are against his Will. For instance, sometimes a young person will pray "God tell me if my unsaved girl friend is to become my wife." But God has already told us that this is not his will. We know that we are praying together with the Holy Spirit when we concentrate on things which God has already shown us are his will, things like the salvation of the lost, the spiritual growth in maturity, open doors of ministry, etc. But there are many things which we do not know specifically if it is God's will or not. We can pray as Jesus did "if it is your will." But we should also spend time determining God's will in specific situations. When we have a deep burden to pray about something (if it is not for selfish reasons), then usually that means that this is God's will.

c) Not learning to control our minds and are alert. We can only pray in the Spirit when we are alert when we pray. (Col. 4:2) We are to be alert in two ways. First, we are to be alert to situations around us that need our prayer. Prayer must not become a standard list that we pray without thought. Second, our

minds are to be alert while we pray. Satan often gets us to become sleepy when praying. We aren't praying in the spirit when we are not alert. So we need to get enough sleep so that we are not tired. And then we need to learn to control our minds so that we are alert while we are praying.

14) Prayer and working for God: One of the dangers for leaders is that they get so busy working for God, taking care of church matters that they reduce the time they spend praying. It seems that the busier we become, the less we pray. But this is the opposite of what we should do. The busier we get, the more we need to pray. If we are too busy to pray, this shows that we are working in our own strength, not in the power of God. It also shows a proud heart, thinking that we can do God's work without asking God to help us. Any church that focuses more on its ministries than on prayer is a church that is working without the power of God. There are several things to remember when thinking about prayer and ministry:

a) The higher a person is in leadership, the more he needs to spend time in prayer. In Acts 6:1-7, the apostles refused to get involved in the administrative details of the church because they knew that doing so would distract them from the two things they were supposed to be doing, which was praying and teaching God's Word.

b) Prayer is work and it is ministry. In Col. 4:12-13 Paul tells the believers that Epaphras was working hard on their behalf. Paul explains that Epaphras was working hard by praying for them. As leaders, often the busier we are, the more anxiety we have, the less time we spend in prayer, and the less work we get done. Isaiah was told that victory comes not by using human resources, but in having a quiet trust in God. The very things which seem to bring answers to our problems, when done in our own power become the things which cause our defeat. (Is. 30:15-17) Although it does not make sense to us, the harder we work at getting something done, the less we accomplish. But the more time we spend in prayer looking for the solution, the more we accomplish. The busier Jesus was, the more he seemed to pray. And he never became anxious and rushed.

c) Any ministry that we do which is not carefully prayed over is a work done in our strength. It becomes our work and not the work of God. We can only do God's work when prayerfully we trust him to do it. God could work without our prayers. But he invites us to join with him in his work through our prayers. It is like a father asking a small child to help him plow by holding the plow with him as they walk along. The father could plow alone, but it gives the father and child pleasure to do the work together, even though the small child is not really much help. In the same way, God could do all of the work without us. But he invites us to join him in the work by praying.

d) Leadership is about moving people onto God's agenda. But in the church we have no "authority" to force people to do things which we believe God wants. So how are we to change them? The only instrument God has given us is prayer. It is through prayer that we change people's hearts, their minds, their character, and their actions.

However, we must be careful not to determine what we want to do, and then ask God to bless it. Rather, when praying, we must be totally committed to knowing and doing God's will. We should tell God that if he wants to change any of our plans, we are willing. We should put our wills under his control and we renounce any personal ambition or vested interest in our plans. Rather, from our hearts we need to pray "Your will be done." We want to follow God's plan, not ours. We should ask God to lead our thoughts and actions so that his will and his work are accomplished, not ours. And using circumstances or others, if God changes what we thought was the best way, we should be happy that God is doing his work. We should not be angry that our plans do not happen. Once we have honestly committed our work, our plans,

and the results into God's hands, we should refuse to fear others' disapproval. And we leave in his hands the success and failure of what we seek to do for God's glory. It is God's work, not ours. It is his church and not ours. So let us prayerfully learn to allow him to lead us, rather than deciding what we want and then asking God to bless us.

Q. 32. a) Describe ways that we often make our plans and then prayerfully ask God to bless it. b) What is the difference between asking God to bless our plan, and asking God to reveal his plan and guide us in accomplishing it?

15) Prayer does not relieve us of our responsibility to use what God has given to us. It is not an excuse for us not to plan well. God has given us minds to use for his glory. If we do not plan along with our prayers, God will often not use our prayers or us to get the work done. (e.g. Nehemiah prayed, but he also planned. When the king asked him what he wanted, Nehemiah had a plan to tell him. God used Nehemiah's prayer and his planning to accomplish the work of God. [See Neh. 1-2]) Prayer should not be an excuse to not get involved and work hard. Paul expressed how he would work with all of his might. (1 Cor. 15:9-10) Often God lays an issue on our hearts for us to pray about. But then he expects us to work with him in finding the solution. In everything it is important to maintain fervent prayer and keep depending upon God to work. Ultimately we know that in our own strength we can do nothing of lasting value. Only if we join with God will the work be accomplished in God's way for God's glory.

What the church needs today is not more programs, greater skills, or better methods. Rather, she needs more men and women who are spiritually in fellowship with God and can be spiritual leaders over God's people. Basic to this fellowship is prayer. Without it, the spiritual life and power of the leader becomes weak. God does his work through men and women, not through programs. When we get too busy to pray, two things happen. First, we dry up spiritually. Without God's empowerment, we get tired and cannot do God's work. Second, we become proud and think that we can accomplish God's work in our own strength. If we feel our lives are dry, if we are tired, if we think we are too busy to pray, we have turned away from the well of power, which is the well of prayer. We must return to being people of prayer, those who know their God and have his power and Spirit.

WEEKLY MEETING

DISCUSSION

1. a) As a group, make a list of characteristics that unbelieving people see as the ideal person. Think about that person in relation to his family, his relationships at church, his relationships at work, and his relationship in his community. b) What does the Bible teach to be the ideal person in the above four areas of life? How are they similar or different to what people in the world believe? c) Do most Christians have these characteristics? If not, why not? d) Are most church leaders known for these characteristics? If not, what hindrances does this bring to the spread of the Gospel? e) Why is it important for believers to be changing our lives so that we are growing towards the "ideal" found in the Bible?

2. a) List some people in your church denomination who are highly respected as godly leaders. b) What things in their character has brought them that respect? c) Why do you think godly character is pictured in the Bible as the foundation of church leadership? d) Are most leaders in your church elected because of their godly character? If not, how do members choose people to be elders? e) Make a list of problems frequently found in the churches that are the result of wrong character of leaders.

3. a) Have you ever seen a person chosen for church leadership who was not a true follower of Jesus? How do you think this can happen in our churches? b) Why is a strong prayer life important to spiritual growth? c) Do you think most church leaders have developed a strong personal prayer life in which they regularly meet with God? If not, what problems does this bring to their personal life and to their leadership of the church? d) Many Christians are more familiar with praying with others in a group. But we have learned that way to becoming spiritual is through personal time with God in prayer. Do you believe this is true or not? Explain your answer. e) Why do you think it is often easier for church leaders to be busy in ministry rather than take time to pray? f) What type of teaching needs to happen in your church for people to become more serious in personally getting together with God in prayer? g) What suggestions can you make to each other and to church members about how to find time to pray to God when they live in crowded homes and it is hard to get alone with God?

4. Review the fifteen points about prayer in the third day's lesson. a) Which of these explanations do Christians know well? Which of these explanations do Christians not understand? b) Make a list of things about prayer that need to be taught to believers in your church for their understanding of prayer to be more biblical. c) Make a plan together of how to teach about prayer in your church so that people have a more biblical understanding.

LESSON THREE

FIRST DAY

HOW A PERSON BECOMES SPIRITUALLY MATURE (PART 3)

He was a well educated young man and highly respected by all the religious leaders as a spiritual person. He spent long hours in prayer. And whenever someone did not follow his religion, he persecuted them, and worked with the government to put some of them to death. He was known for his religious zeal. And yet, in the eyes of God, he was an enemy of the Gospel, lost and going to hell. Who was he? His name was Saul, who would one day become known around the world as Paul.

There are many people like Paul who have religious zeal. They sing and pray many long hours. But they are not what God wants them to be. For example some Muslims have a lot of zeal in following their religion but clearly do not know the truth about God. Others, although they believe on Jesus Christ, and even pray a lot, do not have spiritual depth to their lives. Their lives are like houses built upon the sand, unable to stay strong during times of difficulty. (Mt. 7:24-26) Like Saul before he met Jesus, and like the Jews, they have "*zeal without knowledge.*" (Rom. 10:2)

Q. 1. a) Give examples of how some people of other religions have more zeal than many believers. b) Does this zeal save them? Why or why not? c) Illustrate how you have seen some believers have a lot of zeal in worship, but their lives are not growing in godliness and when trouble comes they soon fall away. d) Why does this happen?

We saw last week that a godly character is the foundation for spiritual leadership. We must be spiritually mature with godly character if we are to lead God's people in the way God desires. We then asked the question "*What do we need to do to become spiritually mature?*" We saw that the first answer to this question is that we must become men and women of prayer. It is not just the length of time we spend in prayer that helps us grow spiritually, but the quality of prayer. Prayer is how we relate to the living God, listening to him, and also sharing what is in our hearts. Prayer brings God's power into our lives. Prayer is how we ask God to fulfill his will in our lives and the lives of others. No one can become spiritually mature without developing a life characterized by fellowshiping with God in prayer. But prayer is not enough to make us spiritually mature.

2. Spiritual maturity comes when men and women know and apply God's Word.

Like a man with only one leg has a difficult time walking, so also a believer who only prays has a difficult time growing in spiritual maturity. The other leg, the knowledge of God's Word, is necessary in order for there to be good spiritual health. As Jesus said, it is those who know his word and follow it who have lives built upon solid rock. Such people, even during the storms of life, do not waver and fall. (Mt. 7:24-26) Paul learned that to be acceptable to God, his life must also be based upon the knowledge of God's Word. (Rom. 10:2) Zeal and prayer, without knowing God's Word, often gives us the impression of power, but not the reality of power in our lives. (2 Tim. 3:5)

Q. 2. a) Read Josh. 1:7-8. What warning did God give Joshua as he sent him into leadership? b) Read Ps. 1:2-3 and 119:9. What does David say makes a person "blessed" in the eyes of God? What keeps him from sin? c) Read 1 Tim. 3:2. What qualification must elders fulfill in relationship to God's Word? d) Read 2 Tim. 2:15. What does Paul tell Timothy he must do if he is to be a worker of God who is not ashamed?

When people buy a new tape recorder or a radio a manual is often included. That manual guides the purchaser on how to use the tape recorder or radio in a way that is beneficial to the person and that improves the length of life of what was bought. People can experiment and learn to use the radio as they want. But often it shortens the time before the radio is broken. For instance, often the manual instructs people not to turn the radio up too high or the speaker will be damaged. Because people do not read and obey this instruction, wanting to impress their friends with their new radio, they turn the volume of the radio up as high as possible. But soon the speaker is damaged and the quality of music is lessened.

In the same way God's Word is a manual to explain not only how we can live in a way that pleases God, but in a way that is most beneficial to us. But if we do not read and obey God's Word, then our spiritual lives do not develop and our leadership ends up hurting us and others. (e.g. If we use false promises to get people to vote for us, soon people do not trust us, even when we say something that is true. As a result our leadership ability is lessened, and the people themselves are hurt because they do not follow what would have been good advice.)

Q. 3. Describe a situation in your church when a leader did not know or follow God's Word and therefore was personally harmed and hurt others as well.

Throughout the Bible, God always demands that his leaders know and obey his Word. Through Moses, God told all of the kings that they must copy the law for themselves. (Deut. 17:18-20) This way they would have a personal copy of the law to study and read. And they would be able to lead the people of God according to the Word of God, not by the teachings of the culture around them. God told Joshua when he began to lead to make sure he always focused on understanding and obeying his commandments. David says that the man is blessed who "*delights in the law and meditates day and night on it.*" This person knows and follows God's Word so that he can keep his ways pure. In his list of qualifications for elders Paul says that an elder must be "*able to teach.*" Paul also warns his assistant Timothy that if he wanted to be a worker who was not ashamed when standing before God, he must "*study*" God's Word.

The Bible clearly shows that leaders of God's people must emphasize knowing and obeying God's Word. And yet in our days, few leaders and few Christians emphasize the study of God's Word. If there is a conference for prayer and healing, thousands will show up with a lot of excitement. But if there is a conference or a Bible study where the focus is the study of God's Word, few attend. Many elders have never gone to a Bible school or even regularly attend a Bible study. They want to lead, but they do not know God's Word. And they do not even try to study God's Word. They are too busy to join a Bible study group or go to an evening Bible study class, or read books which help them grow in their knowledge of God's Word. Even though they might pray a lot, without the balance of knowing God's Word, they will never become spiritually mature or lead in a way that honors God and develops a mature church.

Q. 4. a) Describe how many Christians do not honor the study of God's Word. What type of things do they prefer over the study of God's Word? What does this show about the balance of their life in growth in spiritual maturity? b) Illustrate how many church leaders want to lead but do not make the effort to study God's Word. c) Why don't many believers take the time to seriously study God's Word? d) What do you think needs to change so that the study of and obedience to God's Word is practiced in your church?

To become spiritually mature, we must balance our prayer life with time spent studying God's Word. Both are needed for healthy growth. If one is missing, or if one is under developed, then our spiritual lives will not be balanced. Fellowshiping with God means that we talk to God in prayer, but it also means that

we listen to God as he talks to us through his Word.

The Bible shows that the primary way that God talks to us is through his written Word. Although God might use visions, dreams, or words from the Holy Spirit, these are not the usual way that he talks with us. Only in God's Word are we sure that God is speaking in a way that has no error. (Note: In this TEE book we will not be able to learn in depth how to study the Bible. To learn more about how to study and interpret the Bible so that we can be sure that we are hearing from God and not just reading our thoughts into God's Word, you should read books like on how to study the Bible and how to interpret the Bible.

To become mature, strong believers we need to do the following:

a. We must read God's Word every day. This is called "devotional" reading. Our personal time with God has two parts. One part is prayer to God. That time is primarily when we share our praise, confession, thanksgiving, and requests with God. The other part is when we read from God's Word. This is the time when, like Samuel, we are saying "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening." (1 Sam. 3:10) When reading devotionally, we are not trying to deeply understand truths. Rather, we are letting our hearts listen to what God wants to specifically say to us.

Q. 5. For the next week, keep a record of your devotional time alone with God. a) How much time did you spend in prayer? b) How much time did you spend in devotional reading, when you listen to God speak to you? c) List some things which God spoke to you about during your reading. d) Did you spend more time in one part than the other? If they were not balanced, why not? e) What changes do you need to make in your devotional time next week in order for both of these spiritual disciplines to be balanced?

b. We must learn to study God's Word deeply. Paul warned that believers are immature because they only want the "milk" of God's Word and not the "meat." (1 Cor. 3:1-3) The "milk" is the devotional reading. It is good and God speaks to us. But without the "meat," which is the deeper truths, we can never grow in the depth of our knowledge. We must study, and study is difficult. Paul told Timothy if he did not want to be ashamed when he stood for evaluation of his life before Jesus Christ, then he had to study God's Word. The Living Bible translation of 2 Tim. 2:15 is "Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth (NLT)." In order for us to know God's Word and teach God's Word, we must study God's Word. Learning the deep truths of God's Word is not something we finish if we go through a Bible school. Rather, God's Word is something that we must keep studying all of our lives, seeking to understand it more. We can study God's Word on one level through study programs like Mekihima. We can study at a deeper level through TEE, or various Bible schools, or by buying commentaries which explain the truths of God's word in a deep way. Every author or teacher looks at God's Word in a unique way, so different authors help us to understand the deep truths of God's Word more clearly.

Q. 6. Think about the past year. a) List ways that you have studied deeply God's Word so that you understand the deep mysteries God wants you to know and teach others. b) How are you going to increase your time in studying God's Word deeply this coming year? What type of study programs are you going to join to help you study God's Word deeply?

c. We must obey what God reveals to us in the Word. Paul says that the knowledge of God's Word is only available to those who are spiritual. (1 Cor. 2:6-16) The Holy Spirit will only reveal God's truth to those who are walking in obedience to God and his Word. So when we study God's Word, we must come

with the commitment to obeying everything that God tells us. If we intend to only do the things that we want rather than letting God tell us what to do and we agree to obey, then God stops speaking to us. Our knowledge is then turned into an instrument of Satan to create pride. (1 Cor. 8:1-3) The difference between a life that is built upon rock and one on sand is often not what we know about God's Word. Rather, it is whether or not we are obeying God and following what God teaches in his Word. We only grow in spiritual maturity when we submit our lives to God and obey what the Holy Spirit shows us in the Bible. If there are parts of our lives that we knowingly do not live in obedience to God, then we are not filled with the Holy Spirit. And if we are not filled with the Holy Spirit, then we cannot grow spiritually.

Q. 7. a) List some truths that God has shown you from the Word which changed your life and which you are obeying today. b) List some truths that God has shown you in the Word but you are not obeying, or you often do not obey. c) Why are some truths harder to obey than others? d) Is Jesus the Lord of our lives if there are some truths that God has shown us which we are not obeying? Explain your answer. e) Take time right now to pray about your answer in b). Confess your sin and ask God to help you obey him.

d. We need to meditate on the truths which God gives us. (Ps. 1:2) To meditate means to think deeply about a truth, looking for ways that it applies to the person. It is like a cow who not only chews on the grass when eating, but all throughout the night chews again what he has eaten earlier. No one grows deep in his understanding of God's Word and how it applies to all situations of life without spending time thinking deeply about the truth. If we quickly read through the Bible, or if we only seek to understand the facts of the Bible, we only grow a little. In order to grow in spiritual maturity, we must learn to think deeply about the truths in God's Word. For instance, God hates favoritism. (James 2:1-9) If we were to meditate on this truth, we would think through what are different ways to show favoritism in the church and in the world. We look at tribal favoritism, or economic favoritism, or skin color favoritism, or educational level favoritism, or preferential treatment to family members, etc. As we examine each of these areas of favoritism, we begin to ask ourselves what are ways we are showing favoritism in each of the above areas of our lives. We then determine to obey God by not allowing these types of favoritism in our lives. If we do not think deeply about God's truths, we do not change. And if we do not change how we think and how we live, we do not become spiritually mature.

Q. 8. Take one truth you read from God's Word this morning and "meditate" on it. a) What are different areas of life that truth might apply to? b) What are different ways that truth impacts how you are to live in obedience to God? c) What are ways you need to change your life in order to be walking in line with the will of God?

e. We need to memorize key truths from God's Word. (Ps. 119:11) David tells us that it is when we hide God's Word in our hearts that we are able to overcome the temptation of sin in our lives. When Satan tempted him, Jesus quoted Scripture which he had memorized to overcome Satan. (Mt. 4:4, 7) One of the major ways we "resist" the devil (James 4:7, 1 Pet. 5:9) is by having Scripture memorized which we can use when temptation comes upon us. Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 10:3-5 that we are to take every thought "*captive*." It is by thinking about godly things, especially things from God's Word, that we are able to change how we think and how we act. Often we are not able to carry the Bible around with us to work or school. We must "hide" the Bible in our hearts. Then the Holy Spirit is able to take what we have memorized and apply it to specific situations. He takes the Word which we have memorized and encourages us by it when something sad happens to us. Or when tempted to sin, the Holy Spirit brings those memorized verses to our minds and through this gives us the ability to say "no" to Satan and overcome him. One of the key disciplines for spiritual growth is to regularly memorize God's Word. (See Phil. 4:8 for Paul's instruction that we are to

think about what is true and pure.)

Q. 9. a) How often do you memorize Bible verses? b) Make a list of Bible verses that you know by heart. Describe how the Holy Spirit has used those Bible verses in the past to encourage you or keep you from sin? c) Make a list of Bible verses that you should memorize. And then write down your plan on how to memorize those verses during the coming year so that they are hidden in your heart.

Summary: Spiritual maturity is a process. No one becomes spiritually mature quickly. Rather, through spiritual disciplines, the Holy Spirit works in a person's life, changing habits which change character, which bring spiritual maturity. The two major tools God uses to help us grow in spiritual maturity are prayer and study of his Word. Both are equally important and need to be balanced. We need to make prayer and study of God's Word "habits" in our lives so that we spend time with God every day, listening to him and speaking with him.

But there are other tools which God has given to us to help us grow in spiritual maturity as well.

3. Spiritual maturity is enhanced when we use "fasting" as a tool for spiritual growth. Throughout history, Christians have learned that fasting is a good tool to help spiritual growth. But it is easy for a wrong understanding of fasting to develop and rather than being a tool for good, it can become a tool used by Satan to create spiritual pride. So it is important to understand what Biblical fasting is and how it helps us grow spiritually.

The Bible teaches the following things about fasting:

a. Fasting is not a discipline to be forced on believers by the church. Rather it is a personal choice of the individual or group of believers for a specific purpose. The Bible does not indicate that believers must fast on certain days of the week or on certain holidays. It is permissible to have certain fasts like this and some Christians find benefit from fasts on specific days of the week or during a certain part of the year. But Christians must guard against such practices becoming rituals which are done without remembering the reason for which we fast. It may be good for elders to spend Saturday night in fasting. But they must guard against it becoming a ritual which they do without thinking about the reason for fasting.

b. The Bible does not teach that fasting is only withholding certain types of food. Rather, fasting is always not eating any food for a specific period of time. There is no indication in the Bible that on certain days of the week we can eat fish, but no other animal products and call this fasting. Such thinking can be dangerous for it gives us the proud feeling that we are fasting rather than helping us understand the purpose of fasting as a tool of spiritual growth.

c. Fasting, whether it is only not eating or combined with not having sexual relations with our spouse, is not the goal of fasting. Rather, the primary purpose for fasting is to focus time on seeking God's face. There is little advantage to fasting if we continue our normal pattern of living. If we fast, but still go to work, or watch TV, or spend time with our friends, then fasting is of little value.

c. Fasting is not a "bribe" to God. Fasting is not a tool God has given us to force God to do something that he might not want to do otherwise. We must guard against Satan's lie that we can use fasting as a way to force God to answer a certain prayer that we might have.

d. There are at least three major reasons why believers should fast:

1) It is a tool to help us learn self-control and self-discipline. By fasting we learn to overcome the natural desires of eating and sexual pleasure. By voluntarily stopping these good things we learn to control our desires and set them aside for prayer, study of God's Word, and meditation. (1 Cor. 7:2-5) Paul says that he learned to beat or discipline his body so that it submitted to him rather than he having to submit to these natural desires which could lead him away from following God. (1 Cor. 9:27) Until we break the hold that our natural desires have upon us and learn to control them, we will not grow in spiritual maturity. Fasting is a tool to help us learn to overcome the control of these natural desires and to make them obedient to us.

2) Fasting helps us set aside time to focus on spiritual things rather than continue in the normal pattern of living. Many Christians throughout history have found that if they remove themselves from the normal things of life, (e.g. eating) and spend time seeking the face of God, that God meets them in unusual ways. If they spend hours in prayer and studying God's Word, then all of their senses are focused upon God. God has told us that we will find him when we seek him with all of our hearts. (Jer. 29:13) In the same way, when we spend hours and even days, focusing upon God and our relationship to him, God will meet us in unusual ways and we will grow deeper in our faith. Some Christians spend a week every year without eating or spending time with friends, focusing upon God. They testify that these times refocus their spiritual lives and throughout the rest of the year they can walk with God in a healthy way.

3) The most common type of fasting is when in humility we bow before God in times of sin or difficulty. In the Old Testament fasting was often linked with times of confession from sin. Individually, and especially corporately, God's people would realize that they had sinned against God. So they would focus all of their attention upon repenting of their sin and asking God's forgiveness. They would ask God to heal them and their land from their sin, to lift his hand of judgment and restore his blessing. (e.g. 1 Sam. 7) In order to focus upon God and to show that they are serious in their request for forgiveness, the Jews would fast, wear sack cloth, not wash, not have sexual relationships, etc. For us today, the tool of fasting can help us examine ourselves and our church's sinfulness. It is a focused time of asking God's forgiveness for those sins and deliverance from his punishment. It is a time of making a commitment to God to change how we live so that we will honor him.

Fasting is also a way for us to focus upon something which we would like God to do for us. For instance, we could fast when someone is sick and we are asking God for healing. Or we could fast when we want to know God's will as to whether or not we should build a new church building. God sometimes waits until we humbly and fervently come to him about our problems before answering. He could give us the answer we want immediately, but that would not help us to grow in our faith in Jesus. And we would begin to treat God like "father Christmas"- someone who is there to give us things we want even when they are selfish things. By withholding a quick answer, God encourages us to realize that all good gifts come from him. And he is reminding us that those answers come because of grace, not because of our goodness or because we can manipulate God to do something for us. When we fast and pray, we often see what is selfish in our lives and we stop praying for those things. We begin to pray for what is really important for our spiritual growth and for the kingdom of God.

Q. 10. a) List reasons why many Christians fast. b) Which of the above three reasons for fasting do you think most Christians follow? c) Which of the reasons for fasting listed above do Christians not follow? d) What are ways you can use the tool of fasting to enhance your relationship with God, to further your spiritual growth?

4. Spiritual maturity takes place when there is a commitment to be holy and righteous. In Heb. 12:14 we are told that without holiness no one can see God. The word **holiness** means "separate" and has different meanings in the Bible.

First, all believers are called holy or "saints" because we are separated out from unbelievers to be the children of God. Believers are to remember that we are no longer similar to the rest of the people in the world. God has chosen us and we are different, separate from others. When believers try to resemble the world in how we live and act, we have forgotten that God has called us to be separate, to be different.

Second, we must be separate from sin. Sin is anything that is not in line with the will and desire of God. If we desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit and grow in spiritual maturity, we must always separate ourselves from sin. We must learn to hate personal sin, having the same attitude towards it as Isaiah who when he saw God said "Woe is me, I am a man of unclean lips." (Is. 6:5) We should hate any sin, no matter how small it seems to us. We must determine to be absolutely holy. And this means that in leadership we hate any semblance of sin in the lives of God's people. We must have the attitude of Paul who said that he worked hard to present the church as a pure virgin bride to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2)

When thinking about holiness, we often focus upon external actions that seem especially bad. For instance, we concentrate on drink, adultery, polygamy, chewing chatt, etc. Although the Bible does guide us in how to handle these problems, there are a lot of subtle sins that the Bible also show are evil. David wrote that "you (God) desire truth in the innermost parts of our being." (Ps. 51:6) to show how God wanted a person to be honest with himself, God, and others even in his hidden heart. Jesus said that it is the thoughts and motives in a person's heart that really destroy a person, rather than external things. (Mk. 7:14-23) In fact, Jesus classified sinful thoughts and bad relationships with people as being equal to sinful acts. (Mt. 5:27-30) In 2 Cor. 12:20-21 Paul lists common sins like quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder alongside sins we normally call evil like impurity, sexual sin and debauchery. If we want to grow in spiritual maturity, we must learn that God hates all sin, no matter how small it might seem to us. He hates small lies as well as sexual immorality. He hates gossip as much as drunkenness. No one can grow spiritually if he knowingly lets small sins continue in his life without repenting and seeking to overcome those small sins. As James said, the one who breaks the law in even a small way is a "lawbreaker." His relationship with God is impacted by the small sins just as much as they are by the big sins. (Jms. 2:8-11)

Q. 11. a) Make a list of "small" sins which we easily overlook, but that keep us from growing spiritually. b) Which of these "small" sins do you sometimes continue without really thinking that they are bad? Take time to confess these sins to God now, asking him to give you victory over them. c) In what way are our "small sins" frequently more destructive to our personal life and the church than the big sins which we often punish in church?

We have seen that it was the filling of the Holy Spirit which was a requirement when people were chosen to be leaders in the early church. The Holy Spirit will not fill people who are carnal, who have sin in their lives that they have not repented and turned from. The filling of the Holy Spirit always demands that we be holy in our lives.

Third, to be holy means we are separated to God for his service. It is not enough to be free from sin. To be holy means that we are totally separated to the service of God. We belong to him because he has bought us. (1 Cor. 6:20) Therefore we determine in our hearts that everything we do is for his glory. We no

longer live to please ourselves, but him who bought us. (2 Cor. 5:14-15) We must do the things which God asks us to do.

When these three types of holiness are true in our lives, we will grow in spiritual maturity and God can use us in church leadership.

The Bible also teaches that if we want to please God, we must be **righteous**. To be righteous is to live life in alignment with God's Word. The prophet Micah told God's people that if they were to be pleasing to God, they had to "*act justly and to love mercy.*" (Mic. 6:8) James says that true religion involves keeping control of one's tongue and taking care of the poor, like the widows and orphans. (Jms. 1:26-27) So it is not enough to flee from sin, but we must act in a way that pleases God and do the things that he desires of us.

Q. 12. Review the disciplines which are needed for us to grow into spiritual maturity and be qualified for church leadership. a) Make a detailed plan for how you will balance your time so that you are becoming both a person of prayer and a person of the Word. b) For the next month, keep a record of how much time you spend in prayer and how much time you spend in the study of God's Word. What does this record teach you about how balanced your life is? c) What are ways for you to focus more on becoming truly holy and righteous as God's Word teaches? How can the desire to be holy and righteous become a habit and then into character traits in your life?

5. Spiritual maturity results when we are filled with the Holy Spirit as a normal pattern of life. (Eph. 5:18)

Q. 13. Read Eph. 5:1-21. a) 1) What do people usually think the filling of the Holy Spirit consists of? 2) How does one get the filling of the Holy Spirit? 3) How does the filling of the Holy Spirit evidence itself in the life of an individual? b) What indications does Paul give in these verses about what the filling of the Holy Spirit is and how it evidences itself? c) What role does the filling of the Holy Spirit have in developing spiritual maturity? d) What role does the filling of the Holy Spirit have in the ministry of a church leader? e) Read Gal. 5:16-26. What do these verses teach about the Holy Spirit and the character of a leader?

The Bible teaches that only those who are filled with the Holy Spirit are to be chosen as leaders. (Acts 6:3) When a church is led by a leader who is not filled with the Holy Spirit and not under his control, then the person is leading God's people in his own strength and wisdom. The Holy Spirit is no longer leading the church through Spirit-filled leaders. Anytime leaders who are selfish and not living under the control of the Holy Spirit are leading the church, the Holy Spirit cannot fulfill his desires in that church. Such a church begins to die spiritually. When the Holy Spirit is confronted with worldly church leaders, he does not force them to do his will. Rather, he quietly withdraws, leaving them to lead in their own strength. But when leaders are under the control of the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit gives his power to these leaders. He gives his wisdom and tells them what he wants to do. The Holy Spirit is able to lead the church through these Spirit-filled leaders.

Often when Christians think about the filling of the Holy Spirit, they focus on what happened in Acts 2 or Acts 10 when the Holy Spirit came upon certain believers with great power, enabling believers to speak in tongues. They say that these stories are an example of what the Holy Spirit will do in the lives of godly Christians today. However, a clear understanding of the book of Acts seems to indicate that these stories are not meant to be examples of how the filling of the Holy Spirit will always happen in the lives of believers. Rather, Acts explains how the Holy Spirit equally came upon all believing Jews (Acts 2), the Samaritans (Acts 8), and the Gentiles (Acts 10). These stories primarily teach that in the church there should be no

ethnic divisions as was common in the New Testament times. Writing about 30 years after the Acts 2 event, the Apostle Paul claimed that not all godly believers will speak in tongues. Rather this spiritual gift will be given by the Holy Spirit to certain believers. (1 Cor. 12:7-11, 28-30) The Holy Spirit gives other spiritual gifts to other believers as well.

What does Ephesians 5:1-21 tell us about the leader and being filled with the Holy Spirit?

a. The Bible commands all believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul compares the filling of the Holy Spirit to a person being drunk with wine. When a person is drunk with wine, he falls under the control of the wine and loses control of himself. He no longer can walk straight. He sometimes falls down. His speech is slurred because of the wine, etc. In the same way, a person under the control of the Holy Spirit is being influenced to live in ways not possible in his own power. In our natural man we are selfish, proud, impatient, and we do not love those who are mean to us, etc. But when we are under the control of the Holy Spirit, we become selfless, humble, patient, and loving even to our enemies.

b. Things which believers need to do in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The context of Ephesians 5:18 indicates there are two major things which facilitate the filling of the Holy Spirit. First, we must get rid of all sin in our lives. In Ephesians 5:3-17, Paul lists different sins which we must stop doing as the children of God and live as the children of light. Just like dirt in a pipe stops clean water from flowing, in the same way, sin in our lives keeps the power of the Holy Spirit from filling us and flowing through our lives. The Holy Spirit will only fill people when there is no unconfessed sin and selfishness. Once our hearts get rid of the things which the Holy Spirit hates, the Holy Spirit comes in and fills us. Second, the filling of the Holy Spirit comes as we commit ourselves to walking in holiness and righteousness, using the power that the Holy Spirit gives us. (Eph. 5:9) It is not enough to be holy and get rid of sin in our lives. We must seek out the will of God for our lives and obey it. The will of God involves showing love to others, living in unity, serving each other, and helping the poor, etc.

(Note: Often believers have found that the Holy Spirit comes in great power into our lives when we not only cleanse our lives of sin, but spend time seriously seeking God to do a mighty work in our lives. Just as God said that we will find him when we seek for him with all of our hearts (Jer. 29:13), God sometimes waits to reveal the Holy Spirit's powerful presence until we earnestly desire it. For some this power can reveal itself in speaking in tongues. For others, this power can reveal itself in a deep sense of surrender and peace. Some Christians call this unusual, once-for-all working of the Holy Spirit in power the "baptism" of the Holy Spirit. Others call it the "filling of the Holy Spirit." What is important is not what word we use for this work of the Holy Spirit or how the Holy Spirit reveals his powerful presence in our life. Rather, it is that we have made a firm commitment to totally submit to him and be a pure instrument for his use. It is this breaking of our selfish, rebellious will and our commitment to live in absolute obedience which frees up the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. That power might on occasion demonstrate itself in powerful acts. But most usually that power demonstrates itself in our lives by changing our character so that we are like Jesus. What is ultimately most important is not how the initial "filling of the Holy Spirit" revealed itself in the past in our lives. Rather, it is whether or not the Holy Spirit is daily filling our lives, or in daily control of our lives. It is this daily filling which will change our lives into the image of Christ, making us spiritually mature.)

As leaders, if we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we must get rid of all known sin in our lives. And we must commit ourselves to walking to complete obedience to him. Another way to say this is that we must totally surrender our lives to the control of the Holy Spirit. When we do this, the Holy Spirit is able to influence our lives. He controls our personality so that we think and do the things that he wants us of do. Our intellect, emotions, will, and body are now available to him to achieve his purposes. He takes our

natural abilities and personalities, empowers them, and works through them.

c. Ways the filling of the Holy Spirit reveals himself in our lives. God's greatest desire from the Holy Spirit in our lives is to change who we are and how we live. He wants us to resemble his Son, Jesus Christ. And so the filling of the Holy Spirit will change us on the inside, giving us the power to change our character and actions so that they will honor Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:18-33 shows that the filling of Holy Spirit will influence us in several key areas of our lives. First, the Holy Spirit will change our worship. We will thankfully and worshipfully meet with each other to praise God. Second, our attitudes in life will change from selfishness and complaining to thankfulness no matter what the external circumstance of our life might be. Third, our relationships with other believers will change. No longer will we seek our own way, looking out for our own interests. Rather, we will willingly humble ourselves and submit to others. It will not matter if they are older or younger, male or female. In love, we will seek to honor the other person and meet their needs. Fourth, our family relationships will honor God. Rather than a battle of wills between a couple, the wife will submit as the husband lovingly serves his wife, just like Jesus Christ gave himself for the benefit of the church.

d. How the Holy Spirit helps us to grow in spiritual maturity. First, the Holy Spirit brings attention to areas of our lives which need to change to be in line with the will of God. Second, it is the Holy Spirit who gives us the desire to change. Third, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to overcome wrong habits and character and change to be what God wants us to be. As Paul said, it is God who gives us the will to change and enables us to change. (Phil. 2:12-13)

Summary: Every day of our lives we make a choice whether or not to live in obedience to the Holy Spirit, under his control. So at any given moment, we are either controlled by the Holy Spirit or controlled by our flesh. If we are controlled by our flesh, we cannot grow, for we no longer have the power of the Holy Spirit helping us to change. But when we are controlled by the Holy Spirit, he helps us to make decisions which are in line with his will. Over time, as we usually make decisions in line with the desires of the Holy Spirit, then we develop godly habits. After awhile, these godly habits become godly character which reveals our spiritual maturity.

And so to become spiritually mature we must live under the control of the Holy Spirit. Over time the Holy Spirit shows us areas of our lives where we are not honoring Jesus. He then helps us to want to change and gives us the power to change. Little by little the Holy Spirit replaces wrong habits and character with God-honoring habits and character. Gradually we become spiritually mature. Until we die and go to heaven, there will always be areas of our lives over which the Holy Spirit must gain further control and bring change. So spiritual maturity does not mean that we are perfect. Rather, it means that we have developed a level of godliness whereby we can be models to others of how to live as God desires.

In Gal. 5:16-26 we are told that in each believer are two natures. One wants to rebel against God and do what it wants. The other nature wants to obey God and do what he wants. These two natures fight each other for control over our lives. If we chose to live our lives in our own power and for selfish reasons, our sin nature controls us. Then our lives are characterized by things like sexual immorality, false worship, or selfishness which leads to divisions between us and other people. But if the Holy Spirit fills and controls us, he gives us a new character. Then our lives will be filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Who is controlling your life on a normal basis?

Q. 14. Take time now to prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to help you examine your life. a) Are you filled with the Holy Spirit? What evidence is there that you are filled with the Holy Spirit? b) If you are not filled with the Holy Spirit, what are sins you need to get rid of or things you need to do for the Holy Spirit to fill you? c) Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your habits and character traits that are not in line with his will. List these out on a piece of paper. d) Over the next week pray every day through these ungodly habits and character. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you desire to change and then have the power to change. e) What decisions or actions do you need to focus on so that these wrong habits and characteristics will change to ones which honor God?

6. Spiritual maturity is influenced by the type of friends we have.

If we are to grow in spiritual maturity, we must choose the right type of friends. Those whom we spend time with greatly influence whether we are growing in spiritual maturity, or if we are still allowing the things of the world to control our minds and lives. Solomon said that "*He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.*" (Prov. 13:20, See also Prov. 22:24-25; 24:1; Ps. 1:1) If we spend our time with those who have little desire to grow in spiritual maturity, then we will not grow in spiritual maturity. But if we choose friends from those who love God and desire to follow him with all their hearts, then we too will love God and seek to honor him with our lives.

It is not only the company of godly friends which will help us grow in spiritual maturity. We must encourage our friends to help us grow in spiritual maturity by sharing what they see in our lives is not godly or in line with the teachings of the Bible. Solomon said that "*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*" (See Prov. 27:6; 27:9) Often we cannot see our own weaknesses. But others can see them. If we are to grow, we need friends who will point out these weaknesses to us, and then help us grow.

(Note: All of us need to have different levels of friends. For instance, we should have unsaved friends to whom we are witnessing. In this friendship, however, we must be careful not to be influenced by their way of thinking and living. We should also have many friends among believers who love God. Being with them helps us also live in godly ways. Finally, we all need a few close friends who know us well and who can challenge us to grow in spiritual maturity.)

Q. 15. Make a list of your friends. a) List those whom you enjoy being with, but who do not help you grow in spiritual maturity. Pray and ask God whether or not you need to limit your time with these friends if they are hindering your spiritual growth. b) List those whom have been used by God to help you grow in spiritual maturity. c) Think through people in your church who are godly and wise. How could you spend more time with them so that they can help you grow in spiritual maturity? d) Choose one or two of your closest friends. Ask them to share things in your life that they do not believe is what God wants. Ask them to pray with you so that you can grow in spiritual maturity.

SECOND DAY

KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 1)

If we don't have a clear idea of what we want to do, then we usually will not accomplish anything worthwhile. Growing in spiritual maturity is not like throwing a piece of wood in the river and the wood will float down the river without having to do anything. Rather, it is like plowing and planting. A farmer plans what crop he wants to plant, where, and when. Then he has to work hard preparing the ground at the right

time for the crop. Finally he has to plant the seed in the ground. Once he has done that, then it is God who will cause the seed to sprout, provide the rain to keep the plant growing, and provide the produce. In our spiritual lives, we must know what type of character we need to develop in order to be the type of leaders that God wants us to be. We must also plow up our lives by prayer. We must plant the seeds by reading God's Word. We must keep weeding out the things in our life which hinder spiritual growth. And then the Holy Spirit will work in our hearts to produce the character that honors God and which he uses in his leaders to make a difference in our churches and in the world.

Q. 16. Read 1 Tim. 3:1-12, Tit. 1:6-9, 1 Pet. 5:1-4. a) Make a list of spiritual traits required for elders and deacons. b) Define each of the traits. c) Why must church leaders have each of these traits in order to lead the people of God in the way God wants them to? d) What happens to the elder's leadership if each trait is not found in a leader? e) What differences are there between the qualifications of the elder and deacon?

Toward the end of his life, Paul became very concerned about the quality of leaders who were leading the church. He knew that there were many leaders who were not leading in a godly way. These leaders were harming the churches rather than helping believers grow in spiritual maturity. So he asked Timothy and Titus to visit the churches in Ephesus and Crete to choose leaders who would lead in the way that God desired. He carefully described what type of leader was to be chosen to lead in God's church. They were to take great care to make sure these leaders met the spiritual qualifications which God wanted for those guiding his people towards spiritual maturity. Peter also wrote to churches with whom he related to describe qualifications for elders.

In outlining qualifications for elders and deacons, Peter and Paul focused upon the spiritual qualifications, or the character, which leaders were to have. As we study these qualification, we can see the following:

1. Most of the qualifications for leadership are based upon character and spiritual maturity rather than external qualifications of education, popularity, riches, etc. They focus on what a church leader is to be like, rather than what he is to do. The only qualification describing what an elder is to do is "able to teach."

2. These character qualities are not only for leaders. All Christians are to have these qualifications. However, since leaders are to model the ideal that God wants from all of his children (1 Cor. 11:1), all leaders should have these qualifications if they are to lead God's people.

3. There are other qualifications for leadership which are not mentioned in these lists in 1 Timothy, Titus, and 1 Peter which we will study next week.

4. Many of the qualifications for good church leadership which we focus upon today are not mentioned here. For instance, there is nothing written about a leader being able to read and write or having finished Bible school or elementary school. It does not mention that these leaders should have positions of power in the government or be wealthy. How different this is from today when the major criteria for leadership are education and wealth. We have become like Samuel when we tend to focus more on the external appearances rather than on the heart which is most important to God. (1 Sam. 16:6-7)

5. These criteria for leadership deal in three different areas of a leader's life: a) his personal life, b) his relationship to his family, and c) his relationship to non-Christians. It is not enough to be a godly person, but the leader has to have a good relationship with his family and with non-Christians. His godly character

must influence how he lives his life in his family and before the community who are watching.

Q. 17. a) Why do we tend to focus upon external qualifications today rather than the heart, or character, of a person? b) What problems develop in the church when an elder has good external qualifications but lacks the character described by Paul in 1 Timothy 3? c) What do we need to do in our churches to change how leaders are chosen so that we focus more on character than external qualifications?

Study the following chart which compares the different qualifications Paul and Peter mention for those who would lead in the church.

1 TIMOTHY 3- ELDERS	1 TIMOTHY 3- DEACONS	TITUS 1- ELDERS	1 PETER 5- ELDERS
Willing to serve/servant's heart			Willing and eager to serve as servants
Above reproach		Blameless/ upright	
Husband of one wife		Husband of one wife	
Temperate			
Self-controlled		Self-controlled/ disciplined	
Respectable	Worthy of respect		
Hospitable		Hospitable	
Able to teach		Encourage others with Word, refute false teachers	
Not given to drunkenness	Not drink much wine	Not given to drunkenness	
Gentle		Not violent	
Not quarrelsome		Not overbearing, not quick tempered	
Does not love money	Not pursue dishonest gain	Not pursue dishonest gain	Not greedy for money
Manages family well		Children who believe, obey	
Not a new believer			
Good reputation with outsiders			
	Sincere		
	Believes the truths of the Bible	Believes the truths of the Bible	
		Loves what is good	
		Holy	
			Refuse to use power but lead by example

It is clear from this chart that Paul did not have only one list of criteria in mind for church leadership. Each list for leadership is similar to, but different from the others. Peter and Paul were both emphasizing that church leaders are to be spiritually mature. Paul called a spiritually mature person someone who is "above reproach" or "blameless." Spiritually mature leaders live godly lives. They are holy, kind to others,

know believe and teach others the truths of God's Word, teach their children how to be godly followers of Christ, are careful in money matters, etc.

It is interesting that the major difference in qualification between elders and deacons is that whereas elders had to know the truth and be able to teach others and refute false teachers, the deacons are only required to believe the truth. Otherwise their character qualifications are similar to the elders. Clearly, in the New Testament, deacons were not only those willing to carry chairs, clean the church, or take up the offering. They had very important ministries which demanded godly character as well. Probably they were responsible for most of the administrative matters of the church whereas the elders were responsible to shepherd the believers spiritually.

Let us study the different characteristics which Peter and Paul mention for elders (called overseers) and deacons. We will use 1 Tim. 3 as the basis for understanding godly character.

BACKGROUND TO THE LEADERSHIP SITUATION IN THE EARLY CHURCH

From the times of Moses, the Jewish people were guided by a group of people called "elders." (See Num. 11:16-17) Later, when the Jews were scattered in captivity, in each city where they formed a synagogue, the Jews would choose elders to guide themselves. These elders would oversee the worship and teaching in the synagogue, rebuke and discipline Jews who were not following the teachings of the Old Testament, and where necessary settle disputes between Jews so that their matters would not be taken to the courts. These elders were chosen because of their wisdom and for their willingness to provide fatherly oversight of the Jews.

As the early church grew, they copied the practices of the Jews and elected elders to oversee the church. Like the Jews, these elders were known for their character and their ability to guide people in following God. They oversaw the worship and teaching in the church. They disciplined wayward believers. And they settled disputes among believers.

Although usually local church leaders were called "elders," they were also called "bishops." By using the word "bishop" Paul was seeking to communicate two major meanings. First, a bishop is one who provides oversight of others. So the bishop was an elder whom God had given the responsibility to oversee the spiritual and material needs of his people. Second, the "bishop" had no authority in himself and did not work for his own benefit. Rather, he has been given a responsibility by someone else and is accountable to that person. He works for the benefit of that person. The church bishop, then, does not have any authority in his own right. Rather his authority comes from Jesus Christ. And he did not serve for his own benefit, but for the benefit of Jesus Christ and the body of Jesus, the Church. (Note: The word "bishop" was not used as a title for a high church official who oversaw a given geographical territory until many years after the New Testament times. So we must not understand the word as the Orthodox or Catholics use it.)

The New Testament uses the word elder and bishop interchangeably to refer to the office of those who provide the oversight of the church. (See Titus 1:5,7) The word "elder" focuses upon the fact that these leaders were the respected, usually older, men of the community. And the word "bishop" focuses upon the work of the elders. They are those who are given the responsibility by God to provide the spiritual oversight of God's people. Most likely in the New Testament, the word "pastor" also referred to this position of elder as well, especially to the elder who was serving fulltime in teaching the members of the church. (Note: We will study this more in the third section of this TEE book.)

It seems that by the time that Paul wrote the book of 1 Timothy, the elders of the church in Ephesus had grown weak in their leadership. Several years earlier Paul had called them together and warned them of the need to guard the church from false teaching and to take care of God's flock. (Acts 20:28) Perhaps they did not do this. So now Paul was sending Timothy to Ephesus to reappoint elders. To guide Timothy in choosing the right people for eldership, Paul describes for Timothy the spiritual qualifications needed for all overseers over the flock of God in the local church.

BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHURCH ELDERS

1. SERVANTHOOD: THE ELDER MUST DESIRE TO BE AN ELDER WHO IS WILLING TO SERVE GOD'S PEOPLE SACRIFICIALLY: Although it might not seem like it, 1 Tim. 3:1 reveals a very important part of the character of a leader. It is the character of being willing to sacrifice one's life and convenience for the sake of others. Jesus said that the greatest love is revealed when someone is willing to sacrifice his life for another. (Jn. 15:12-13) That is what church leadership is like. Church leadership is giving up our lives, our conveniences, and our desires in order to serve the people of God. Because it demands great self-sacrifice, only those who are willing to serve in this way should become elders.

The church is greatly harmed by having people who do not want to serve as leaders. Those who unwillingly or reluctantly serve as leaders often do not fulfill the ministry of elders. They come to the meetings when convenient, but do as little work as possible. By holding these positions, they keep others who are willing to serve God's people from working. And often they lead like the world, with power and authority, rather than with humility and patience. It is better to have fewer leaders who want to serve God with all of their strength than to have many, even better externally qualified leaders, who do not work for God with all of their potential. That is why both Paul and Peter indicate that church leadership is for those willing to serve God's people as elders (shepherds) rather than being forced upon a person. It must come from a heart that desires to serve God and his people.

Q. 18. a) Describe a situation when you saw a church force someone to be a church leader when he did not have time for the ministry or did not want the ministry. b) What damage did this bring to the church? c) Why is it important for someone to become an elder willingly, with a sense of calling by God, rather than because he is forced to do it?

To understand what Paul meant when he wrote that desiring to be an elder (overseer) is good, we need to understand Paul's view of leadership. Normally, it is not good to desire to be a leader because we usually desire to become leaders for selfish reasons; for things like status, or pay, or glory, or other benefits. But suppose God said to you "I want you to be a church elder. I want you to serve me by helping my people grow and become holy." Of course you would be honored that God had asked you. But then if he said "Realize that if you are willing to be a leader, you will not be paid adequately in this world. You have to wait until you get to heaven. And it will mean long hours of meetings. Rather than respecting and honoring you, many times people will grumble about your leadership. Your family will miss having time with you. Your personal work will suffer. And you have to be willing to do anything- clean the toilets, carry the benches, sweep the floor- all without telling the people how you are serving them. In short, you are to be a slave of those in the church- and often they will treat you like a slave. When enemies come to persecute the church, you will be the first to be put in prison and die for your faith. Are you willing to be my servant and be an elder?"

Put this way, how many of us would be willing to be an elder? Paul and Peter are saying that the desire to be an elder must come out of the right motives, which is the willingness to serve God and his people

even when it brings personal danger and inconvenience. As Jesus said, the greatest leader is the one who is willing to be the slave of others. (Mt. 20:25-28) Such a decision means that we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves for God and for God's people.

Sacrifice is the heart of church leadership. Unlike the world, often there are few benefits to being a church leader. If we look at benefits to provide our motivation, seeking things like honor, glory, power, pay, etc.; then we are still serving like the world, and we will end up harming the people of God. But when God asks us to give our lives for him and for others and we expect no reward in this life, then we have the heart of a servant. And God's servant, although he may not receive many benefits in this life, will be greatly rewarded in the life to come. (1 Pet. 5:4) Church leadership must flow out of desire to serve, to see others grow, to meet their needs. It is only those with the character of a servant who can serve God. Do you have that desire? If so, then it is good for you to want to be in a position of eldership where you can serve others even more selflessly.

Q. 19. a) Do most elders understand their position of leadership according to the way it was described above? If not, why not? b) What is the difference in motivation and leadership when we become an elder knowing it makes us a "slave" of others rather than a "leader" of others? c) Describe the difference in the life and leadership of an elder if they see their role as a servant of others rather than wanting the benefits of leadership.

2. ABOVE REPROACH (BLAMELESS, UPRIGHT): More than anyone else in the church, the reputation of a leader is very important. Non-Christians often determine the reputation of a church by the reputation of the church leader. In fact, they even judge the truthfulness of Christianity by the character of leaders. When seeing a church leader live in a way that they know is not right, non-Christians often say "If that is what Christianity is like, then I do not want it." Paul insists that church leaders should be respected by people, which will bring honor to the church and to Jesus Christ.

To be "above reproach" means that there is nothing wrong in the person's life that people can accuse him of. The Greek word means "*one who cannot be laid hold upon.*" He must have such spotless character that there is nothing in his character that someone could point to and accuse the person of doing something wrong. There is nothing in him which brings dishonor to Jesus Christ. His life is so clean that it is like throwing mud at a window. The mud does not grab onto the window but slides off. In the same way, the leader must be so pure that any accusation does not stick, but quickly slides off since all know that his character is above reproach.

Elders should be like Daniel. When people examined his life, his leadership, how he handled money, etc., there was nothing that they can find to accuse him of except for his worship of God. (Dan. 6:1-5) In the same way, a church leader should have nothing hidden in his life which if it came to be known would bring dishonor to him and the church. There is to be no favoritism, no abuse of money, no telling of lies, no selfish ambition- nothing that people can accuse him of and be proven guilty.

Q. 20. a) Do you think most leaders would be willing to have their lives carefully scrutinized to see if there is anything that would bring disrepute to them? If not, why not? b) Describe how the disrepute of a leader brings shame to the church and to the cause of Christ.

Many scholars think that Paul uses this character of "above reproach" as a title or major qualification describing what leaders are to be like. All of the other character traits are examples of what it means to be

above reproach in character and in relationships with others.

HAVING A GODLY MARRIAGE

a. Husband of one wife: There are three ideas in this requirement.

First, the leader must have only one wife. A church leader must model God's standard of marriage between one man and one woman. He must not be a polygamist. Monogamy is God's design for marriage, even though many cultures have other practices. This means that no person with more than one wife is able to be a leader in a church.

Second, the husband is sexually faithful to his wife. He is not a person who commits adultery with other women.

Third, the husband and wife are modeling God's design in marriage as seen in the Bible. The man views his wife as his partner the same way that God planned when he gave Eve to Adam. He does not treat his wife as a slave or as someone who is inferior. Rather, the person treats his wife like an equal partner, like when two oxen are yoked in one plow. God made man and woman different from each other, but both are created in the image of God and are equal heirs of God's eternal kingdom. (Gen. 1:27, Read 1 Pet. 3:7) Peter warns husbands that if they do not treat their wives with respect, God will not listen to their prayers. Paul said that the loving, submitting relationship between husband and wife is an illustration of what the relationship between Christ and the church is like. (Eph. 5:22-33)

Because this character is listed first this shows that having a model marriage was very important in Paul's eyes. Marriage is the foundation of any society. When marriages break apart, there is no peace in a community. If parents do not model in their home what it means to treat others with respect, then the children will not do so with others in the community. Godly marriages are also important to the church. Throughout the world, most people put their trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior when they are younger than 16 years of age. So the most spiritually receptive people are young people. And the most receptive group of all are the children of believing parents. This is so important in the Bible that God said that the children who are born to believing parents are special. Malachi 2:15 says that one reason God honors marriage is so that godly children are born to godly parents. Paul said that the godly influence of just one parent on a child is so strong that there is a good chance that the child will become a believer. So even if married to an unbeliever, a parent should stay married to witness to their spouse and to influence their child to trust Jesus as their Savior. (1 Cor. 7:14)

Q. 21. a) Do most Christians have a model marriage as described above? Why or why not? b) Do most church leaders have a model marriage? If not, how do many church leaders fall short of the model of marriage that God wants of them?

Paul does not mean here that a person has to be married in order to be a church leader. Otherwise both Paul and Timothy, who were not married, would not qualify for leadership. (1 Cor. 7:7-8, 9:5) Paul even encouraged church leaders, especially those who were evangelists and church planters, to remain single so that they could work without hindrance for the Gospel. (1 Cor. 7:1, 32-35) He would not have given this instruction to remain single if it limited people from becoming church leaders. However, Paul knew that most people would marry. And if married, the leaders should have a godly marriage which other church members could copy.

POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS WHICH HELP US LEAD GOD'S WAY

b. Temperate: This word means "to be calm, circumspect, and a person of wise caution." The Greeks used this word for a person who is calm in the midst of troubles. He is free from rash actions. He has a clear mind and is balanced in his thinking. His perspective is Biblically based and balanced, without going to extremes. He is not given to great emotional swings from anger to apathy, depression to great joy, etc. The leader will have no habits which will lessen the respect of people towards him.

c. Self-control: This refers to a person's ability to control his life so that he lives according to godly principles. He is not controlled by his emotions or by the opinions of other people. The leader who is self-controlled has all of his nature under the absolute control of God and his Word, rather than let habits and the views of other people control him. We see this idea in 1 Cor. 9:27 when Paul says that he beats his body to make it his slave so that he will not fall into sin.

Self-control is important for spiritual growth. It means that we control our desire for sleep and get up early so that we can meet with God each day and pray and read. It means we control our sexual temptations. It means that we have power over our emotions so that we do not get angry or allow situations to overcome us. We control how we spend time so that it is used for beneficial things rather than wasting time by only sitting around and talking to our friends. A person with self-control takes responsibility for things, rather than blame others for problems. To blame others means that we are acknowledging that we are not in control. Someone has said that more leaders fail in leadership because they have never learned self-control than because they do not have the ability to lead.

Q. 22. a) Explain how self control is at the basis of all spiritual growth and godly leadership. b) What are areas in your life where you often are not controlling your self? c) What are areas in your life where you have learned self-control? d) What do you need to do so that you have control over your life rather than letting your emotions or others control you?

d. Respectable: In the Greek, this refers to a person who has good manners in his dealings with others and is dignified. He is not simply selfishly enjoying life but is dependable. In his dress and demeanor, people look at him as a person of dignity. Because a leader has developed self-control, his every instinct and desire is under perfect control. This in turn leads to becoming a man who is respectable, whose inner control leads to an outwardly beautiful life. "The leader must be one in whose heart Christ's power reigns and on whose life Christ's beauty shines."

e. Hospitable: Hospitality is an important part of the ministry of an elder. It is an extension of being generous. There are two levels of hospitality included here:

First, an elder must show generosity by having an open home to visitors. He must be willing to accept inconvenience for the sake of others. This was especially important in New Testament times when there were no hotels like many places in the countryside today. And the hotels in the cities were known for being unclean and filled with immorality. Therefore Christians and traveling teachers and even the poor relied upon other believers for a place to spend the night. This injunction was given when there were few options besides staying with another believer. As church leaders, elders are to model generosity by readily opening their homes to these traveling believers. (Note: Taking people into their homes was not intended to be a way for a rich believer who is given money (per diem) for a hotel and food to save money at the expense of someone else who was usually poorer. That is not love. Love would mean that we do not want to inconvenience another person while we personally benefit. So if we are paid per diem and want to stay

with other Christians, we should look for ways to financially help them, rather than keep the money for ourselves.)

Second, since an elder is a shepherd of church members, his home must always be open to members of the church to come and talk. People should feel welcome when they come to the elder's house for a church matter. If they do not feel welcome, then they will not bring their problems to the elder who is God's instrument to help them overcome their difficulties. So hospitality means that church members as well as unbelievers should feel welcome to visit, to share their problems, to receive counsel and spiritual advice and teaching, love, etc.

Q. 23. a) Why is it important for people to feel comfortable with the elders so that they feel welcome to visit their homes? b) What is your home like? Do many ordinary members of the church stop by for a visit? If not, why not?

THE MAJOR SKILL NEEDED TO LEAD GOD'S WAY

f. Able to teach: This is one of the few requirements for leadership that is not based directly upon character. Rather, it is a skill. However, behind the ministry of teaching is an attitude, or a character, that must be present in the elder. In order to be able to teach, the elder must have learned five important things:

First, the elder must have a teachable spirit. We won't learn if we aren't open to learning new things. So elders must always be seeking to learn new things.

Second, there must be the discipline of taking time to study God's Word to learn the truths. In Titus, Paul said that the elders must be able to use the Word of God to encourage the believers and refute those who teach false truths. Elders must know the major truths of the Bible. This only comes when elders take the time to study God's Word for themselves.

Third, the elder must first have applied God's Word to his life before he seeks to pass on truth to others. Biblical teaching starts when we know the facts and apply them to our lives. Having first learned how God's Word applies to ourselves, we pass on Biblical "wisdom," which is the application of the truths of God's Word in real life situations. We teach out of what God has done in our lives and what we have learned about spiritual growth. Today people often focus upon formal education as the foundation for teaching. We think that teaching is based upon the knowledge of facts. It does not matter if we have experience the truth or not. For instance, some single people think that they can teach on marriage because they have taken a class on marriage. But such people rarely make much of an impact on other people's lives. Rather, those who have lived the truth have credibility to teach others.

Fourth, elders must know how to take God's Word and can apply it to real life situations. Biblical teaching is when we take the truths of God's Word and apply it to specific situations people are facing. It is not only passing on general information or facts we have learned in the Bible school. Elders must learn that true teaching means we are able to teach at the level of the people, knowing their educational background, and their level of spiritual development. And it is focused to address the problems the church members are facing. And they are able to take God's Word and refute false teachings in the church.

Fifth, elders must establish different ways to teach members. It can be from the pulpit, or in Sunday school classes, discipleship classes, going to homes to give godly counsel, etc.

Hidden in this section is an important truth. Often we think leadership in the church primarily involves elders meetings where we make decisions, passing down orders, deciding how to use money, when to build a church, solving disagreements, etc. But that is not what the Bible teaches as the major part of leadership. Rather, Biblical leadership is based upon two major tools of leadership.

First, it is based upon **modeling** when we show other believers how to live in a God-honoring way. Paul's whole list of characteristics of being godly leaders is about being the type of people whom others can copy, to be able to lead like Paul who said "Follow me as I follow Christ." (See 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Tim. 4:12)

Second, Biblical leadership is based upon **teaching**. It involves passing on Scriptural truth in a way that encourages people to grow in their knowledge and spiritual walk. The world uses commands, rewards or fear of punishment to make people obey. But God did not give church leaders this type of authority. Rather, our authority comes from proclaiming the Word of God. That is why Paul tells Timothy that even when people are rejecting his teaching and listening only to teachings that they want to hear, he should focus upon preaching the Word in season and out. (2 Tim. 4:1-5) Elders should clearly teach the Word of God to show people how they are to change to live in a God-honoring way. And they must teach God's Word to withstand false teachings that seek to come into the church. (Acts 20:26-31) Elders are to be the "guardians" of truth in the church. And in order for them to guard the truth, they must know the truth.

Paul is not saying that all of the elders must be good public speakers. But all elders must have the knowledge of God's Word and be able to teach in some way. Some of the elders might be good at public speaking and able to teach the believers every Sunday. But other elders might only be able to teach in small groups or individually when counseling or discipling one person. Because the leaders are responsible to help people grow in their faith, and since spiritual growth requires teaching God's truths, the elder must be able to teach people God's Word so that they will grow in their faith.

Q. 24. a) Are elders in your church chosen with the understanding that they must be able to teach God's Word? If not, why not? b) Describe problems you have seen when the elders do not know God's Word so that they cannot correctly teach believers. c) What are some ways elders who have not been able to go to Bible school can still grow in their knowledge of God's Word so that they can teach? d) How well are the elders of your church using these two God-given leadership tools of modeling and teaching? How could they use these tools better? e) What other tools of leadership do they use which the Bible does not focus upon?

THIRD DAY

KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 2)

Yesterday we started looking at characteristics which Paul and Peter listed as being necessary for those who are willing to serve God and his people by being elders in a church. These characteristics are "**requirements**" for elders, but they should be "**goals**" of growth for all church members. We can use these characteristics to see how we are doing in developing into spiritually mature people.

Q. 25. Read 1 Tim. 3:1-12, Tit. 1:6-9, and 1 Pet. 5:1-4 again. a) List the character traits starting from those you think most leaders fulfill to those which few leaders fulfill. b) Describe how the situation in our churches would change if all of these characteristics are part of church leaders lives.

Let us continue our brief study of the characteristics of godly leaders outlined by Paul and Peter. In 1 Tim. 3, Paul's next series of characteristics are expressed negatively as things a man above reproach will not do as a follower of Jesus.

NEGATIVE CHARACTER TRAITS WHICH LEADERS MUST BEWARE OF

g. Not given to drunkenness: We learned earlier that an elder must be self-controlled. He must not allow anything except for the Holy Spirit to control his life. (Eph. 5:18) And so Paul states that no elder must allow alcoholic drink to control him. He must not become drunk, for a drunk person is not able to control what he does. Anything that takes away the self-control of a person, including chatt or other types of drugs, tobacco, etc. should not to be used by anyone seeking to serve God--either an elder or the common members of the church.

h. Not violent or quick tempered but gentle: Another area of our lives that we must learn to control is our anger. An elder must never be someone who uses his authority to either verbally or physically to attack others- either church members or family members. Like Jesus, when others insult him, he will not retaliate. (1 Pet. 2:20-23)

The Greeks viewed the character of gentleness very highly. The Greek word for "gentle" referred not to the character of being quiet and letting others get their way. Rather, it is the character of true justice. It goes beyond the written rules and looks at the intent of the law and the intent of the person. It understands that people are weak and prone to fail. So it deals gently with people. It also looks at the intent of the person rather than what the person did which might have been wrong. And it looks at the long-term actions of the person, how they tend to be over time rather than focus upon what the person did at the moment. A gentle person focuses upon the good side of a person, not on their mistakes and problems.

Elders should sympathize with people and their problems. A godly leader understands their weakness and when they fall into sin. Just like we are tender with small children even when they do something that is not what we like, so also we must learn to be gentle with others. When Jesus described himself, he told people to come to him for relief from all of their problems, for he is "gentle and humble." (Mt. 11:29) In Isaiah 42:2-3, referring to people who are emotionally broken, we are told that Jesus would never break a splintered reed or snuff out a smoking wick. That is what elders in our churches must be like. Rather than a harsh judgmental attitude seeking to punish people, the elder needs to relate to people with understanding, knowing their weaknesses and gently helping them to grow spiritually.

Q. 26. a) In what ways do elders often become impatient with other believers and treat them harshly? b) Why do you think it is important for elders to be gentle with believers, even when those believers are causing trouble? c) Why is it important to not only focus upon keeping the "rules of the church" but seek to understand the intent of the person?

i. Not quarrelsome: This means a person who does not constantly fight over differences of ideas, always finding fault with others, always picking apart ideas, being negative and demanding his own way. Rather than always fight for his rights or for his opinions, the elder should graciously listen to others, and give up his ideas out of respect for others if they choose not to accept his opinions unless their decision compromises what God wants from the church.

j. Does not love money: It is interesting that both Paul and Peter focus upon this area of the use of money or our attitude towards money. In fact, this is the one characteristic that is mentioned in every list

of leadership requirements. (See the chart in yesterday's lesson) Perhaps Peter and Paul both focused on this issue because it is one of the major areas in which church leaders often fail. In 2 Cor. 2:17 Paul said that he refused to peddle the Gospel like a trader "as many do." Even in his time there were many church leaders and church ministers who saw money as the major reason why they would serve God. In 1 Tim. 6:5-10 Paul mentions that one of the characteristics of a false teacher is an unhealthy interest in money.

Those of us who are full-time paid ministers need to carefully think about this. If we choose to be a pastor or evangelist because we cannot get another job; or if we demand pay for our ministry based upon the salary level of the world rather than the ability of our congregation to pay; then most likely we are becoming merchants of the Gospel. Or if we often think about how much our salary and benefits are going to be and if that determines where we will work, then we are traders in the Gospel. Just like merchants try to get the best price for their teff, we are seeking to get the best price from our ministry as church leaders.

But non full-time church workers like elders must also be careful in their attitude towards money. They must show in their work (farm, office job, etc.) that gaining money and other benefits are not the most important thing to them. They must have demonstrated a greater concern for God and his kingdom rather than the world and its benefits. (Mt.6:19-24, 33) They should not focus on getting bigger houses, climbing the social ladder, etc.

There are two reasons why this is very important for elders:

First, elders need to model for the members of our churches a lifestyle of generosity and concern for God and his kingdom. By how much we give in our tithe we can show people the joys of tithing to God. By helping the poor, we can show how God wants his children to reach out and help the poor. By using our money to spread God's kingdom and not benefit our personal lives, we can show believers that there is another world coming and that we must all focus our attention upon God's kingdom now.

Second, elders have the responsibility to use the church's money in a proper way. If we are not trustworthy in our personal use of money, the members of the church will not trust us in how the tithes and offerings are being used. If we use our own money to make life easier for ourselves, we will also selfishly use God's money to buy less important things in the church (e.g. bigger church buildings, musical instruments, choir robes) more than the important things (e.g. books to help people grow in their faith, sending out evangelists) If we love money too much, we will be tempted to misuse church money for personal needs, like to pay for good food at the elders' meetings, or even stealing the money for our own use. Elders must make sure this area of our lives does not bring any disrepute upon us. Often this means that we need to be extra careful that we do nothing that will bring an accusation against us. (Note: We will study this more in a later lesson.)

Q. 27. a) In what way have you seen a person who tends to argue and quarrel ruin the harmony among elders or in the church? b) Describe how you have seen an elder or church worker who has a "love for money" bring problems into your church.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS WHICH A LEADER MUST MAINTAIN

k. Manages his family well: Leadership starts at home. A person who is not able to provide spiritual leadership at home will not be able to provide spiritual leadership over the greater family of the church. If elders are not able to positively influence their children towards following God, then like Eli's and Samuel's

children, their children end up spreading evil and are a bad testimony among the people of God. (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 8:3)

The word "manage" does not mean that the father is a harsh boss of his wife and children. Rather, there are two ideas involved in the father's relationship to those in his family. First, he is to "take care" of his family. This means that he is responsible for their physical and spiritual well-being. He leads not for his benefit, but for their benefit. Servant leadership starts in our families as husbands sacrificially care for their wives and children. Second, the husband is to manage, or guide, oversee, and provide direction to the family. He is to guide them to grow spirituality. If he isn't home, or if he is not carefully working with his wife and children to help them grow, then he is not fulfilling the leadership role that God has given him in the home. And if he does not do this at home, he won't do it in the church.

(Note: This teaching implies that the husband and wife are living together. How can a husband provide leadership to his family if the wife is living in one area and the husband is living in a distant area? The tendency today of some evangelists and Christians with government jobs for husbands and wives to live in two different locations and only visit each other occasionally does not have any Biblical basis. Can you image Abraham leaving Sarah in Haran and going to Canaan alone? Be careful that the desire for money does not place the husband and wife in an unbiblical relationship. Is this not a way that the love of money could be hindering the elder and his family? And how can the elder model a Biblical marriage if his family is not with him?)

For some evangelists, living separately is not a financial issue, but because the wife misses her family and is struggling to adjust to a new culture. If God has called us to be evangelists, we must be very careful when choosing our wives. Unless they also are called to be evangelists, they will often not be satisfied living away from their home area. They might live with their husbands for a time, but she will eventually find a reason to go back home, living apart from her husband. Although the evangelist can try to force his wife to stay, this rarely works. She will make his life and ministry miserable if she is not happy there. And in today's generation, the wife will often make up her own mind to go back home. If an evangelist finds himself in this position where his wife refuses to stay with him, it is better for him to return home. A great danger is that some evangelists fall into sexual sin when their wives do not stay with them. And they cannot model a Biblical marriage to those whom he is called to serve. At home, if the man still believes that God has called him to be an evangelist, he should pray that God will change his wife's heart so that she is willing to come. And he should wait patiently for God to work in his wife's heart.)

Part of "managing" his family should also mean that the wife is supportive of her husband's ministry in the church. The decision to become an elder, evangelist, or pastor should not be the decision of the husband alone. Rather, it is important that the whole family make the decision to serve God sacrificially. Church leadership impacts not only the husband, but the wife and children as well. Because the husband now has less time to help in the home and in raising the children, the wife must take more responsibility in the home. And people will be coming to her home more often asking for the assistance of her husband. She will have to cook more than she used to. If she does not do accept this added responsibility joyfully, realizing that she is also serving God, her husband's ministry will be impacted. Both she and her children will begin to resent the father. It won't be long until their home will no longer be a model of how to live peacefully as husband and wife.

There are some church leaders who misinterpret Luke 18:29-30 and say that an evangelist does not need to spend time with his family. He is to leave them and be blessed. But that is not what the passage in Luke is teaching. He is talking about the initial act of believing on Jesus Christ. A person must not allow his

family (wife or children) to hinder his following Jesus as a disciple. Rather, he is to "leave" them by placing his trust in Jesus and following him. Paul clearly teaches that the husband is still responsible to take care of his wife and raise his children in a godly way. In fact, Paul implies that if evangelists and elders neglect their family so that they do not grow up to fear God, they are not qualified to be evangelists and elders.

Unfortunately, there are many pastors and evangelists who do not provide godly leadership in their homes. Some are so busy working for God that they do not have time for their families. Others do not spend time teaching their own children about God, how to follow him and honor him with their lives, how to pray and study God's Word for themselves, etc. They assume that their wives will do this. As a result, children of pastors and evangelists have earned the reputation of being undisciplined and are first to abandon their faith when challenged in school. This is often true of the elders' children as well.

God's principle of leadership is always faithfulness in lower levels of leadership before giving leadership responsibilities at higher levels. The family is the foundational area of leadership, the place where all church leaders are to learn to lead in a way that pleases God. If someone cannot lead there, then it is certain they cannot lead as a godly leader over more people. If a man cannot teach his wife how to love God, or his children how to love God and evidence their love for God by respecting their parents, then they will not be able to influence the people of God to love God and obey his commands. The elder is the "spiritual father" of the members of the church. The same care needed when raising his family should be taken in helping each member of the church.

The style of leadership of the elder is also demonstrated in his home. If the elder uses power, commands, force, verbal and physical abuse in the home to get his wife and children to obey him, he will lead in the church in the same way. But if the elder leads by serving, helping, caring for, gently encouraging, teaching, modeling in the home, then he will be a servant in the church family as well.

Q. 28. a) Do most elders', pastors', and evangelists' families have a reputation of being disciplined and godly? If not, why not? b) Why did Paul say that it is important for an elder to have a family that loves and obeys God? c) List things a father should do as the spiritual leader of the home to encourage his children to believe on God, and love and obey him. d) Do most fathers in your church do this? e) Jesus said that no one is to separate husband and wives. (Mt. 19:4-6, 1 Cor. 7:1-6) Do you think these verses apply to evangelists or church leaders living separate from their wives for any reason? Explain your answer. f) Why is it important for the wives and children to be supportive of the ministry of their father?

Does this mean that if one of the elder's children rebel that he is no longer eligible for leadership in the church? No. No matter how well we teach our children, they still have the ability to rebel against God and go their own way. However, if most of the children are disruptive, undisciplined, and wander away from the faith, this is usually a sign that the husband has not done his job of raising them to be respectful and so that they desire to follow Jesus themselves. So before removing an elder from ministry because one of his children is rebellious, the other elders need to examine the situation to verify if it was because of the elder's negligence and lack of leadership in the home, or if it was because the child rebelled against what he had been taught.

l. Not a recent convert: Paul insisted that an elder be spiritually mature. A new believer has not had time to become spiritually mature, so he is not ready to be a leader in a spiritual ministry. He might have been a leader in the government or in the community. But he still is not ready to lead in a spiritual organization. Only those who have learned to follow God and resemble him and lead as he wants are

qualified for church leadership. How does someone become spiritually mature?

First, one of the major ingredients is time. It takes time for the Holy Spirit to work on a person's character to change them into the image of Christ.

Second, each person must submit to the Holy Spirit. A person has to desire to grow into Christ-likeness for spiritual maturity to take place. This means there must be the desire to pray, study God's Word, obey God, serve God, etc.

Third, it takes the consistent application of God's Word to one's life. A person grows spiritually as we listen to God's Word and apply it to our lives. We have to unlearn wrong ways of thinking learned from the world and wrong habits that we have developed over time. We each must learn new ways of thinking as new creatures and develop new habits of following God.

Fourth, each person needs to learn how to defeat Satan, their old nature, and the attractions of the teaching of the world- which are the three enemies that work against the believer.

Although it does take time to become spiritually mature, just being a believer a long time does not make a person spiritually mature. Some believers, because of their desire to follow Jesus with all of their hearts, become spiritually mature quickly. Others, even though they have been Christians for a long time, never submit their lives to Jesus and therefore do not grow in spiritual maturity. So there is not a certain length of time that qualifies a person to be a leader.

The question Paul wants us to ask as leaders are chosen is "Are they spiritually mature?" If not, then whether or not the person is a recent convert or a long time Christian, they are disqualified from leadership. Often new believers who are famous are quickly put into positions of authority. But without having the moral character as the foundation for leadership, their leadership can become a tool of Satan leading to pride and their downfall. They fall into the same sin of pride which Satan committed which led to his fall into sin. This pride in leadership which often causes spiritually immature people to fall also brings harm to the church. It is important for church leaders to give believers ever increasing responsibility so that they are ready for leadership without becoming proud or viewing the position like the world does.

Q. 29. a) Illustrate how you have seen a new believer or a spiritually immature believe fall into the sin of pride when elected into leadership. b) What can the existing church leaders do to help less spiritually mature believers grow into spiritual maturity so that they are qualified for leadership?

m. Good reputation with outsiders: People judge the church by what they see in leaders' lives. If leaders have a good reputation as seen in the eyes of the world, then the church will be respected. If leaders are known for fighting and selfishness, then the church will not be respected. And when the reputation of the leaders limits their witness or the witness of the church, then they have fallen into the trap of the devil. They are stumbling-blocks limiting the growth of the kingdom of God.

Once the author of this study book talked to a government official soon after the fall of the communist government. "We are looking to you evangelicals to show us how to live in unity and how to develop as a country" he said. Shortly afterwards, however, various evangelical churches started fighting against each other as well as fighting amongst themselves. Next time the author saw the government leader he said "Evangelical believers are worse than us. Why should we listen to you when you cannot live at peace

amongst yourselves?" The lack of godliness of the leaders of the churches and the rest of the believers ruined the testimony of the churches and limited the impact which the churches could have made on the nation.

Leaders should not only model how to be godly church leaders, but we must model how to be ideal citizens. Unbelievers might not agree with the leader's beliefs or life style, but they should honor him for his character and his actions. This means that elders should be involved in their community, not just in church work or relating only to other believers. But when relating in their community, an elder must be careful that he does not become like the non-believers when he makes friends with them. Like Jesus, we are to be with sinners as their friend, but should not participate in their sins. (Mt. 11:19, Jn. 8:46) So elders are not to have the respect earned by being similar to the people of the world, but have the respect earned for standing on principles and showing godly character. Even unbelievers respect those who stand on godly principles and care for fellow humans and society. Why else do they choose so many believers to be leaders in the kebeles and government?

AN ADDED CHARACTER TRAIT FROM THE DEACONS

n. Church leaders must be sincere or consistent in their decisions. Although this character trait is listed for deacons, it is assumed that the elders have this character trait as well. The Greek word for this character means someone who does not speak in two different ways. This can mean two things. First, it can mean that the person does not say one thing to one person and another thing to another person. What is decided and what he says is always the same. He does not frequently change his mind and what he says depending upon whom he is talking to. He does not evade issues or cover over problems with smooth sounding words. What he says is clear and true, no matter who is listening. Second, it can mean that he is not inclined to spreading rumors in the church. As people come to the elder (and deacon) and share secrets, this person does not take what he has seen and heard and tell it to others.

Q. 30. a) Illustrate how you have seen the reputation of church leaders enhance the respect of non-Christians for the church. b) Illustrate how you have seen the reputation of church leaders hinder the respect of non-Christians for the church and for the Gospel. c) List ways that church leaders should be more involved in their communities so that they and the Gospel are more respected. d) What are some dangerous things church leaders need to be aware of so that their friendship in their communities does not limit the spread of the Gospel?

Much of what Paul says as criteria for elders also refers to the criteria for deacons. In his list in Titus, Paul adds several more personal characteristics that church elders need to have for them to be qualified for eldership.

TEACHINGS FROM TITUS ON THE ELDER'S SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

o. Love what is good: When we grow in spiritual maturity, our character becomes more like God. God loves sinners, but he hates what is evil. Paul told Titus that elders should be the same way. We are to hate evil in any form. That evil might be hypocrisy among believers, or injustice in society, or favoritism, or wrong views of women, etc. (Note: We must learn to hate the sin, but love the sinner.) On the other hand, spiritually mature elders are to look for, praise and reward what is good in all of its forms. We should get excited when small children learn to love Jesus or when someone lovingly helps an unbeliever. We should rejoice when someone refuses to pay a bribe in order to get a favor from the government or when people learn to take care of God's creation by not cutting down all of the trees. Rather than complaining about people, we look for good things to praise.

p. Holy: To be holy means to be separated from the world and sin, and separated for God's use. A spiritually mature person realizes that he is no longer the same as people in the world. He lives differently, thinks differently, and acts differently. He does not participate in anything that will displease God, even though others do it. He no longer follows the way of his culture, but conforms his life to the way that God wants him to live.

Q. 31. Review the past two day's lessons. a) Which of these characteristics do you think most church leaders in Ethiopia practice? b) Which of these characteristics do you think many church leaders struggle with? Why do they struggle with that specific character? c) If you were going to oversee an election of elders in your church, how would you get the members to focus on these characteristics in choosing elders rather than other criteria such as education level and ability to speak publicly?

Summary: Spiritual leadership is based upon character. And so Paul emphasized that all elders must fulfill spiritual qualifications in order to lead God's church. Next week we will study some other characteristics which are also foundational to godly leadership. Below you will find another way to organize the qualifications for spiritual leadership. Read through these carefully. Do you fulfill these qualifications? If not, what do you need to do to become a spiritually mature person so that God can entrust you with the care of his people?

a. Spiritually qualified elders are men of experience. These men do not only have paper qualifications of having gone through a school. Rather, they have developed experience and maturity in the following areas of life:

1. Faithfulness to God over time. They have shown themselves to be committed to following Jesus in all circumstances.

2. Quality relationships with people. A godly person knows his own strengths and weaknesses. They know the people over whom they minister. As leaders they have shown that they have a desire to minister to people and people have responded by coming to them for help. Others look up to them as good models in how to follow Jesus.

3. Consistent victory over Satan. These believers live holy lives, overcoming the various temptations Satan brings upon them.

4. Know God's Word. They do not only have factual knowledge, but they have learned to apply the knowledge of the Word to their lives and are living in obedience to it. They are also actively passing on what they know to others, either formally in church or Sunday school, or informally in counseling situations.

b. Spiritually qualified elders have demonstrated leadership in the family. The depth of relationship the elder has with his wife will no doubt reflect how the elder will be able to develop relationships with the church. His ability to keep his covenant of purity with her in marriage will show how he will be faithful to the church. If he keeps his promises to her, then he will likely keep his promises to the church members. And the fact that the elder can lead people into a relationship with Jesus will be revealed in how his children have come to know Jesus as their personal Savior. Since the faith of the children is often caught by watching a vibrant relationship with God more than by teaching facts about God, the faith of the children will reflect how close the elder's relationship is with God.

c. Spiritually qualified elders are known for their relationship with God. They love God more than anything else. Their study of the Word, prayer, and service all reflect this love.

d. Spiritually qualified elders are known for their compassion. They are sensitive to the needs of people, and when they see people struggling, they help them. This is especially seen in their concern for the spiritually lost who are going to hell.

e. Spiritually qualified elders have developed mature character.

1. Although they are not perfect, **their life is consistently lived in line with what the Bible teaches** and are therefore respected by most people for being men of integrity.

2. They have learned **self-control**. They have learned to control the dark side of being human; their temper, their tongue, their love of money and glory, etc. They do not retaliate against those who slander them or disagree with them. They are above reproach in business dealings, known as someone who is fair and honest. They have also learned control over their will. Rather than doing what they want with little thought, they manage their life and their time according to principles. They have a disciplined prayer life and study life.

3. They are men of **courage**. They are not afraid of people or afraid of the pain of rejection. They are not politicians who change their decisions depending upon what people want. Rather, they live their lives based upon biblical values, even when others do not agree.

4. They have a **sense of vision** of what God wants them and others to do. And then they have the commitment to work slowly to fulfill God's vision. They do not just follow the past, but always ask "What is God's desire of us now?"

5. They are **flexible**. Since times and situations are always changing, they are able to adapt to the changing times. But they do not just accept everything new, but evaluate whether it is important based upon what the Bible teaches.

6. They **listen to the ideas of others**. They do not think they have all of the knowledge. They are not afraid that listening to others means that they are not good leaders. They realize that every believer has the Holy Spirit in him so each person can be guided by the Holy Spirit to give good counsel.

7. They are **able to handle the criticism of others**. Leaders will always be criticized because it is impossible to please everyone. Therefore elders need to know what to do with criticism. They must not be afraid of it. Nor should they get angry at it. Rather, they need to listen carefully to each criticism. And then they ask themselves "What is true in this that I need to change?" and "What is not true, and therefore I do not need to worry about it?" These elders know that Jesus Christ is their master, not people, and they are going to be evaluated by him and not them. But they want to be the best they can be, so they always listen to what others are saying.

f. Spiritually qualified leaders are willing to serve God as an elder. They are not pressured by people into being an elder. The elder knows that God has asked him to serve his people by being their shepherd. He gives freely of his time, money, spiritual gifts, etc. so that other believers can grow in their spiritual lives and service of God.

Q. 32. a) Which of these qualifications do you meet? b) Which of these qualifications are you weak in? c) What do you need to do to become a spiritually mature person so that God can entrust you with the care of his people?

WEEKLY MEETING

DISCUSSION

1. a) Describe how many Christians do not honor the study of God's Word. What type of things do they prefer rather than studying God's Word? What does this show about the balance of their life in growth in spiritual maturity? b) Illustrate how many church leaders want to lead but do not make the effort to study God's Word. c) Why don't many believers take the time to study God's Word seriously? d) What do you think needs to change so that the study of and obedience to God's Word is practiced in your church? e) Which of the types of Bible study described above do most Christians not do?

2. a) Are elders in your church chosen with the understanding that they must be able to teach God's Word? If not, why not? b) Describe problems you have seen when the elders do not know God's Word so that they cannot correctly teach believers. c) What are some ways elders who have not been able to go to Bible school can still grow in their knowledge of God's Word so that they can teach? d) How well are the elders of your church using the two God-given leadership tools of modeling and teaching? How could they use these tools better? e) What other tools of leadership do they use which the Bible does not focus upon? f) Discuss whether or not the church should make regulations outlining what level of Biblical knowledge a person must have in order to become an elder, an evangelist, or a pastor.

3. a) Do most elder's, pastor's, and evangelist's families have a reputation of being disciplined and godly? If not, why not? b) Why did Paul say that it is important for an elder to have a family that loves and obeys God? c) List things a father should do as the spiritual leader of the home to encourage his children to believe on God, and love and obey our Father in heaven. d) Jesus said that no one should separate husband and wives. (Mt. 19:4-6, 1 Cor. 7:1-6) Do you think these verses apply to evangelists or church leaders living separate from their wives? Explain your answer. e) Why is it important for the wives and children to be supportive of the ministry of their father?

4. Review the past two day's lessons. a) Which of these characteristics do you think most church leaders in Ethiopia practice? b) Which of these characteristics do you think many church leaders struggle with? Why do they struggle with that specific character? c) If you were going to oversee an election of elders in your church, how would you get the members to focus on these characteristics in choosing elders rather than other criteria such as education level and ability to speak publicly?

LESSON FOUR

FIRST DAY

KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 3)

Q. 1. Read 2 Cor. 11:23-29. Make a list of troubles that Paul faced as he took the Gospel throughout the world. What brought the most burdens and suffering to him? c) As you think about the ministry of being a church leader, how is Paul's description of his sufferings similar or different to what happens to an elder?

It is true that in many ways following Jesus is convenient. Being a disciple often brings joy and gives internal satisfaction. But we must be very careful in how we understand these statements. From a human perspective, this song is often not a reality here on earth. Following Jesus often causes persecution. (2 Tim. 3:12) That is why Jesus told those who wished to follow him that they had to take up their cross and follow him. (Lk. 9:23) During our life on the earth, we will face troubles; poverty, famine, loss of jobs, sickness, and finally death. Jesus warned that in the world we will have many trials. (Jn. 16:33)

This is especially true for church leaders. Church leadership actually brings more trouble upon a person. Almost every great leader in the Bible led in the midst of added suffering. Moses endured the constant resistance of his people. Even his brother and sister turned against him. (Num. 12:1-9) David faced the resistance of Saul and the rebellion of his son Absalom. Jeremiah suffered the persecution of those to whom he proclaimed the message of the Lord. (Jer. 37:15) Almost all of the 12 disciples faced imprisonment and death. So no one who becomes a church leader should expect an easy way, or that it will bring joyful circumstances and satisfaction. There is a cross that church leadership brings which other believers do not have to carry. Ultimately, our satisfaction is the result of a desire to please and obey God who has asked us to do a job for him. Happiness comes by showing our love for him in obedience, even when it may not be convenient to us. One day our joy will be complete when we die and hear Jesus' words "*Well done, good and faithful servant!*" (Mt. 25:21)

To be able to serve God as a church leader we must first develop our character and our spiritual maturity. Last week we studied the characteristics Paul said must be present in church leaders for them to serve as elders and deacons. For the next two weeks we will summarize some other traits that leaders need to develop in order to lead effectively. There are an unlimited number of characteristics which leaders could develop to make us more effective in leading in the church. Of course no leader will ever have all of these. However, the following characteristics are listed as things which all leaders should seek to grow in. Some of these characteristics are more important than others. But all of them are important if we want to be leaders whom God can use greatly for his kingdom. Unfortunately we will not be able to adequately describe each of these characteristics. However, we list them because it is important for us to think about these characteristics which will make our leadership more fruitful. As you study these characteristics ask yourself "Am I like this? or Do I need to grow in this area of my life?"

Over the next two lesson we will review characteristics which make church ministers effective leaders. We have divided these characteristics into four categories. The first category deals with characteristics which primarily have to do with leadership as it relates to God. The second category deals

with personal characteristics which enhance our leadership. The third category is those characteristics which influence how we relate to others. And finally we will look at those characteristics which impact how we work as leaders.

CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: CHARACTERISTICS ORIGINATING IN A LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD (PART 1)

1. Serving from an awareness of a call from God into ministry.

Q. 2. Read Is. 6, Ezek. 2:1-8, Acts 9:1-19. a) Describe the call to ministry of each of these leaders. b) What promise did God give to them which shows the difficulty of ministry which they were going to face? c) Read Acts 20:28. Whom did Paul say chose elders to be leaders?

We often hear statements like "I have been called to be an evangelist." But what do we mean when we say this? A "call" from God is a deep sense in our hearts that God is asking us to serve him in a specific way. There are two types of calls. There is a general call which all believers have no matter where they work. And then there is a specific call which God gives to those who are to separate themselves out to serve him in the church.

a. All believers must see their areas of work as being given to them by God for the purpose of serving him. In one sense, every believer must realize that he is "called" to serve God where he is. No matter what our work, we are to live in holiness and love those around us. If a believer is a doctor in a hospital, then God has "called" the person to be a godly doctor reaching out on behalf of Jesus to the physical needs of people. His purpose for work in the hospital should be to serve God, honoring him by being the best doctor he can be in helping others. How he works should resemble how Jesus would work if he were in the hospital helping the sick. If God has "called" a person to be a farmer or trader, then the person seeks to be the best farmer or trader he can be for the glory of God.

b. But the Bible shows that when God wants to separate a person out from the normal types of work that people do so that they give themselves to fulltime or part time ministry, he asks that person to serve him in a specific way. This is said to be a "call" to ministry (e.g. as an evangelist, pastor, development worker, missionary) or leadership (e.g. elder). From the Bible, we can learn the following about God's call into ministry and leadership:

1) God chooses leaders. (Acts 20:28) One of the most important truths that church leaders must remember is that we are not chosen by man to be leaders, but by God. Yes, people might vote for us and put us into leadership. But, their vote is under the sovereign control of God. Paul told the Ephesian church elders that as church leaders they were there because the Holy Spirit had appointed them as leaders. Daniel 4:25 reminds us that all leaders are chosen by God. God is in control of government leaders, but he is also in control of the church leaders. He is the one who lifts up or lowers a leader. (Ps. 75:6-7)

The truth that it is God's responsibility to raise us into leadership or lower us from leadership helps us to realize these important truths about church leadership:

a) We should not get jealous of others who are chosen into leadership when we are not chosen. Knowing that God oversees the affairs of the church and works to raise up certain people into leadership, we must allow God to choose and raise up whomever he wants. It does not matter what tribe, what family,

or what educational background the person has. If Jesus is really the Lord of the church, the one in control of all situations in the church, we must trust his choice. If he does not choose us at this time, we should not get upset. Any sign of jealousy in our hearts indicates that we are not desiring to serve out of pure motives. It also indicates that we are not trusting God to oversee church leadership.

b) We have no right to work at getting our friends or people we trust into positions of authority. Sometimes elders think that they know best who should be a leader. Often this is because they want their friends or relatives to be leaders with them. Other times they do not trust the church members to choose the right people. But any attempt by elders to manipulate the selection of church leaders shows that they do not trust God to choose who is best. They do not trust God to move in the heart of people to choose the right leaders for the church. As elders, it is our responsibility to teach the people what type of people God seeks to bring into leadership. It is our responsibility to tell them about the characteristics needed for godly leaders. But then we show our faith in God by allowing people to pray about and choose whom they think is the best. Even if they do not choose someone we think is good, we trust God's control in the situation and accept their choice.

Q. 3. a) Describe a situation you have seen when leaders in the church favored their relatives or their tribe when choosing leaders. b) What was the result of such action in the church? c) Why is it important to learn to trust God to oversee the selection of leaders?

c) We should not push to get into leadership or struggle to stay in power. We do not have to try to tell people to vote for us or do anything to encourage getting into leadership. If we do, we are saying that we do not trust God to overrule in deciding who the leaders of his church are to be. You will remember the story of David and Saul. After God chose David to be king, David had to wait almost 13 years before God actually elevated David to be king. Twice David could have killed Saul and become a leader more quickly, but he refused to raise his hand against God's anointed king. He knew that God puts leaders into power, and David refused to be involved in removing leaders out of power. That was God's business. (1 Sam. 24:3-13, 26:7-11) We do great damage to the church when we fight against others trying to get into leadership or trying to get others out of leadership. The Bible does not approve of this for it shows our lack of faith in God.

If we truly trust God, we also allow him the right to replace us with someone else. We read in 2 Samuel 15:25 about the rebellion of Absalom, the son of David. David refused to manipulate the situation to stay in power. Rather, we read how he trusted God to keep him in leadership if that was God's will. As David said *"If I find favor in the LORD's eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. But if he says, 'I am not pleased with you,' then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him."* (2 Sam 15:25 &26).

d) We do not need to be afraid of what people say about us and whether or not they will re-elect us. We should only be concerned about what God says about our leadership. (Gal. 1:10; 1 Cor. 4:1-5) After God calls us into leadership, he holds us accountable for how we lead. If we ever become more concerned about what the people think than what God thinks, or if we let people sway us away from God's path because we are concerned that they might not re-elect us, then we have stopped being the slave of God and become the slave of men. If we change how we lead in order to please people, then we are no longer serving God. Yes, we should listen to people, and within the framework of the Bible, seek to do what is good for them. But always our first concern should be to obey God and his Word. I have heard leaders say "I know that what is happening is not in accord with God's Word. But if we don't do it this way, they will

leave the church." When we say or think this way it means that God no longer matters, only the people's opinion is important.

Oh the freedom leaders feel when we realize that leadership is God's business, not ours! Gone is the jealousy against others in leadership. Gone is the fighting to become leaders or trying to stay a church leader. Gone is the fear of the opinions of people. Do you have this freedom?

Q. 4. a) Describe situations when 1) a person worked to become elected as a church leader; 2) a church leader worked hard to not be elected out of leadership; 3) a church leader allowed the desires of people to influence how he led, prayed, or preached; 4) the elders changed what they believed was right and what God wanted because they were afraid of what the people would say. b) What do the leader's response in each of these situations tell us about whether he trusts God to lead his church and serves him?

If we think that we must push our way into leadership or fight to maintain our leadership position in the church, then we are thinking in a worldly way about leadership. We are leading for our glory or our benefit. Or we are saying that we do not trust God to choose his leaders for the church. We have to do it for him. Church leaders need to confess this sin of trying to force their own way into leadership. We need to carefully examine our lives, and then commit our lives to God, asking him to raise us into leadership if he desires, or remove us from leadership if he desires. And as long as we are in leadership, we must serve with the awareness that God himself has chosen us for leadership and he is holding us accountable for how we care for his sheep. Are you in leadership in a church? Do you realize that God has placed you there? You have been "chosen" by him and placed into ministry for a reason.

2) A call is a **command** by God to serve him. The command from God is to serve him as a pastor or teacher or evangelist or elder. We know it in our hearts and when we are not serving in that way, we know that we are disobeying God. Paul expressed his call by saying "Woe am I if I do not preach the Gospel." (1 Cor. 9:16) So even though friends and family want us to get a better job, or even if opportunities come for a better job, we know God wants us to serve him in a different way because he lays a heavy burden in our heart to serve him. Therefore we refuse the things which might be physically better for us in order to obey God and do what he wants us to do. That ministry might be to serve as a full time evangelist or missionary, taking the Gospel to those who have not heard about Jesus. Or it might be to be an elder or pastor in the church, shepherding the people of God, even though it means we do not have the time with our family that we would like or our plan for our personal life is set aside.

Until God changes his plan for our lives, we are to fulfill his command to serve him as ministers on his behalf. If we leave that ministry for any reason other than God has clearly told us to do something else, we have chosen a path of disobedience to God. Or it shows that we were not serving out of a call from God, but because for some reason we have chosen that ministry for our convenience and now want to do something else.

Q. 5. a) Describe how have you seen a person chose a certain ministry because they have a "call" from God to fulfill that ministry. b) Describe how you have seen a person leave his ministry when a better opportunity for work arose. What does this show us about the reality of that person serving God out of an awareness that God has called them to minister in the church? c) Why do you think it is important for full-time church workers and church leaders to have a sense that God has "called" them to work on his behalf?

3) A call from God is for a **specific ministry**, not for a general ministry. God does not call a person to be a general church worker. Rather, God calls a person to serve him in a specific way. God uses all of a person's experience to prepare him for specific ministry. God uses his family background, his education background, his work experience and also gives him specific spiritual gifts which will enable the person to minister where God wants him to serve. And God determines the level of ministry he wants that person to work in. He determines if it is at a local church level, or awraja, zone, or national level.

Throughout their life, each church worker must examine what he is doing to see if it is what God has called him to do. If the church asks him to move into another ministry, he must prayerfully ask God if that is what God wants. And if he is changing to another ministry which was not part of what God had originally told him to do, he must carefully seek God's face to make sure that he is obeying God and not changing ministry just because there is a personal advantage. God's call and appointment of a person can change throughout his life. But at each step the church worker must determine that he is hearing the call of God. Although obeying church leaders is important, if that is the primary way a church worker gets assigned to a position, if he does not feel a call from God to that specific ministry, then he will never serve as God wants him to serve. He becomes an "employed" worker doing a job (no greater or less than someone who is working in an office) rather than a "called" worker.

4) Because a call comes from God, each church worker is ultimately responsible to God to fulfill the call, not to the church elders. Church ministers are not "employees" of the church in the same way that someone is employed by the government. The government has the right to do whatever it likes with the employee for it is paying the salary and the individual is accountable to the government. But a church minister is ultimately responsible to God to fulfill his call. He is to work with the elders in fulfilling that call. But no elder has the right to force a church minister to do something that is outside of his call. He is not to be treated as an employee, but as a person called by God to a specific ministry.

Church leaders must be very careful how they handle church ministers. If each worker has a specific call from God, then it is the responsibilities of the church leaders to understand what that specific call is and make sure the individual is working in that role. To assign church ministers outside of their area of calling is to fight against God who has given them the call and the specific gift. If church leaders treat church ministers as "employees" to be told what to do without any consideration of their calling, the church minister and the church will suffer. If the ministers in the church do not serve where God has gifted them and called them, they are in disobedience to God, and soon their spiritual life and desire to serve God will dry up. Soon they will only be serving because they are afraid of their job. They will end up doing as little work as possible. The church will suffer as well. We have all seen what happens when we put someone gifted as an evangelist in administration. Because the person is a successful evangelist does not mean that God has called him and gifted him to be an administrator. Although the church minister who is gifted as an evangelist might try to administer to the best of his ability, because he does not have this gift, the church will not function well.

Q. 6. a) Describe when you have seen a person called by God suffer when he is asked to do something which God has not called him to do. b) Illustrate how you have seen a church suffer when a church minister is asked to work in an area which God has not called them. c) How would the attitude of elders change towards church workers if they viewed them as those having a call and gift from God for a specific ministry rather than as employees of the church?

5) A call from God does not necessarily bring success as the world understands success. We are to be faithful to what God tells us to do even if we do not see immediate fruit. As we saw in the verses above, God called Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Paul into their ministries. But God did not promise them success as the world understands success. He told Isaiah and Ezekiel that no one would listen to them. He told Paul that he would suffer many things for Christ. What would keep these leaders serving during times of difficulty? It would be their sense of call from God. Whether people listened and responded or if they seemed to be unsuccessful and no one was saved, they had to be faithful to the task God had given them.

6) A call from God is the main thing which will keep church leaders ministering through times of difficulty. We have seen that church leadership does not always bring times of success when people are happy with our leadership. There will be times when we are struggling and people are not happy with our ministry. But what keeps us going? It has to be the awareness that God has chosen us for the work. That is why in Acts 20:28 Paul told the elders that it was the Holy Spirit who chose them to be elders. It was not the church who appointed them. If the Holy Spirit called them to be elders, the Holy Spirit would help them through the times of difficulty. Our sense of call from God will keep us strong during times of difficulty. It is like a deep stake in our lives which keep the winds of trouble from overcoming us.

7) A call from God has nothing to do with being chosen by people to lead or having a ministry because we have training or are being paid to minister in the church. In our generation, it seems that many have lost their sense of serving God because of a call from God into ministry. People become evangelists because it is a job for them. As long as the pay is good, they will serve. But when the pay is not good, or if their pay stops, they quit and return home. But where is the burden which Paul felt when he said "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel?" (1 Cor. 9:16) People claim to have a call from God, but as soon as a better educational opportunity opens up, or they get a DV to go to America, or a better paying job with an NGO, they leave their ministry. Perhaps the reason why so few church leaders have the power and authority that the uneducated fathers of the church enjoyed in previous generations is because we do not serve with the burden or a call from God.

Examine the following examples of situations we commonly face in our churches today which illustrate why a sense of God's call into ministry is important:

1. You are in the church and suddenly on the day of election, someone suggests your name. Because you have a good education and a good job with the government, you are elected into leadership. You have not shown in how you already minister in the church that you have a "shepherd's heart," which is a desire to take care of the people of God. You have not prayed about becoming an elder and feel no burden in your heart to be a leader. No one has asked whether or not you fulfill the qualifications of leadership. But you were elected into leadership. This is not a call from God into leadership. Without listening for God's voice will you lead as God wants? It is unlikely.

2. We need a worker in our church. This is a gifted youth who was not able to continue his education, so we send him off to a Bible school. Upon graduation, he comes back and we ask him to work in our church. That is not a call into leadership. Education does not bring a call from God to our lives. Those with no call usually have other questions that they ask before they start work. We hear of cases today where when asked to work in the church, the first question highly trained people from our Bible schools ask is "How much am I going to be paid?" Or we hear "No one will be an evangelist- the pay is not enough. If we increase the pay, then people will work as evangelists." As a result, we get evangelists who serve God because of good wages. A call from God does not come by how much money a person gets. Such an attitude turns us into those who are marketing the Gospel, as Paul warned about in 2 Cor. 2:17. Anything

that we do that finds its source in added benefits for us is a way of selling the Gospel. One person once asked "Why is it that we always see pastors being called to larger churches? Does God not sometimes call someone to remote areas?" Could it be because we no longer minister based upon a call of God, but out of a desire to serve God as long as it benefits us? Has ministry in the church become just a job and we expect job advancement just like in a government office?

3. Being elders of a church awraja, we have to walk many miles or take the bus in order to get to the meeting. We begin to think "Why should I go all the way to the elders meeting? It is a long way. Unless the food they serve me is good (i.e. meat), then it is not worth going. And unless they reimburse me for my expenses, why should I pay from my personal money?" So we serve God for the "food" we get and demand that we do not suffer economically if we are elders. As a result we spend most of the church offerings on ourselves, our meetings, and not on the spread of the Gospel. Where is the sense of calling? Where is the sense of "This is what God wants from me. I will do it whether or not it brings me benefit, even if I have to pay for it with my own money"? Rather our attitude must be "If God has called me to this ministry, then I will do it out of love for him. Whether the food is good or not, or even if there is no food, and whether or not they reimburse my expenses, it does not matter. In fact, if my getting these benefits causes people to doubt me and my motive for service, or limits the spread of the Gospel, I will refuse the benefits."

Contrast the normal attitude we have in leadership today with what Paul says about the "call" God gave him. In **1 Cor. 9:15-18** Paul said that for him preaching the Gospel was not a choice, it was a command. He refused to let it be turned into something that brought added benefit to him. He was very concerned that no one would ever think that the reason he worked was so that he could get paid or have a better life than anyone else. He even refused a salary because of this concern.

Amazingly, in today's world, the church leaders are becoming the "rich" in the church, especially the paid evangelists and pastors. They get more salary than most of their members of the church. These members look at their leaders and see better houses, better clothes, etc. and they think "How nice it must be to be a leader in the church. Look at how they gain from our money!" "Look how God is blessing me for being faithful" says the church leader. But this inequality is creating jealousy and causing people to doubt our motives for ministry. Perhaps the "blessing" is from Satan, or from a wrong understanding of ministry, and is being used to destroy the purity of what it means to serve God from a sense of call!

A call from God into a ministry or leadership is foundational to being able to lead in a godly way. All of the great people in the Bible were able to lead because they knew that God had called them. In fact, often they were very reluctant to get into leadership. Moses pled with God to send someone else. (Ex. 4:13) Jeremiah told God that he was too young. And one day when he tried to stop his work as a prophet, God's Word burned deep in his heart so that he had to talk. (Jer. 20:7-9) Never once was wages an issue for these called leaders. Rather, what was important for them and the people was the assurance that they were called by God to minister. How far away we have wandered from the Bible today!

Conclusion: The Bible tells us that it is always God who calls a person into leadership. It does not come because a person wants a job or because the church tells the person to serve as an elder or pastor. Leadership is never viewed as primarily the choice of the person or even the church. God might use the church to confirm his call in a person's life, but the call originates from God. No amount of education or pay will bring a "call" from God. In fact, if education and money are emphasized, then most often this reveals we have no call, or at least we have forgotten the call.

If we do not have a sense of God's call into leadership, we must hesitate becoming leaders. Someone

who does not want to be leader usually makes a poor leader. An uncalled leader often creates more harm than good. He will lead by doing as little as possible or lead using worldly power and methods. Sometimes God calls us directly into leadership like Jeremiah. But often his call is indirect. He calls us by putting a burden for people in our heart. Without this burden for people, for their salvation and growth, we cannot serve God and his people in leadership.

Beware of anyone who wants to be a leader. It is usually because there is something in leadership that he wants which is not godly. A leader has said "A true and safe leader is likely one who has no desire to lead, but is forced into a position of leadership by the inward pressure of the Holy Spirit and by the press of external circumstances." Beware of anyone who is not actively serving God **before** he is chosen into leadership. The formal title of elder or pastor should not change how we minister. Rather, even before we are in leadership, we should be giving of ourselves to help people grow. Being chosen as a leader does not make a person a godly leader. Rather, our being chosen into leadership should acknowledge that we are already serving God and his people in a way that people respect us and know that we are their shepherd, taking care of their spiritual need.

Q. 7. 1) a) Describe how God has called you into ministry. b) What type of ministry has he laid upon your heart? c) How are you preparing yourself for that ministry? d) How are you currently involved in that ministry? 2) a) Describe how you have seen people in church leadership or church ministry without a sense of calling from God. b) What problems did this bring to the church? c) What differences do you think a sense of calling from God into ministry or leadership brings to the ministry of the person?

2. Absolute obedience: Carrying the cross of leadership no matter what the personal cost

Q. 8. a) Read Gen. 12:1 & 4. 1) What command did God give to Abram? 2) Why would it have been difficult for Abram to obey this command? 3) List some blessings Abram and the world would receive because of his obedience. b) Read Ezek. 24:15-18. 1) What did God command Ezekiel to do? 2) Why would this have been difficult to obey? c) Read Jer. 16:1-2. 1) What command did God give to Jeremiah? 2) Why would this command be hard to obey?

Many of us are willing to obey God when it does not require much personal cost. If we see enough benefit from something God asks us to do, then we are willing to obey. But if there seems to be no benefits, then often we do not obey. For instance, sometimes we hear "If we do not pay people a good salary, they will not become evangelists or want to work in the church as pastors. We have to pay them well so that this ministry attracts them. If we want our good students to do church work, we must pay them a good salary." Such statements mean that if we reduce the sacrifice in serving God, if people no longer enter church ministry because they seek to obey God no matter what the personal cost, then God's work will prosper. This is an unbiblical idea. Such statements mean that we have church leaders and church ministers who serve because of personal benefit rather than obedience to God. It is another way of peddling the Gospel, or using the Gospel to gain personal benefits. (2 Cor. 2:17)

Biblical leadership always involves great personal cost. Abraham had to leave his family before he could be blessed. Ezekiel was not allowed to mourn for his wife when she died. Jeremiah was not allowed to get married. Almost every great leader we read about in the Bible led with great personal suffering. It is the same for leaders today. Since we are giving of ourselves to serve others, we do not get a lot of things we would want. One writer said "The degree in which we allow the cross of Christ (giving our lives for others out of obedience to Christ) to work in us will be the measure in which the resurrection life of Christ can be

manifested through us. To evade the cross is to forfeit spiritual leadership." Those in church leadership do not have much personal time, or family time, or time just relaxing with our friends. Often it is lonely because people who were once our friends no longer treat us the same, or they expect favors, or we do things which is not popular with people but is what God has asked us to do. There are personal "scars" as people accuse us of things which are not true, or gossip about us, or resist our leadership. (2 Cor. 4:7-12) We get physically and emotionally tired as we continually give of ourselves for others. We are perplexed as we try things and they do not work as we would want. We try to do something for someone and they turn against us. But because God has called us to serve his people, we must learn to accept the cost.

If we do not learn to obey God even though it may not be convenient for us, then when we are church leaders we will never lead in a way that primarily seeks to honor and obey God. Rather, we will always be asking these questions.

a. "What benefit will I get from this ministry?" If there is no benefit, then we will not obey God. We will think more about our salary, who will pay our travel costs, who will buy books for us, how we will advance in leadership levels, when we can go to the next level of education, etc.

b. "How can I please people through my leadership?" And if the decisions are not popular with people, rather than face their displeasure, we will lead primarily to please them rather than God.

Q. 9. Read Gal. 1:10. What choice did Paul have? What would happen if he followed each of the choices he listed?

Being a church leader often involves making decisions which are not popular with some people. At such times, each church leader has a choice. The choice is to be committed to following and obeying God no matter how difficult and unpopular the decision may be, or to primarily seek to please people. If we choose to follow and obey God no matter how personally inconvenient or unpopular the way may be with others, then we are the slave of God. But if we lead primarily seeking to do what is convenient and best for us or if we lead primarily with the desire to please people even when we know it is not the best, then we are slaves of man.

We are either the slave to our personal pleasure or we are the slave of others and their desires. To be a slave to our own pleasures and conveniences, or to be a slave to the views and demands of others might seem to be the easiest way for us. But the godly way, which is the only way that we can help people grow into spiritual maturity, means that we must first learn to obey Jesus and be his slave. We will only be rewarded by God if we determine to obey him no matter how inconvenient it may be.

c. "How little can I do in this ministry in order to fulfill my responsibility, but in a way that does not inconvenience me?" We are willing to attend elders meetings as long as our business does not suffer, or we do not have to take holiday time from our jobs, etc. But if the elders meetings and other church ministries are inconvenient for us to attend, we will refuse to come. And so we do a half-hearted job serving God, rather than serving him with all of our hearts and strength.

Q. 10. a) Describe ways church leaders flee from total obedience to God and take the road of partial obedience and partial sacrifice. b) What results from this type of leadership in the church? c) List ways you have chosen to obey God fully even though it did not please others. d) Describe times when you chose to make life a little easier for yourself or follow people's desires even though you knew that it was not what

The amazing thing is that when leaders show absolute obedience to God even though it is not convenient, other members will notice and begin to obey God totally as well. Obedience to God is usually "caught" from leaders, not "taught" from the pulpit. Even when we sin, if leaders openly confess our sins to the church, we are teaching people that there is forgiveness for sins. Rather than losing the respect of people and risk being asked to leave the ministry, people will respect us more and honor us for showing true spiritual maturity. But more important, God is pleased and he gets glory.

SECOND DAY

KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 4)

CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: CHARACTERISTICS ORIGINATING IN A LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD (PART 2)

If God is going to use us greatly, we must be the type of men and women whom God can use. We must make sure our leadership flows out of how we relate to God in different areas of our lives. We saw yesterday that each minister and leader must have a strong sense that God has called him or her into that specific role. We are to obey God in that role, even when it might not be convenient for us or bring us popularity. Following are more characteristics which reveal the quality of a leader's relationship to God.

3. Faithfulness: Dependability in doing the work that God has given us, even when no one is watching.

Q. 11. a) Read Gen. 39:1-6. 1) Where was Joseph? How did he get there? 2) What did God eventually do for Joseph? 3) What was Joseph's attitude that enabled God to bless him? b) Read Mt. 25:14-28. 1) What did the master give to each of his servants? 2) What did each servant do with what was given him? 3) How did the master reward those who were faithful? 4) What did the master do to the servant who was not faithful in using what the master gave him? 5) What does this teach us about church leadership?

Few character traits are more important in leadership than faithfulness. Faithfulness is the character of dependability. It means that people can trust us to do what we have agreed to do no matter what. If we say we will be in a certain place at a certain time, if we are dependable we will be there. If we say we will do something by a certain day, faithfulness means that we will have all of the work done which we have committed ourselves to do. If people cannot depend upon us to keep our word or get the work done, then they will not trust us in leadership.

a. Faithfulness when doing seemingly insignificant ministries. Church leadership is based upon the principle of proving ourselves faithful in small areas of ministry before being entrusted with greater responsibilities. God rewards faithful service in little things with greater ministry opportunities. We can see this in the life of Joseph. God allowed Joseph to be sold as a slave into the house of Potiphar. Joseph could have become bitter at being a slave; angry at God, his family, and others. But he refused to be bitter. And he could have decided to be like the rest of the slaves and only work when forced to, when the master was watching, doing as little as possible. But even as the newest and lowliest slave, Joseph worked hard. He was faithful to his master. Joseph did not know that God would use his faithfulness to honor him. He did not think "If I work hard, then I will be put in charge of the other slaves and not have to work as hard." All he thought about was honoring God by working hard. God blessed Joseph's attitude and his faithful

service and raised him to leadership over Potiphar's house. Joseph was faithful in leadership in one man's house, but then he was falsely accused and sent to prison. Again he could have become bitter against God and others. Or he could have decided to do as little as possible as a prisoner. But Joseph maintained his trust in God and faithfully served in the prison- with no expectation that God would raise him into greater positions of leadership. Again, God saw that Joseph was faithful and honored him by raising him to the second level of leadership, over all of the prison. Now Joseph was faithful in leadership over many people in the prison. Because he had been faithful to God and to those in responsibility over him in these two lower levels of leadership, God eventually raised Joseph to leadership over all of Egypt, which was the most powerful nation in the world at that time. He served under Pharaoh as the Prime Minister. He was able to serve God, his family, and the nation of Egypt faithfully because he had previously learned to be faithful in small things.

We do not develop the character of faithfulness after we are elected into leadership. Our character must be developed long before we become leaders. It starts when our parents ask us to do something like taking care of the animals. If we do not do that job well even though no one is looking and our parents do not know what we are doing when we are off in the fields, then God will not raise us into more important levels of ministry. When God asks us to help other believers grow in their faith, if we do not disciple a new believer to the best of our ability, we do not develop the character of faithful service to God. Or if we are asked to clean up the church and we willingly do it and do it well, then our character of faithfulness is being developed. And if God sees that we are faithful to what he wants of us, he gives us more responsibility. He may ask us to lead a Bible study. If we are faithful in that, then he may ask us to lead a community prayer group. As we faithfully serve that group, we may be asked to become deacons. If we faithfully serve the church members, then God raises us up to greater responsibility, to be elders or ministers in the church. The way God develops leaders is by raising them from small ministries where few are looking to greater ministries in front of many people. At each level God asks us to be faithful and serve him with all of our abilities even though we think no one notices. But not only does God notice, but people also notice those who are faithfully serving God in the small things. And those people become God's instrument to raise up the person to greater levels of leadership.

b. Faithfulness when no one is watching. Most people can serve well when people are watching. But the test of character is how we serve when no one is looking. David developed his leadership ability by first being faithful in ministry to his father's sheep. Every day, alone, he took the sheep to the best grass, the best water, and took care of all of their needs. And whenever a wild animal came to kill a sheep, David risked his life to fight the animals on behalf of the sheep. (1 Sam. 17:33-37) No one could see- except God. But David was developing the character of faithfulness in taking care of other people's things. So when God wanted to anoint a new king to take care of his people, he chose unseen, unnoticed David who was the youngest in his family. (1 Sam. 16:11-13) And when Goliath fought against God's people, David was ready to fight and serve publicly in Saul's court and later over the whole nation because he had learned to depend upon God for victory when working alone with the sheep.

In the same way, there are many ministries God asks us to do, especially when we are young, which do not seem important because they are common and few people see us doing it. We can be asked to go to the market and buy something for the church. If we do it quickly, well, with a good attitude of seeking to help- perhaps no one will notice. But God is watching. Or if we are asked to clean the church before a meeting, if rather than complain or get angry inside because we have to do it, if we quietly do the work, cleaning the floor as if Jesus himself was coming to visit, God watches this. In God's time, God who sees all of these hidden things will raise us into greater ministries. But if we complain, or if we are half-hearted in our work, or if we only do things when others are watching- because we have not learned to be faithful,

God will not raise us to be leaders. Or if we do become leaders, we will not be faithful in serving God as elders. Paul told the Colossians slaves "*Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*" (Col. 3:22-24) It does not matter who asks us to do something. Ultimately, we are doing it for Christ. If we do not work faithfully to the best of our ability, it means that we are not serving Jesus to the best of our ability.

Q. 12. a) Describe how have you seen this principle of faithfulness in small things bringing greater responsibilities true in your life or in your church. b) Make a list of things, both ordinary and important, which people have asked you to do. Describe how you have done these things faithfully. c) What are some things God has asked you to do for him now? Explain how you are showing faithfulness in fulfilling your assignment. d) If you are not serving Jesus and others faithfully to the best of your ability, take time to confess your sins. Make a commitment to be faithful in those ministries.

As a church, we must be careful that we do not go against God's way of developing leaders. "Send me to Bible school, and when I come back I will be the pastor of this church" the youth say. Some people think that the book knowledge they receive in a school prepares them for leadership in a public place. And when they graduate, they think that they deserve high positions of leadership. They feel insulted when they are not hired, or not respected, or not given high levels of leadership. But God says, "First prove to me that you are faithfully witnessing about me even if you are not assigned as an evangelist." Or "Show me that you are concerned about the spiritual growth of a new believer that the elders know nothing about before I make you a pastor." That is where the heart of a pastor develops. Or "Clean the church, the bathrooms, arrange the chairs without anyone asking you. Be concerned about my house. These things show me that you are worthy of greater levels of responsibility."

When we do not honor God's way of developing leaders, which is faithfulness in small things before given greater responsibility, we bring great harm to the church. The result is evangelists and pastors who do not know what it means to serve faithfully when no one is looking. Therefore, unless the elders are there to tell them to go to work, they do not work with all of their abilities. They are not faithful to their ministry, but rather do as little as necessary to keep their job. Or they become proud, thinking that their education alone is the key to greatness and success. They look down on anyone who does not have the same level of education as they do. If the elders do not do what they want, then they pridefully cause division in the church, encouraging separation of the youth from the elders. We must go against our culture's teaching that leadership is something earned by education. We must return to God's way which is being faithful in small things before being given greater responsibility.

4. Dependence on God for guidance and ability to lead.

One danger for gifted church leaders is doing things in their own strength. Leaders often have a lot of natural ability. But in the church, what matters is not what we do in our own strength, but what God does through us in his strength. And so church leaders must learn to be dependent upon God for their ministry. Jesus told the disciples when he was releasing them into ministry that without him they could do nothing. (Jn. 15:5) Paul said that he was able to do all things because God strengthened and enabled him. (Phil. 4:13)

Q. 13. Read the following verses: 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; 2 Cor. 2:17, 4:1-2. What can we learn about depending upon God for leadership?

The book of 2 Corinthians focuses upon this truth. Church leaders must remember that our ability to minister for God's glory comes out of God's enabling strength when they are weak. Notice the following truths in 2 Corinthians:

a. 2 Cor. 4:7-12: God desires that the growth and development of the church be the result of his powerful working, not the ability of the leader. Therefore, God puts his powerful, glorious Gospel in "jars of clay." Our weak bodies and our sinful nature provide the opportunity for God to show his powerful Gospel to people. Difficulties in life which almost defeat us are the very things which God uses to build his kingdom by showing the power of the Holy Spirit working in weak humans.

b. 2 Cor. 12:7-10: Paul was a naturally gifted individual. And God honored him with amazing abilities and spiritual gifts. God even allowed him to see a special vision of the greatness of God. But God knew the danger of this special revelation to human beings. So he gave Paul a problem to reveal his personal weakness. Even when Paul asked God to remove it, God refused saying that it was needed for Paul. God wanted to reveal his greatness by using a weak Paul rather than a physically powerful Paul. As Paul said in 2 Cor. 3:4-5, he had learned that his success is only because God chose to use him. It was not because of power within himself.

c. 2 Cor. 2:17, 4:1-2: Paul refused to use any "tricky" method or human tool to make it easier for people to believe or for him to be successful. He determined that he would only preach clearly God's Word and let the power of the Holy Spirit work the miracle of salvation in people's life.

Because Paul had trained himself to be dependent upon God for all situations and all of his ministry, he was able to be "content" in any situation that God allowed in his life. (See Phil. 4:11-13) Paul needed nothing except God's presence in his life. Paul allowed his life to be poured out for the honor of God, even if that meant death. (2 Cor. 2:15-16; 2 Tim. 4:6) Paul knew that his life and personal convenience were not important. What mattered was that his whole life be used for God's glory whether by living longer or by dying sooner. Keeping himself from dying or getting physical benefits were not important because Paul was depending upon God to do what he wanted in Paul for God's glory.

As leaders, we need to always dependent upon God. We depend upon God to tell us what he wants to do in his church. We depend upon God to give us the right people to do the work. We depend upon God to provide the finances for his work. We depend upon God for the daily strength to overcome natural selfish tendencies in leadership. We depend upon God for ability to lead in humility. Have you learned to live in total dependency upon God?

Q.14. a) Describe ways that church leaders often depend upon their own wisdom, education, connections with famous people, wealth, fine sounding arguments, or power to accomplish God's work. b) Explain how church leaders would lead differently if they realized that God wants them to understand and acknowledge their weaknesses and depend upon God alone and the clear preaching of the Word of God for success. c) List some things that you know you are "weak" in. How can these weaknesses be a tool by God to show off his power in your life?

Q. 15. Review the above four characteristics for successful spiritual ministry which indicate a leaders' relationship to God. a) Are these four characteristics part of your life? Explain your answer. b) What can you do to grow in each of these four characteristics so that God can use you more effectively?

CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: CHARACTERISTICS COMING FROM THE LEADER'S INNER LIFE (PART 1)

We have studied some of the characteristics leader need to develop in their relationship to God if they are to minister in the church in a way which brings honor to God. The second category of characteristics deals which personal characteristics which leaders must develop if they are to lead effectively.

Q. 16. Read Judges 6 & 7. a) List the ways that Gideon demonstrated courage. b) List some other examples from God's Word where leadership demanded courage. c) Why do you think courage is important for a church leader?

1. Courage: The ability to face all situations and go against what people want alone if necessary for the sake of truth and the Gospel

It is very important that church leaders have courage. Leaders need courage to try new things rather than just continue what has always been done in the church. Courage enables us to stand alone for our beliefs even when others disagree. Courage helps us to withstand false or imbalanced teachers, even though they are popular with others. With courage we can resist doing what we know is not right in God's eyes, even though other elders may do it. No one can properly lead the people of God if they don't have courage.

We often see godly courage in the Bible. In Josh. 1:6-9 God repeatedly told the new leader, Joshua, to be strong and courageous. Gideon's courage allowed him to face a huge army with only 300 men. David courageously faced Goliath as a young man when even the greatest soldiers were afraid. Paul's courage allowed him to face imprisonment and death without fear or running away. It enabled him to accuse Peter of sin when Peter was doing something harmful to the integrity of the Gospel. (Gal. 2:11-14)

Where does this type of courage come from? It is something we must develop before we get into leadership. Courage comes from understanding who God is and absolutely trusting him, no matter what the circumstances are. It starts when we take a stand for God even when our friends make fun of us in school. Our courage grows as we are forced to speak out against others in our choir group who are doing something that is not right. Only when we learn to stand alone with God because we trust him and his Word do we develop the courage we will need when we become church leaders. Leadership is often a very lonely place. It means standing up against other elders who are leading according to their culture, giving preference to family members and their own tribe rather than working impartiality with all brothers and sisters in Christ. Lack of courage means we are quiet or we join them in wrong doing. Courage enables us to stand for the truth, even if all of the elders turn against us and we are forced out of leadership.

Amazingly, although courage coming from absolute trust in God might temporarily bring the antagonism of others, in the end, people honor the church leader who stands on his convictions no matter what others say. If he does so with humility and trust in God, people will eventually turn to that person for leadership. They will trust him to always speak what is right and to do what is right. And God also will honor him, for like Abraham who offered Isaac as a sacrifice because of his love for God, that leader was willing to sacrifice his reputation and popularity out of his love and faith in God.

Q. 17. a) Describe situations which require a church elder to have courage. b) Explain how the lack of courage impacts church elders. c) In what way does a man's courage eventually gain him the respect of others?

2. Humility: The character of not viewing ourselves as any better than others and therefore allowing others to receive honor

Q. 18. Read Mt. 11:28-30, Lk. 18:14, Phil. 2:8-9, 1 Pet. 5:5-6. a) What do these verses teach us about being humble? b) What can we learn about humility from the life of Jesus? c) Why is humility an important character for church leaders?

The Greeks did not respect the character of humility. The word was used of someone who cringed in fear of others, and described someone people thought was absolutely contemptible. But in Christianity this word describes one of the most important characteristics of godly people. The Bible clearly teaches that God hates all pride and honors humility. Moses is called great because he was the most humble man who lived. (Num. 12:3) Jesus described himself as being humble. In humility he laid aside his heavenly glory and became a human. Peter warns us that God takes an active stand against those who are proud but honors those who are humble.

Therefore humility is one of the most important characters of a church leader. But what is humility? Does it mean that we are to go around with our heads bowed low saying we are useless, a worm which others can walk on, or dirt which is no good? Does it mean we have a low opinion for ourselves and only do what others want? Biblical humility includes the following ideas:

a. Normally when we think about ourselves, we tend to see ourselves in a positive light. We think that we are better than others. We are from a better family, have lighter skin color, and are wiser and have the right answer. This leads to "pride," the opposite of humility. Pride causes us to compare ourselves with others and think we are somehow better than they are. Humility, however, helps us see ourselves as we really are, which is as God sees us. On the positive side, we see the gifts and abilities which God has given us. (Rom. 12:3) But on the negative side, we see our weaknesses, our selfishness, and the many ways we fall short in our service for God and our relationships with others. Therefore we know that we are not special. If it were not for the grace of God, we would not be worthy of leadership or ministry.

b. All of us tend to be self-satisfied. We look around and compare ourselves to others. We might not be as gifted as some, but by comparing ourselves to other people, we think we are good enough. We compare our spiritual life (our prayer and Bible study) and we think "I am better than so and so, therefore I am good." But Christian humility comes when we compare ourselves to Jesus Christ. And then we realize that we have nothing to boast about. We might have gone to Bible school and learned God's Word. But when compared to all of the truths that there are in the Bible, we realize that our knowledge is very limited. Or we might be a good musician, but compared to the greatest musicians, our skill is almost as nothing. We might be a gifted administrator, but we know that there are others far superior to us and that we have much to grow in. We might be a popular preacher, but we know that there are many ways that we are not as good as we could be. Christian humility always causes a leader to know that he is really not very good and that there is much that he can improve in. His standard is perfection, even though he will never reach it. His standard is not what he sees in comparison to others but to God.

c. Biblical humility focuses upon the worth of a person as viewed by God, not as viewed by the world. We know that we are honored by God since we are created in the image of God. And we know that we are honored by God since he chose us and made us his children. We know that we are honored by God since we have a unique spiritual gift with which to serve God. Because of this, we have nothing to be ashamed of. But because this is also true of every other believer, we know that we are not any better than

they are. And we know that everything we have comes from God. We did not earn it ourselves. (See 1 Cor. 4:5-7) A humble person finds his sense of worth in God, not in anything human. True worth is not found in whether a person is a male, or from a certain tribe, or has a certain level of education, or has a leadership position. We know that in the eyes of God, things which the world says is important; like riches or education or being from the right tribe, or beauty- these all mean nothing. Therefore we do not use these things as a standard to either shame ourselves since we are not as popular as the world describes, or be proud since we are better than others according to the world's standards.

d. Biblical humility causes a person to see no reason why he should be a leader over another person. Or that others must listen to our ideas and not someone else. Or why we should get richer than another person. Therefore, when someone else is elected leader, or when another's opinion is listened to, or when other people get certain blessings rather than us, we are pleased.

e. Humility means that because we know who we are in the eyes of God we do not need to defend our status. Rather, we give up the things which bring human glory, and lower ourselves to serve all people with no sense of being better than anyone. Knowing he was God, Jesus did not defend his status as God. Rather, he willingly gave up his glory of being God to become a human. In the same way, our humility means that knowing we are children of God, we do not have to push ourselves forward to glory in being leaders. Rather, we give up the status and glory of leadership and lower ourselves to become a servant of others.

f. Biblical humility means that we do not seek to be honored by people or gain benefits. As leaders it makes no difference if we sit at the front of the church or at the back of the church, if we sit on a chair or sit on the floor, or if people know that we are leaders or not. It means that we do not fight for our rights, but submit to those in authority. No person can be a good leader until they have first learned to submit. That is why Peter tells young people to beware of pride and to learn humility by submitting to leaders. Only after learning this lesson, does God work in someone's life to eventually lift them up into leadership.

g. Humility means that we make no effort to be noticed by others. We don't push to be in the choir or preach because we want to be seen. It does not matter if people see what we do, or appreciate us, or honor us for what we do. Humility means that we simply want to honor God who will then honor us.

This character is opposite to what the world teaches. The world honors people who boast about how fast they can run, or how great their family is, or how many people they have won to the Lord, or how much they pray, etc. It is the ones who push themselves forward to be first in line, or to become the leader in the kebele, or to get the benefits who succeed. And those who succeed the world honors. Christians also fall into this trap of pride when they boast that they are evangelists or church leaders, or are prideful of their level of education. The Bible tells us that God hates boasting and honors humility instead. Have you learned to be humble?

Q. 19. a) Explain why you think that humility is a high value for Christians but not respected by non-Christians. b) Explain how a church leader can demonstrate humility. c) List illustrations of how many church leaders demonstrate pride.

3. Perseverance: The character of keeping going when things are difficult

No one likes problems. When we are sick, we go to the doctor and want to become well quickly. When there is a problem at church, we want it fixed quickly or we go to another church. When we have a

relationship problem, we want it fixed quickly, or we avoid the person and run from the situation.

Although this is a natural reaction, as long as we are living in a world where people are sinners, church leaders must know that they will face difficult problems. God only greatly uses those leaders who persevere in the midst of troubles. And so in order to be effective leaders, we need to learn how to persevere during the difficult times. If we tend to get discouraged when our ministry does not grow as we expected, or if we quit as soon as there are problems and look for another church or another job, we will never accomplish much for God.

Most ministries require that we continue to faithfully work even when there are difficulties. When Nehemiah started rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, he faced one problem after another. There were the external problems of enemies who made fun of his work and threatened to attack both Nehemiah and the Jews. They maligned Nehemiah's reputation by spreading a false rumor. There were also internal problems as the Jews fought over inequalities. (Neh. 4-6) In each case, it would have been easy for Nehemiah to quit and return to his good job in the Persian government. But instead, he persevered. And God used him to finish the work and bring honor to God. Unless we persevere in the vision and ministry that God has called us to, we will never finish the task God has given us.

In 2 Cor.4:7-12 Paul shares how his effectiveness as an apostle came because he never quit. He shared how there were times when it seemed he failed. He was knocked down. But he always got back up and never allowed himself to give up. Everywhere he tried to minister, he faced opposition. (Read the list of Paul's struggles in 2 Cor. 11:23-29) And yet because he persevered, God used him mightily to start many churches and spread the Gospel over thousands of miles. Just imagine how different the world would be today if Paul had quit when he first faced opposition! There would have been no church outside of Jerusalem. Imagine what God could do in and through us if we too persevered! Are you tempted to quit over something today that you know God wants you to do? Persevere. There will come a time when God will use this for his great glory.

Q. 20. a) Explain how some church leaders quit when things got difficult. b) In what way did this stop them accomplishing what God wanted from them? c) List some of your problems that tempt you to quit. Spend time in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to give you the power to keep working.

4. A renewed mind: One who continually uses his mind to grow in understanding and insight

Q. 21. a) Look at the following verses and list what they teach about the unbeliever and his mind and the believer and his mind: Mt. 22:37; Lk. 24:45; Rom. 1:28; 8:5-8; 12:2; 1 Cor. 14:15; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 1:21; 3:2; Titus 1:15; 1 Pet. 4:7. b) Do you think believers today focus more on their emotions or their minds? Explain your answer. c) Describe ways that how we think influences how we act. d) What are ways that leaders can continue to develop their minds?

A careful reading of the New Testament shows us that God places an emphasis upon our minds. Before we were saved, our minds were darkened with sin and controlled by Satan. Salvation came to us when we were taught the truth about Jesus and our minds began to change. As followers of Jesus, we are to change how we think; we are to develop our minds. We show our love for Jesus by loving God "with all our minds." We are to renew our minds, or the way we think so that we live in a way that honors God. So if a leader is to be effective and lead in a way that God wants him to lead, he must always be using his mind to grow. Our minds are gifts from God to be developed. Like our muscles, if we do not use our minds, they grow weak. A successful church leader will always use his mind to grow in the following ways:

a. He will seek to grow in his understanding of God and his Word. No leader can ever know enough about God and about the Bible. So the most successful leaders are always studying so that their understanding of God's Word increases.

b. He will seek to grow in his understanding of the world around him. It is said that "all truth is God's truth." And so a successful leader will also be reading and thinking about things outside of spiritual things. He is called to guide the flock of God, and this means he must share with them about how God's truth impacts the world they are in. So he studies about his government and politics and how that will impact the members of his church. He studies about world events, and the ideas of nations. He studies about ethical issues like abortion, or what is God's view of work, or what are the values the world is teaching the youth.

c. The leader will seek to understand the issues of his days. Like the men of Issachar, he will understand what is happening so that he can prepare his people to live in a godly way during his days. (1 Chron. 12:32)

In our days, we focus upon our emotions. We enjoy lively worship and exciting programs. But God will not bring change in us and in our people until we begin to change how we and other believers think.

There are two other truths related to our minds which make an effective leader.

First, a leader is one who can think for himself rather than just following what others believe. Most people do not spend time thinking and developing their own views. Whatever people say, they accept without thought. They follow the thinking of the crowd. But great leaders always develop their own beliefs by thinking deeply about issues. Then they stand upon their beliefs, even though others do not believe in the same way.

Second, a leader is one who has practical wisdom. The book of Proverbs is a book about wisdom. Unlike knowledge, which is the understanding of facts, wisdom is knowing how to apply facts to life. There are many leaders who have good ideas. But many of their ideas are not practical. They do not provide the solution to the situations facing the church. So the most effective leaders are those who are able to come up with the best solutions to the issues. Their ideas bring real changes, not just good sounding plans.

5. Self-sacrifice: Giving up personal desires for the benefit of others

Repeatedly we have seen that the biggest difference between the worldly leaders and the Biblical leaders is the attitude of being a servant of others. Behind servant leadership is the character of giving up of our lives for the sake of others. As Jesus said in Jn. 15:12-13 "*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*" Until a leader has learned to put aside what he wants for the sake of others, he cannot lead as a servant. Leadership in the church means that he gives up time and money he could use for himself so that he can serve others. Women tend to do this much easier than men. Women often give up what they want for someone else. They arrange their time to serve their husbands. Or they selflessly take care of little children. It is us men who struggle more with this character. From the time we were little children we have learned to expect others to do things for us. We expect our mother, or our sisters to cook for us, get the wood and water for us, etc. Many of us have developed the attitude that others are there to provide for our needs. Until we break this view of life, we cannot be servant leaders. As one person said "Ask not what your church can do for you; but for what you can do for your church." That is the basis of self-sacrifice; that is the basis of servant leadership.

Q. 22. a) List ways that our culture encourages us to think about ourselves first rather than about others. b) List ways that true leadership flows out of self-sacrifice. What are things that a good leader has to give up in order to serve others? c) List ways you have learned to die to self in order to serve God and others. List ways that you need to grow in this area of your life.

THIRD DAY

KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 5)

CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: CHARACTERISTICS COMING FROM THE LEADER'S INNER LIFE (PART 2)

The character of the leader forms the basis of how he leads. Spiritual characteristics for successful leadership need to be formed in us long before we are ever chosen to be leaders. Yesterday we began our study of characteristics of a leader's personal life which are invaluable for leadership over the family of God. Today we will continue this study of characteristics of the leader's inner life.

6. Taking responsibility for ourselves rather let our emotions, other people or events control us

One of the most foundational characteristics which a leader must learn is to take responsibility for his life. In most of our cultures we are taught that we are "prisoners" of what has been handed down to us. Everything comes to us by "chance" or our culture and therefore we can't change our situation. We are born into a poor family, therefore we have no hope of becoming rich. "My father plowed with oxen so I will have to plow with oxen." "I get angry because my father got angry." "I must circumcise my girls because my culture tells me that is good" we say. Many of us go through life blaming others for the situation we find ourselves in. "I am not in the choir since my father is not an elder." "I do not have a ministry since the elders have not given me anything to do." As long as we allow our situations and others to control us, we cannot grow. As long as we put the blame for our situation on others, we will not develop. Until we learn that leadership is about overcoming problems to bring change rather than just accepting things as they are we cannot bring change in a situation.

But God has given us the ability, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to take ownership of our lives and make a difference. God has given each of us an ability to make choices which determine how we believe and act. God has given us the ability to think about how we would like things to be and work to make them happen. But in order for us to change, we must determine to choose to believe differently and act differently.

a. The difference between people who react to circumstances and those who decide to change their circumstances: There are two types of people. There are those who **react** to their circumstances. They feel trapped by the fact that they are female, or poor, or uneducated. And they try to do nothing about it. "This is how I am born. I cannot change it" they think. The second type of person is those who take **control** of themselves and circumstances and work to make a difference. "I might have been poor, but by doing this I can change." "I am a female and my culture does not respect me. But by doing such and such I can change my life to make it better" they say. How we express things is how we demonstrate whether we are willing to take ownership of our life or continue to allow circumstances and people to control us. Notice the following chart which compares these two reactions to life.

REACTIVE PERSON	PERSON WHO TAKES CONTROL
"I am poor. There is nothing I can do."	"I might be poor, but et me look for alternatives to make my life better."
"I always come late. That is just the way I am; I can't change."	"I choose to have a different attitude, to change my character. So I will learn to come one time."
"So and so made me mad because they insulted me. They have done something against me so I won't help them."	"I refuse to let them control my feelings and attitudes. I will do what is best not because I like what they did, but because I choose to follow Jesus and do the best thing."
"They won't allow me to change how we worship. There is nothing we can do about our elders."	"How can I change their minds so they understand the benefits of a different type of worship?"
"I can't do that. It is too difficult."	"I might not be able to do everything I want, but I will do what I can to change it."
"I must do what my culture says I have to do."	"I will do what I believe God wants me to do and what is best for me and the church. I will change my culture if necessary."
"If only the elders would change, the church would be better."	"I will work in ways I can to make things better rather than wait for them to change."

Q. 23. a) List other examples of how people often are reactive and blame others or circumstances for their situation rather than seek to change their circumstances. b) Contrast how those who seek to change their circumstances would react to those situations.

b. Success in life is determined more by our attitudes toward circumstances than by the circumstances themselves. A pastor once wrote *"The longer I live the more convinced I become that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it."* Success as leaders is determined by 10% ability and circumstances and 90% attitude. To a great extent, whether we will be successful spiritual leaders is determined more by our attitudes than whether we have a good education, whether we are skilled in ministry, or even if we are godly. The pastor wrote *"I believe the single most significant decision I can make on a day to day basis is my choice of attitude. It is more important than my past, my education, my money, my successes or failures, fame or pain, what other people think of me or say about me, my circumstances, or my position. Attitude is what keeps me going or cripples my progress. When my attitudes are right, there is no barrier too high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, no challenge too great for me."*

What makes a person great is not so much determined by events over which a person has no control, but our attitudes to those events. One man born crippled can sit in his wheel chair and beg for money, bitterly complaining that he can do nothing. Another man also born a crippled can look around himself and say "what can I do given my situation?" He goes to school, studies hard, gets good grades, and then gets a good job. What is the difference between the two? It is their attitudes. One said "I can't do anything." The other said "I can do a lot of things even though I have some limitations." Often we hear women complaining that they cannot do things because culture does not allow them to succeed. But yet there are women who have worked hard and are in important places of responsibility. How did they do this? They refused to let how people understood the role of women limit what they could do. They took charge of their lives and did all they could to overcome the situation. Often we hear graduates from Bible school complain "The elders have not given me anything to do. I am praying for a place of ministry." But a person who takes ownership of his life looks around and says "Whom can I help?" He sees a few new believers who need discipling, so

he spends time with them. Or he sees a small study group, he joins it and leads it effectively. There are thousands of ministry opportunities which the elders will not stop us from doing. Our problem is that we do not take ownership of the things we can change. The amazing thing is that as we take ownership of our ministry, people notice, and eventually the elders will give us the very ministry we had wished they would give us initially.

c. People's success in life depends upon whether or not we take ownership of our situation and circumstances. Let us look at different areas of our lives to see how we can change from being controlled by others to controlling ourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit.

1) Taking control of our personal lives and attitudes. All spiritual growth takes place when we take ownership with how we are going to live. Do we want to be a person of prayer? It does no good complaining that we live in a house filled with people, or that we are too busy. A person who takes ownership of his spiritual growth will search for a place and a time where he can meet with God in prayer and in study. Some get up at 4 AM in order to have their devotions. Others make a small hut behind their house and tell their children not to come there at a certain time. Do we need books to help us grow in our knowledge? It does no good to complain that we are too poor. Rather, we look for ways to save our money. We don't drink tea when we go to the market, or we work harder in our fields so that they produce more. There are always ways to get money for what we think is important. Our problem comes in not controlling our lives and using money wisely for what is important.

In the same way we control our emotions and attitudes. Do we get angry and bitter when someone says something that insults us? Does this cause us to lose sleep at night? If we are a person who reacts to situations, we let them control our emotions. No one can make us angry or bitter without our consent. We get angry and bitter when we allow circumstances and people's actions to affect our emotions. In a sense, we give them permission to hurt us twice. First they hurt us when they do something against us. And they continue to hurt us when we become bitter. As one author said "It is not what happens to us that hurts us, but our response to what happens that hurts us." A person who is in control of his emotions does not deny that people have done things which are wrong. But he refuses to let circumstances and what others do to continue to hurt him by making him bitter, or taking away his sleep, etc. Notice Paul's attitudes towards circumstances in Phil. 4:11-12. *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.* Paul could have complained against churches who did not support him or about being thrown in prison. But he refused to allow circumstances to control him. Instead, Paul determined how he would react. And he chose to learn to be content and trusting God to give him the strength to overcome the circumstances.

A reactive person usually lives by his emotions. His emotions control whether he is happy or sad, whether he likes his job or does not like his job. A person who takes ownership of his life lives by choice. Situations might be good or not good, his job might be enjoyable or not enjoyable. But he determines to enjoy his life and work on his circumstances so that they change for the better. He determines to work on his relationship with the person who has hurt him so that they no longer do bad things against him. He determines to improve his relationship with the elders so that they are more favorable to his suggestions.

2) Taking control of our social situation. Even today many tribes continue to blame their problems on other tribes. "If that tribe had not fought against our tribe 100 years ago and defeated us we would be fine today" they complain. Or "if the church office had not done such and such, our district would

get ahead" they grumble. As long as a tribe or church district complains about something that happened to them, they are allowing situations to control them rather than control the situation. Someone who has learned to take ownership for his own life and how he lives is always looking for ways to grow. Rather than blame the lack of success of his church on the zone (or church district) or the central office not giving him budget, the successful leader always asks "what can we do with what we have? What changes can we make with what God has given us so that people grow in their faith and we are able to take the Gospel out further than we are now?"

This same attitude impacts whether or not we are trapped in our culture or able to change our culture so that it does not control us. A reactive farmer says "My father plowed with a single plow and oxen. Therefore I will copy him. I don't know any better." A farmer who takes ownership of his life, however, says "My father taught me how to plow this way. But I wonder if there are ways I can improve it? Can I make a plow with two heads and not just one?" Or a wife says "In our culture, the position of girls is very poor. They don't have as many opportunities for education and they are always working. How can I change the expectations of my husband? How can I change the role of my girl children?"

3) Taking control of our work. Often Bible school graduates get frustrated by not being given a position of responsibility when they graduate. They blame their lack of ministry upon the ineffective leadership of the elders or on the fact that the church won't pay them a salary. But that is the attitude of a person who lets others control his life. A church worker or a person in the church whom God has called to minister who takes ownership of his or her life knows that there are many different ways to serve God which the elders do not prohibit. And so they look for ways to minister. "I expected to be the pastor of the church, but they did not choose me. They say they have no pay to give me. But God has called me to be a shepherd of his people here in this church. Since I need something to live on, I will be like Paul who sewed tents during the day and preached at night. I will find a job. (Acts 18:3) And I will look for people whom I can help grow in their faith. It might be one, two, or ten people. I will start by shepherding them" they say. Amazingly, when a person begins to take ownership of his life this way, his ability to impact and shepherd people begins to grow. It isn't long until it grows from ten people, to a Bible study group, and then to a community prayer group as people see a person who is genuinely concerned for their spiritual needs. Eventually the elders will take note. "We need 'so and so' to be our pastor. He is doing a good job helping people grow. We can trust him since he does not fight against us but works with us. How much can we pay him for this ministry?" they ask. Whereas a reactive person will never grow and receive the ministry, a person who looks for increasing ways to serve God and his people will always find ways to serve and God and the people will eventually raise him up in leadership.

4) Taking control of the church. Leadership is about making change. As long as leaders react to things and blame things for their lack of growth, the leader can never bring change. For instance, a reactive leader complains that his church is poor, or it is not involved in evangelism, or people are not growing in their faith. A reactive person says in his heart that change is impossible. Or he blames others for the situation the church is in. "Why doesn't the church district help me?" he complains. But a leader who takes ownership of situations says "How can I change the work ethic of people so that they work harder? How can I change people's understanding of their money so that they give more to God?" Or he says "What can I do to get people witnessing more boldly? Or giving to evangelists? Or going as evangelists?" This type of church leader always looks for ways to change, to improve so that he controls and changes those circumstances that he can.

A leader who has learned to take ownership of a situation never denies that there are problems. But he refuses to say "We have a problem" and blame the problem for the church's situation. Rather, he will

say "We have this problem. What can we do to overcome the problem and change how things are?" For instance, a common complaint of church leaders is "We do not have any money to do the work of the church." Usually church leaders throw up their hands in despair and don't try anything. But the leader who has learned to take ownership of his life will look for ways to change the reasons why people do not give. The leader who has learned to take ownership of his life always examines all of the alternatives and makes a decision which seeks to change the circumstance. He refuses to be a prisoner of circumstances.

Q. 24. a) Give two illustrations of circumstances for each of the four areas above for how reactive people and people who try to control and change their circumstances would react differently. b) Illustrate how the different reactions would bring different results.

d. Various types of circumstances and how a leader can react to them: Our circumstances are in one of three areas.

First, there are those circumstances over which we have direct control. For instance, we have direct control over whether or not we go to a certain church or not. Or whether we stay in our current job or not. Or whether we will get angry at someone or not. If we are not educated, we go to school. A leader must look at his life to see what he needs to directly control rather than allow others or circumstances to control. This is the part of his life which he can most easily influence and change.

Second, there are those circumstances which are under our ability to influence, but not control. For instance, we cannot control the elders or our economic situation. But we can influence the elders' attitude towards us by changing how we view them and relate to them. Or we can influence our economic situation by working harder so that people see we are hard working and trustworthy and give us a better job.

Third, there are some circumstances which we have no ability to change. All we can do is change our attitude towards the circumstances. If we are born cripple, or if I am sick with asthma, or my wife has died, or another denomination took our church- these are things which we do not have the ability to control. They are situations in life which God has placed us.

Q. 25. a) Make a list of circumstances over which a person has direct control. b) Make a list of circumstances over which a person has indirect influence. c) Make a list of circumstances over which a person has no control. d) Illustrate how you think a reactive person would respond to each circumstance. Illustrate how a person who takes control of his circumstances would react to the circumstance. e) What would be the difference in outcome for the reactive person versus the person who took control of circumstances?

So how does an effective church worker address these three different areas of circumstances? The reactive person usually focuses upon the third area, the circumstances which no one can control. No one can control history, the things of the past; the pooriness of our parents, the fact that we did not have the opportunity to go to school, that our tribe was oppressed by others, that churches have been taken from us by another denomination, etc. And yet the reactive person allows these things to affect them emotionally. The more they spend time and energy thinking about these things, the less effective these people will be. The person who believes he can change things realizes that since he is not able to change these circumstances, he does not waste time and energy thinking about them. He determines in his heart to get rid of all anger and bitterness that he might have, and then begin to address the things which he can

change.

The leader who takes responsibility for his life and determines to change things always focuses upon the first two types of circumstances. He immediately takes charge of the things which are under his direct control. He works on his character and attitudes which limit his effectiveness. If he is a church leader, he comes on time. He keeps his appointments. He fulfills all of the promises he makes. Everything that is in his ability to be a good leader, he does.

But leadership is primarily about seeking to influence others. We cannot do that directly. We cannot change other people's character. We cannot force people to give money to the church. Leadership, then, is the ability to increasingly impact circumstances indirectly. Suppose you are a new Bible school graduate. You want to have a place of ministry in the church, but the elders do not give it to you. How do you begin to impact them indirectly? Everything the elders ask you to do, you do willingly without grumbling. If they want you to come, you always arrive on time. If they give you something to do, you do quality work and get it done when they want. Rather than wait for the elders to tell you what to do, you go to them asking what you can do for them. By doing these things over which you have control, you influence the elders. Seeing your attitude, they are influenced to give you more responsibility.

Or suppose you are the leader of a church district which does not pay salaries to its church workers. Rather than complain, you determine to improve your relationship with each local church leader. Every Sunday you visit a different church. You spend time after the service with the elders, asking them how their church is going and what problems they are facing. You pray with them. When they have a work day at church, you are there and help them. You ask them what their goals are for the coming year and then help find the resources for them to meet the goals. As you demonstrate to them that as a district leader you are trying to help them, their heart begins to change. They in turn begin to ask you about the district and your plans and what problems you are facing. You can then share with them the challenge of no finances to do what you would like to do. Now they are ready to listen and are much more willing to encourage their churches to contribute to the district's programs.

The leader who takes ownership of his life also does three things:

*He is a self-initiator. Rather than wait for others to start things, he starts them.

*He does not focus upon his or others mistakes. A mistake is something we cannot change. It is history, and history is something we cannot change. But a leader who seeks to control his life and ministry looks at the mistakes and asks "What can I do differently or better so that I don't make the mistake again?" A leader who does not ask why a mistake took place will make the same mistake over and over again. But the leader who evaluates his life and ministry is a leader who is able to learn from his mistakes. As long as we blame someone or something else, however, we cannot grow and the mistakes continue.

*When we lead people, we never help them grow by not holding them accountable for things they have promised to do or by not letting people face the consequences of their actions. When we do this, we are teaching them that they do not need to take responsibility for their lives. We are teaching them that they don't have to work hard, or come on time, or do a good job. Someone will always fix it for them. But when we hold people responsible to do what they said they would do, and when we allow them to face the consequences of their decisions, then we are teaching them that they are responsible for their lives. If they do not do the work, then they don't get the raise. If they don't do the work, then they will not be given responsibility next time. People can only grow when we give them responsibilities and then hold them

accountable for the consequences of their actions.

Q. 26. a) Describe ways that many people seek to blame others for circumstances rather than take ownership of their lives and their attitudes. b) Illustrate why "attitude" is 90% of successful leadership. c) Describe a circumstance that you are facing that is limiting what you want to do. What are things under your direct control which you can change? What are things you can do to indirectly influence the situation so that it can get better?

7. Learn to put off personal enjoyment for the greater benefit of long-term goals

All of us like to do some things but there are other things which we do not like to do. For instance, I like to study God's Word, but I do not like to spend long hours talking to people. I like to write letters, but I do not like to file documents in a cabinet. Other people like to visit with people, but do not like to study and write.

In order to become the type of leaders who have maximum impact in our ministries, we must learn to control our desires; our likes and dislikes. We must learn to do the things we don't like and not only the things we do like. We must learn to determine what is best and not become distracted with what is good or by things that we like. In Phil. 1:9-11 Paul prayed that the Philippian believers would know what is best. When they knew the best and did that for the glory of God, they had the greatest joy in their lives. It is said that the enemy of the best is not always evil, but often the good. We are often busy doing something that is good, but it may not be the best or the most important. God wants our us to be doing what is the most important, not just what is good.

All our lives there will be a struggle between what is "best" and what is "good." It is good to sleep longer in the morning, but the "best" means getting up early so that we spend time with God in prayer and reading of the Word. If we do not choose the "best" we will not grow spiritually. In the same way, if leaders choose the "good" of drinking tea and talking with our friends over getting the work done which God has given us to do, we are not effective in ministry. Or we can focus upon the "good" things like a new church building, choir robes, and musical instruments rather than what might be the "best," like spreading the Gospel to the unreached people of Ethiopia and the world and helping church members grow in spiritual maturity.

In our days, many church workers want good things quickly. They want to be successful and popular or they want to have a comfortable life quickly. Some leaders make choices that might be permissible, but are not the best for them or for the kingdom of God. In their desire to do what is good, some church workers focus on exciting worship in the church, but do not work hard to help people grow in their knowledge of God. Others want instant honor and recognition so they go to school and get a degree rather than seek the honor that comes out of a life that is lived in integrity and self-sacrifice. Some leaders want a comfortable life style now, so they demand that the church pay them high salaries. Rather than accepting a salary which the church can afford, and carefully saving money to buy things as they can afford them, some workers want all of these benefits immediately. Satan uses the good things of life to keep them from focusing upon the best, serving God's people with integrity and sacrifice. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus tells us to seek the "best." What is "best" is whatever brings the most honor and benefit to the kingdom of God and to live holy and righteous lives. These things last for eternity. The earthly blessings that we so often want are the "good" which can be the enemy of the best.

Q. 27. a) Illustrate how something that is "good" can become the enemy of the "best." b) What are ways church leaders often settle for the good rather than the best? c) Why do you think it is important for church

leaders to learn to develop the characteristics of putting aside things that they might like to do and have so that what is the best is accomplished?

8. Learning the value of taking care of ourselves and to keep growing

One day a man bought a new ax and used it to chop wood. Initially, the ax was very sharp and he was able to cut the wood with little effort. But slowly the ax became dull. Sometimes he hit a stone with the ax, chipping the metal. Other times he left it out in the rain and the ax got rusty. Soon the ax was very dull and cutting the wood became difficult. One day as he was chopping wood, the dull ax bounced off the wood and cut deeply into his leg. He had to go to the health center and pay a lot of money to the doctor to treat his foot.

This man forgot that in order for an ax to be effective, it had to be sharpened frequently. The same is true of us. For leaders to stay effective, they must constantly "sharpen" themselves. Many church leaders forget this truth in their personal lives. They graduate from a Bible school or secular school and they begin ministry. They think that because they have reached a certain level of proficiency as a leader that they do not have to keep growing. Soon they become dull and their ministry is not as effective as before. And often they become dangerous to the church. Their lack of personal growth creates problems as their leadership becomes less effective. So for church leaders to be effective, just like sharpening the ax, we need to sharpen our lives to maintain our effectiveness in leadership. Following are some areas of our lives which leaders must always seek to develop.

a. The leader's **spiritual life**: As church leaders we lead from the foundation of our character and spiritual maturity, and out of our relationship with Christ. Only when church leaders have a growing relationship with God will they have the power to lead and know how to lead in a way that honors God. Paul said that he constantly beat his body (his will) into submission so that it would obey his greater desire to know God. (1 Cor. 9:27) Paul kept pressing on to know Jesus Christ better and to experience his power in his life and ministry in increasing ways. (Phil. 3:12-14) When praying for other believers, Paul prayed that they would constantly grow in their spiritual walk with God; growing in their understanding of God's love, growing in godly wisdom, growing in ministry, etc. (Eph. 3:14-19) If a church leader's spiritual life is not constantly growing, it begins to die, and the power to properly lead God's people dies as well.

b. The leader's **intellectual life**: Many people think that once we finish Bible school we no longer need to grow intellectually. Many church leaders spend all of their time in ministry, but do not read or think deeply about issues the believers face. If we do not keep using our minds, they soon grow weak. A church leader must be always seeking to grow in his understanding about things. We should go to seminars, both to learn about secular issues (e.g. HIV Aids, issues facing Ethiopia [e.g. poverty alleviation]) and to study issues that are more directly related to ministry in the church. (e.g. leadership skills, theological truths) We should read books to increase our understanding. A leader does not need to go to a school or a seminar to learn. Books are teachers which we can learn from in our home any time we read them. If a leader is not reading at least a book per month concerning various issues, he is probably not developing his mind as he should. Another way to grow intellectually is to meet together with other people in ministry and discuss issues, look for solutions, challenge each other's philosophies, share with each other what God is teaching them, etc. Don't just talk about the weather, each other's families, or the problems in the church. As iron sharpens iron, let your mind sharpen the minds of the others and the minds of others also sharpen yours. (Prov. 27:17)

c. The leader's **physical health**: What good is a broken ax? Or what good is a leader who is sick because he does not take care of himself? Paul says that our physical bodies are the house of the Holy

Spirit. (1 Cor. 6:19) He works through our bodies to fulfill the ministry in the church. So it is important for church leaders to take care of ourselves physically if we want to be effective in ministry. Often church leaders get fat because they attend many feasts and spend a lot of time in meetings. When we are overweight, it is clear we cannot work as well, walk as far, or do as much as we used to. In fact, scientists are finding that those who are overweight are usually sick more frequently than those who weigh less. Overweight people are more likely to get diabetes, high blood pressure, ulcers, etc. To stay healthy physically, we must be careful how much we eat and eat the right types of food. And we must be physically active- walking or doing something to keep our bodies firm.

Q. 28. a) What are you doing to keep your spiritual ax sharp? b) List some things that you are doing to keep growing intellectually. c) What are you doing to keep yourself in good physical shape? d) What things can you do differently to stay effective in leadership and to keep growing?

9. Working with great energy

Think of people whom God seems to use a lot. Usually they are people with a lot of energy which they focus upon specific things which God tells them to do. There are different types of leaders:

a. Many leaders sit around and talk a lot. They know what to do, but they never seem to start working. They enjoy meetings, strategy sessions, writing things down on paper, and making decisions in the board meeting. But that is where everything stops. The plan is written on paper, but never becomes a reality. God does not use this type of leader because they talk, but do no action. They accomplish little for the kingdom of God.

b. Other leaders know what they should do, and they work to accomplish what God wants them to do. But they don't work very hard. They prefer to talk to people or let non-important things distract them from the work that God wants them to accomplish. As soon as it turns 5:00 PM, they stop their work and go home. This type of leader gets a little done, but always complains about not having enough time to do much. God will never use this type of leader to accomplish great things.

c. Only a few leaders seem to have a lot of energy and use that energy to do the work that God wants them to do. This type of leader often is frustrated by the slow speed with which other leaders make decisions. When allowed, they work hard day and night to accomplish what God tells them to do. Paul was this type of worker. He tells us that when seeking to plant and mature the church, he worked "day and night." (Acts 20:31) Often he sewed tents during the day time so that he and Timothy and others had enough money to live on and so he would not be a burden to those with whom he stayed. Then late into the night he would teach the new believers. (2 Thes. 3:6-10) The Holy Spirit worked in and through Paul and used his great energy to accomplish many things in a short period of time.

This third type of leader God uses to do great things. Oh that all of us would be leaders who have a clear idea what God wants us to do and would be willing to work hard to accomplish it! Not just talk about it, but actually work to turn it into a reality. Those of us leaders who might not have this type of energy must be careful that we do not limit those who have a lot of energy to work by bureaucratic decisions where we take days and months to make a decision about their ministry. If we do, they will become discouraged and quit. We will be held responsible for not allowing them to honor God by working to the maximum of their capability. Rather, as church leaders with godly wisdom, we must guide these workers with their great energy for God's kingdom so that their work is the best it can be for the glory of God.

Q. 29. a) Describe a church worker who has a lot of energy to serve God. How was God able to use him in a short time? b) Illustrate how this type of worker can become discouraged by the slow process of decisions by other church leaders. c) If God gives a church this type of person, how should church elders guide him so that his work honors God and is beneficial to the church?

10. Enjoys life: A person with a sense of humor

Somehow many Christian leaders have the idea that to laugh is not spiritual. Notice how many leaders go around with a frown on their face. But books on leadership repeatedly emphasize that the most effective leaders are those who enjoy life. They have a sense of humor and laugh a lot. Prov. 17:22 says that a "*cheerful heart is good medicine.*" The Apostle Paul commands "*Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say rejoice!*" (Phil. 4:4)

As church leaders we will always be confronted with problems. If we are not careful, we will lose the joy that we should have if we trust God in all situations. Then our hearts will get heavy and we will become overwhelmed by the ministry.

Both laughter and sadness are like colds. We pass them on to those around us. Those working with a person who laughs and enjoys life also laugh and enjoy life and work. But people who spend time with a sad or grumpy person also get grumpy. Laughter is important for the leader for the following reasons:

It keeps the spirit of the leader up in spite of problems which he faces every day.

It helps those around the leader to keep rejoicing in God even when there are problems.

It makes it enjoyable for those working together in leadership. As they laugh together, they also work together with fewer personality clashes and disagreements.

Q. 30. a) How have you seen the lack of humor make it difficult for people to work with a leader? b) How have you seen the humor of a leader be used by God to make work easier, and to limit personality conflicts?

Q. 31. Review these ten characteristics for successful ministry which deal with a person's character. a) Why do you think each characteristic is necessary for church leaders? b) List some things that result when a church leader does not have each of these characteristics. c) Which of these characteristics are you good at? d) Which of these characteristics are you weak in? e) What can you do to grow in the ones in which you are weak?

WEEKLY MEETING

DISCUSSION

1. a) What does it mean to have a "call" from God into ministry or leadership? b) Why do you think it is important for full-time church workers and church leaders to have a sense that God has "called" them to work on his behalf? c) What would happen differently in the church if we focused more on making sure all church workers and church leaders had a clear call from God? d) What can church leaders do to make sure that church ministers or new church leaders have a call from God? e) Describe how the elders' understanding of choosing and assigning people in ministry would change if they focused more on a person's call rather than on how to get a certain job done.

2. a) Describe how have you seen the principle of faithfulness in small things bringing greater

responsibilities true in your life or in your church. b) How would this principle influence the way a church chooses church leaders or appoints church ministers in the church? c) What problems have you seen in the church when people are chosen to serve God in a leadership position who have not proven that they are faithful in other things? d) What can church leaders do to guide perspective church leaders and church ministers so that they can become experienced in smaller areas of responsibility before they are given greater responsibility?

3. a) List the four characteristics of successful spiritual ministry which originate in a leaders' relationship to God. b) Why are these four things important in a church leader's life? c) What can a church leader do to grow in each of these four characteristics so that God can use them more effectively?

4. a) List the ten characteristics for successful ministry which deal with a leader's personal character. b) Why do you think each characteristic is necessary for church leaders? c) List some things that result when a church leader does not have each of these characteristics. d) Which of these characteristics are weak in most church leaders' lives? e) What do you suggest to help church leaders grow in these areas of their lives?

LESSON FIVE

FIRST DAY

KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 6)

A leader once said "Serving God in the church would be easy if it weren't for the people." The reason leadership is so difficult is not the work load, but because of problems with people. When Isaiah said that all of us have the characteristics of sheep, each going his or her own way, this correctly describes what life is like in the church. (Is. 53:6) As sinful followers of Jesus, each believer still tends to want to go his own way. It is through leaders that God seeks to help his children learn to give up our selfish ways and follow God's way. Therefore, how a church leader relates to the church members is very important if he wants to help them learn to follow Jesus.

CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: THE LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PEOPLE

1. Patience: Waiting for God to work on our behalf

Q. 1. Read Prov. 14:29, 16:32, 19:11, 25:15; Eccl. 7:8; 1 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 5:22; Col. 1:10-12; 2 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 6:12; Rev. 14:12. a) What do these verses teach us about patience? b) Why does a leader especially need patience?

A man once prayed "God give me patience, and I want it now!" His very request shows that he was in a hurry. Like most of us, the man wanted quick results. But God is never in a hurry and people do not change quickly. So patience is an important characteristic for a leader to develop. A patient person confidently waits for God to work rather than being in a hurry and pushing for something to be done our way. The Bible looks at patience in different ways.

a. Patience is needed during times of difficulty like persecution or poverty. Being patient in difficult circumstances means that we bear these things without complaining, looking to God to provide strength to endure and relief from the situation in his time. Leadership itself is a difficulty which requires patience. There are unsolvable problems. Things like lack of money or lack of personnel or problems with people which seem to have no solution. People often resist things that we want to do in the church. Or they insult us and falsely accuse us of doing things that are wrong. Unless we have learned patience and endurance, we will quit. But when we quit, we can no longer be instruments of God to bring change. Patience helps us keep on in faithful ministry, waiting for God to demonstrate our integrity and change the hearts of people so they will listen to us. If we do not have patience we will often become bitter and retaliate against people. Patience helps us accept the abuse of people as we wait for God to vindicate us.

b. We are told to be patient with people as we wait for them to grow. (1 Cor. 13:4) This means that we do not get angry when someone does something that hurts or disappoints us. It means that we do not give people only one chance when they disappoint us, but many chances to change and to grow. As church leaders, we often want people to change quickly. But all change and growth is a slow process. It is easy for leaders to get discouraged when people do not change like we want. Patience means that we keep teaching and preaching, allowing time for God to work in the hearts of people to change them. A patient

leader makes decisions and leads at the speed which people are willing to change. He does not run ahead of the members and then use strong words to force them to do what he wants. Rather, he works with people patiently until they are ready to listen. Like a father who adjusts his walk to the speed of his child, a church leader will adjust his plans for the growth of his church to the speed which the members are able to walk. He does not deal with people harshly when they fail but is aware of their weaknesses and treats them gently.

Solomon shows the power of patience in leadership in the book of Proverbs. Patience will help calm the anger of people and provide a solution to the crisis of the moment. Often if leaders are in a hurry when it comes to people and their problems, we cause more harm than good. Wisdom teaches that we wait until God arranges the time for us to bring godly wisdom into a situation. There is a right time and a wrong time to address an issue. We must patiently wait for God's time to address the problem. Otherwise, Satan uses our impatience to make the problem worse.

Q. 2. a) List situations leaders face which require patience. b) Explain how a leader's lack of patience can cause greater problems in the church.

2. Submission and faithfulness to those in authority

No matter what level of leadership a person is in, he must know how to properly obey the leader who is above him. A leader who has not learned submission will often have a spirit of rebellion and will be struggling against others in leadership. A spirit of rebellion among the leaders of the church causes great problems in the church as leaders fight each other for control. As one African proverb says "When the elephants fight, the grass is destroyed." In the same way, when workers in the church do not submit to those in authority, the members of the church end up being hurt.

The Bible teaches that believers are to be known as those who submit. We are to submit to one another as we lay aside our personal desires for the benefit of others. (Eph. 5:21) We should submit to secular leaders, knowing that God has put them in authority over us for a purpose. (Rom. 13:1-2) We must submit to our bosses at work just as if we were submitting to Jesus Christ. (Eph. 6:5-8) The youth are told to obey the elders in the church rather than fight against them. (1 Pet. 5:5) Even the most powerful leader in the church must submit to the will and guidance of God. (Jms. 4:7) If the person has not learned how to submit to others, he will not have a spirit of submission to God. So clearly, the spirit of submitting to those in authority and of working together rather than trying to undermine the ministry of others is a character all church leaders need.

One of the negative things which have resulted in society because of the communist government is the breakdown in respecting and submitting to those in authority. Children no longer think that they need to listen to or submit to their parents. Young people in the church do not think they need to submit to the decisions of the church leaders. Even choir members, who are usually the models of spirituality for the church youth, "rebel" against the elders by worshipping in a way the elders do not want, playing music louder than suggested, or increasing the volume of the loud speaker when asked to turn the music down. Or when asked to change how they are to worship, the youth threaten to leaven rather than submit. Paid pastors and evangelists often refuse to submit to the elders. When their plans are not accepted, they work with the youth to force elders out of leadership or threaten to leave the church if the elders do not submit to them. Individual church leaders often refuse to submit to the decisions of the body of elders. If they do not like the decision the other elders have made, they will quietly rebel and not tell anyone about the decision or undermine the decision by talking about how bad the decision is. All these ways of "rebelliousness"

against authority are sins against God and cause God's people great difficulty. One of the major reasons there is a problem with a lack of unity in our churches today is that we are no longer willing to submit to authority.

What does it mean to "submit" to authority?

a. It does not mean that believers are not able to voice a differing perspective on an issue. The Bible clearly shows that all of us are able to politely and humbly share with those in authority what we believe is a better way to do things. Church leaders must realize that they should listen to others. A leader who refuses to listen to others is not wise. But submission means that once we have shared our perspective, we release the decision to those in authority. God holds us responsible to share what we think is right. But after we share, God holds the leaders responsible for listening and changing something if necessary. We are no longer held responsible by God for what happens in the church.

b. Submitting means that we are supportive and faithful to the one in leadership over us. When working together as a group of leaders, we must help and support each other. When one elder has an opinion different than the head elder, submission means that he goes to the head elder and expresses his perspective and why he thinks differently. After talking the issue over together, they might agree to disagree with each other. Humans will always have different opinions on certain issues. But first in private, and then in the elder board, after these differences have been discussed and a decision made, the disagreeing elder should not express his disagreement with the decision to anyone. To do so is lack of submission and is rebellion. Satan then uses the person to cause division.

c. If we are submissive, we will never cause a rebellion, even when the leader is wrong. There may be times when we know that the leader has made a mistake and may even be doing something that is sinful and against the will of God. What should we do? The example of David and King Saul is a good indication of how to handle situations like this. When Saul tried to kill King David, we see the following things.

1) David spoke out when he knew Saul was doing something wrong. Repeatedly we read of David telling Saul that he was faithful to Saul no matter what Saul thought or what others said. (e.g. 1 Sam. 24:8-24) But David refused to did not start a rebellion or kill King Saul. David said "How can I raise my hand against God's anointed?" (1 Sam. 24:5-6) David understood that God is the one who raises up a person into leadership, and it is God's responsibility to lower that person. In the same way, when we are not happy with a church leader, it is not our job to force the person out of leadership. We should patiently wait until the next election, praying that God will either change the leader or remove him peacefully from office by having him lose the election. (Note: 1 Tim. 5:19-20 gives us specific instructions how to deal with a leader when he has committed a serious sin in a rebellious spirit.)

2) Rather than fight, David fled from the situation. He told Saul the truth, which was that he was not rebelling against him. When Saul was not willing to listen to him, David withdrew himself from the situation. He left the government and lived in the wilderness. He did not try to get others in the army or government to fight against Saul. In the same way, when the leader or the elders do something that is obviously sinful, it is our responsibility to share where they are Biblically wrong. If they still refuse to listen, then we are to withdraw, perhaps resigning from our position. We should not support or bring division in the church.

3) Instead of leading a rebellion against King Saul, David remained faithful to Saul and allowed time for God to vindicate him. Although many people were attracted to David's leadership and joined him, David

never used these people to cause a division in Israel and start a civil war against Saul. David waited until after Saul died to step forward into leadership. When it is clear that a leader or group of leaders are wrong, we must pray to God and ask him to work. We ask him to change the hearts of leaders. We should pray that God's people will see what is wrong. And we maintain our integrity in the situation. Then in his time, God will change the situation, often using the example of our lives to show people the importance of godliness and holiness. But if we cause rebellion and division in the church, we become a tool of Satan to cause division. And we start a cycle of continued rebellions in the church that is very difficult to stop. If we lead a rebellion, then once we are in leadership, someone else will lead a rebellion against us.

If you see the leaders openly sinning against God, and after you have humbly shared with them from the Word, you have two choices and only the Holy Spirit can guide you which choice to make. First, you can **wait** like David until God works to change those in leadership, either by changing their hearts or by removing them from leadership. This is the most godly response. Second, you can quietly **leave**. You can join another church without making an issue of the problem in your church. You share the reason of your decision to leave to the elders but no one else unless specifically asked. Then you leave. This should only be done when it looks like there is little hope of change. Often we leave our church too quickly and go to another church. But when we do, we will find problems there. Because we are all imperfect Christians, there will be problems in every church. You will never find a perfect church. And God cannot use us to bring change if we leave when there are problems.

Q. 3. a) Explain how there would be more unity in our churches if we learned to submit to those in authority as explained above. b) Illustrate different situations from your church where rebellion against leadership has taken place. What happened? How could have the situation been handled in a godly way? c) When a person, especially a leader, leaves his church for another church, what is usually their reason? How should they have handled this situation so that there would be no division and Satan could not bring dishonor to Jesus?

3. Justice: The character which treats all people with equality and fairness irrespective of how the world views them

Q. 4. a) Read Micah 6:8. What does God say is required of his people? b) Why is it important for leaders to love justice and desire that people are treated equally and fairly? c) List situations when it is a temptation for church leaders not to treat all people with equality. d) Describe what problems this has caused in the church.

All of us grow up within societies that honor injustice in a way that we think it is normal. Inequalities surround us. There is discrimination between men and women, between the educated and the uneducated, between the rich and the poor, between honored tribes (e.g. Amhara) and those not honored (e.g. Shankela or potters), between respected types of work (e.g. teaching) and work that is not respected (e.g. pottery, blacksmith). Unfortunately these inequalities seem normal to us and often occur in our churches. Just watch how Christians chose their marriage partners (those whom they seek to marry and those whom they will not marry) to see how injustice and discrimination exist in the church!

A church leader must realize that these injustices are not the will of God, but the result of our sinfulness. We must recognize that God hates injustice or favoritism of any sort. (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 2 Chron. 19:7; 1 Tim. 5:21) If God's people and the leaders of God's people do not practice justice in the church and seek justice in society, then all worship is unacceptable. (Is. 1:10-17, Is. 6:6-8; Is. 58; Jms. 1:27) Paul says that in Christ's church there are no unequal divisions. All should be treated equally.

(Gal. 3:26-29) If church leaders are to guide God's people in a way that reflects the teaching of the Gospel, if we are going to bring unity in the church, then we must learn to love justice. Justice is doing what is fair and right for all people and acting in a way which respects their equality. This means that the leader will work against any inequality between how men and women are treated, or between the rich and the poor, or between the educated and the uneducated, between different tribes, etc.

In the church, all members are brothers and sisters. In a way, they are the spiritual children of the church leaders, no matter what their economic or educational background or which tribe they come from. God expects the church leader to treat all God's spiritual children fairly and equally. Any time that the leader favors his own family or tribe or the educated and rich member, he is participating in furthering injustice. Satan uses him to create division in the church.

Do you long for justice in your church and in society? Do you practice justice with those with whom you meet? Do you lead your church with equality and fairness? Remember, God's Word teaches that without justice we cannot truly worship of God.

4. Compassion: The character than empathizes with those who struggle and seeks to help them

Q. 5. Read Mt. 22:34-40; Lk. 10:25-37. a) What did Jesus say was the second most important commandment, which is inseparable from honoring God with all of our being? b) Who refused to show compassion? c) Who showed compassion? c) What does this story teach us about the importance of church leaders showing compassion to people?

One of the great dangers in the life of church leaders is lack of concern for those who have problems. Church leaders are frequently asked to help people with their problems. The poor come looking for money. The sick want help to get treatment. Husbands and wives or other church members who are fighting want church leaders to bring resolution. The reality of church leadership is that we are faced with constant requests from people who need our help.

It is very easy for church leaders to become tired and stop empathizing with these people. We may look at these people as interruptions keeping us from doing important things like planning how to evangelize our community. In Lk. 10, Jesus provides important teaching on the need of believers, especially church leaders, to show compassion to those who are hurting. Notice the following things in this passage:

a. Although the expert in the law only asked Jesus for the greatest commandment, Jesus told him that two commandments had to go together. The first commandment is the commandment to love God with all of our being. But Jesus knew human tendency to focus our attention upon God and overlook our relationships with each other. So Jesus immediately said that the second commandment, loving our neighbors as ourselves, had to be practiced as well.

b. Our "neighbor" is anyone, saved or unsaved, who has a need. It is not based upon whether or not they are from our tribe, our family, our church, or someone we know. It does not matter if they are rich or poor, have an honorable lifestyle (teacher) or dishonorable (harlot), since they are all created in the image of God, each one is our neighbor and it is our responsibility to help.

c. It was the religious leaders who had the most difficulty showing compassion. Jesus listed two of the major Jewish religious leaders, the priests and the Levites, as illustrations of those who walk by without

helping. Their hearts had grown hard to the suffering of others, so they did not get involved in their pain.

The same is true for church leaders today. How easy it is for us to become insensitive to the problems of people. When people fall into sin, we quickly become impatient and treat them as an enemy. Or when people come with a problem, we quickly say "May God help you" and walk away. We forget that God's way of helping people is through us. Suffering is growing in our churches and in our country. As the AIDS epidemic expands and many people in our churches and communities get sick and die, as the number of orphans increase, the demands upon us to show compassion will increase.

God asks us to show love to the hurting, not to seek development which brings us benefits. Any attempt to get development which does not flow from a heart of compassion will end up not having the blessings of God. Has your heart grown hard? Have you lost your compassion? Is your church known for its compassion to those who are hurting? May God help us to keep our hearts tender to the needs of people.

5. Friendliness: The character of making friends with people and making them feel important and welcome

Q. 6. a) Do you think visitors would describe your church as friendly? Explain your answer. b) Do you think the leaders of your church are known to be friendly and welcome people into their homes, offices, and the church? Explain your answer. c) Why do you think it is difficult for leaders to be friendly? d) Read Mt. 11:19. What was Jesus called in this verse? Do you think church leaders today would be willing to have this reputation? Why or why not?

Sometimes church leaders believe that in order to maintain the dignity of their being church leaders, they should not get close to people. They should not be friendly with them. And if people are known to be sinners, then we must keep a distance from them. But this is the opposite from how Jesus acted. He was known to be friendly with people. They enjoyed being with him. Even well-known sinners enjoyed his company. They knew that he did not approve of their actions. But they also knew that he loved them and made them feel welcome. It was the religious leaders who struggled most with Jesus' friendliness with people whom they judged were unclean.

Have we become like the religious leaders of Jesus' day? Are we afraid of being friendly to all people? When the leaders are not friendly, the churches are not friendly. One of the most frequent accusations made against evangelical churches by people who come to visit is that they are not friendly. No one welcomes them and takes an interest in them. So they go to other churches, or they don't go to church at all. And people who are saved from a life of great sin are often not made welcome by believers. A converted prostitute once said that she could not go to an evangelical church. As soon as the leaders and members heard that she used to be a prostitute, they indicated that she was not welcome at their church. How far we have fallen from what the church is meant to be! The church is like a hospital where sick people go to get well. It is a place where sinners are made welcome as they come to Jesus for medicine. (Mk. 2:17) It is not a place for people who think that they are holy, but a place where sinners who have been saved come to praise God for saving them.

6. Encouragement: The character of building others up so that they grow in their faith

Q. 7. a) Read Heb. 3:13, 10:25. What command is given here? b) Read Acts 4:36. What special name was given to Joseph? What does that name mean? c) Why do you think having this character is important for leaders?

For most people, life is very difficult. They have problems at work and problems at home. They try to obey God, but often fail and want to give up. One of the important characteristics of a leader is to encourage people. An encourager is someone who sees people who are discouraged, who comes and through godly counsel and by showing love, encourages them to keep living for God. The person does not come to reprimand, but to help people grow. Joseph of Cyprus was this type of person. He always sought to help those who were disappointed about something. That is why the church changed his name to Barnabas, which means "son of encouragement." It was Barnabas who sought out Paul when he was hidden away in Tarsus and was discouraged. (Acts 11:25-26) It was Barnabas who sought to encourage John Mark who had failed on the first missionary journey. Barnabas wanted to give him another chance to serve God. (Acts 15:36-40) Imagine if Paul had not been encouraged and Barnabas had not given him an opportunity to serve God in Antioch. Perhaps the Apostle of the Gentiles would never have taken the Gospel to Europe and many of the letters in the New Testament would not have been written. Imagine if John Mark would have quit because no one trusted him any more. The Gospel to Mark would not have been written. Who knows how many gifted people God wants to use for his glory but they become discouraged and quit because no leader seeks to encourage them? The most successful leaders are always those who encourage others to greater ministries and to continuing to grow in their relationship with God.

7. Diplomacy: Knowing how to speak in the right way at the correct time

One of the characteristics that greatly enhances a leader's ability to minister is knowing how to speak in order to bring a resolution rather than make things worse. Solomon wrote "*A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*" (Prov. 25:11) By this he meant that it is a thing of beauty when a leader has learned to use his tongue in the right way. Leaders lead by speaking. They can cause division or hurt by what they say. Or they can bring peace among believers by what they say. Knowing what to say, when to say it, and how to say it is a special skill that good leaders learn. We can say the wrong thing at the right time and it brings greater division. Or we can say the right thing at the wrong time, and people are hurt. As leaders we need to learn how to say what is true in the right way, at the right time. When this happens, difficulties will disappear. Relationships will be healed. And God's work will get accomplished.

Q. 8. a) Illustrate how we can say the wrong thing, but at the right time. What happens when we do this?
b) Illustrate how we can say the right thing, but at the wrong time. What happens when we do this?
c) Illustrate how we can say the right thing at the right time in the right way. What happens when we do this?

8. Being a peacemaker: Bringing people together to live and work in harmony

"*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*" (Mt. 5:9) Jesus said that one of the major ways we demonstrate that we are children of God is by actively seeking to make peace between people. One of the major ministries which church leaders should be doing is the ministry of bringing peace between different parties. Unfortunately, because of our selfish tendencies, God's children often disagree with each other and fight each other. In almost every church there are disagreements which go on for a long time without resolution. And there are struggles between denominations which go on for years. These are one of the major hindrances to our testimony as the children of God. Jesus said that it is our unity which most clearly demonstrates to the world that he is the Son of God. (Jn. 17:20-21)

It is important that leaders be active peacemakers in the family of God.

a. Leaders must be examples of keeping the peace. Many of the strong disagreements in the church originate between leaders. Because they believe that they or their family or their tribe was not treated fairly,

or because another leader did not listen to their ideas and they were hurt, often one leader will struggle against another leader. Spiritually mature leaders will determine not to let anything hinder the unity among the leaders. As Paul said, they will choose to be wronged rather than allow their reactions to bring disrepute to the name of Christ. (1 Cor. 6:7)

b. Leaders need to be attentive to the relationships of church members. Rather than wait until divisions between church members grow to the point where emotions are high and many people have joined the different sides on an issue, they will become involved as soon as they know that relationships have become strained between believers. Although some relationship difficulties resolve themselves, most disagreements need assistance to be resolved.

When leaders wait too long hoping that the relationships resolve themselves, three things happen.

First, the emotions of those involved become more intense as time passes. If a husband insults his wife, often it is easy to restore the husband and wife if we immediately work to bring forgiveness. But if we wait for several months, the anger in the wife continues to grow. She does things which anger her husband. When the anger and bitterness is great, it is very difficult to heal the relationship.

Second, the number of people involved increases, making it more difficult to bring peace among all of the people. When a husband and wife fight, they begin to share their hurt with others seeking to get their sympathy. So they try to get their children to take sides. Then they bring their respective families into the problem. Soon they share the problem with their friends who take sides. Now the leader does not only have to bring peace between husband and wife, but between many of the parties involved.

Third, the longer the fight goes on, the more difficult it becomes to resolve without major hurt. It is easy to pull up a small weed without hurting a plant, but when that weed is as big as the plant and its roots are deep, pulling up the weed often destroys the plant. In the same way, once a disagreement has grown deep, the church leader rarely can bring resolution without one side or the other believing things were unfair and they refuse reconciliation.

This means that if leaders want peace in their churches, we have to take an active role in being peacemakers. We must watch for disagreements and take quick action to bring reconciliation before the disagreement spreads. A spiritually mature leader knows that God wants him to get involved to bring peace. He knows that praying about the problem is not enough. Sin must be confronted and peace must be restored for the body of Christ to be healthy once again.

Q. 9. a) Illustrate how divisions often happen between leaders. What role should the peacemaker have when this happens? b) Give an example of how divisions often arise among church members. What role should a peacemaking elder have? c) Illustrate how not addressing a division quickly can make resolution much more difficult. d) Why do most elders choose not to get involved soon enough? e) What are some divisions you know about in your church? What role do you think God wants you to have in bringing peace?

9. Not being overly sensitive: learning to accept disappointment and criticism

Many church leaders are very sensitive and are easily hurt when things do not happen as they want. For instance, a person walks by them without saying hello and they imagine the person does not like them. Or a person from another tribe does not show up at the meeting, and they imagine that the person is doing this because they do not like his tribe. Being too sensitive causes leaders to react in several different ways:

a. The leader can become too controlling. Usually when leaders are too controlling, it is because they are insecure in themselves and are not trusting in God. Afraid that people will want to do something that they do not like, many church leaders make all of the decisions and don't let others participate in the decision. Or they are afraid that someone else might come who can preach or teach better than they can, so they refuse to let other people minister and chase away all gifted young people. Leaders become more secure primarily by learning to trust God. They want God's glory, so they are not concerned who succeeds or who gets the glory. They know that God can work through anyone, so they trust people to be led by God to do things for God. They know their own gifts and the gifts of other people. So they do things where they are strong and free up others to do what God has gifted them to do.

b. Some leaders become hurt by any criticism of their ministry. When someone disagrees with their idea, they see it as an attack against themselves. Or when someone criticizes what they do, they get bitter and usually verbally attack the person or begin to gossip about the person. People will always criticize leaders. Since criticism is inevitable, as leader we need to know how to handle it. It helps to remember the following:

1) It does no good to get angry at the person who criticized you. If you allow yourself to get angry and bitter, you are allowing yourself to be hurt again and the problem grows bigger rather than learning from the person and growing more Christ-like.

2) Remember that you are answerable to God and not to the people. In the end, it does not matter what they say, but what God says. Only his judgment really matters. If we have sought to do what he wants, then we must learn to shrug off the criticism of others who might not like our decision.

3) Ask yourself "Is there anything in what this criticism that is true which I need to learn from or repent of?" Even in the midst of a lot of falsehood, there might be some truth. So evaluate what was said as objectively as you can. If there are ways you could have done the work better or handled the situation better, admit it and try to learn from it. If you find you had wrong motives or did something wrong, then confess those to God and to whomever else you need to confess to.

4) Determine not to pay attention to anything said that is wrong. People are often wrong because they don't have all of the information. And they may have a wrong attitude towards you. Understand this and therefore do not become upset.

c. Often leaders are disappointed by people or by things that did not turn out how they hoped. Remember you are human and not perfect. If you did what you could to the best of your ability, that is all God expects. God evaluates not so much the outcome, but the heart motive when we do things for his glory. One of the ways Satan tries to overcome us when things do not work like we want is by getting us to stop trying. The most successful businessmen are those who plan to the best of their ability and then try to do something new. When that does not work, they look for reasons why it failed, and try again. For instance a man called Edison who invented the light bulb tried many times before he finally made a light bulb that worked. If he had quit after his first attempt failed, he would not have created the light bulb which is used around the world today to bring light to millions of people. So keep trying- and like Edison God may use you to do something great.

Q. 10. a) Give an example of how insecurity caused a leader to become controlling in leadership. b) List some truths which leaders should remember so that they can learn to trust others rather than feel they

have to control others. c) Give an example of a leader who was deeply hurt by criticism and turned bitter. How do you think that leader should have handled the criticism? d) Give an example of how a leader got discouraged with something that did not work like he wanted and therefore no longer tried to bring change. Why is it important to keep trying rather than give up when things do not work like we want?

SECOND DAY

KEY CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP (PART 7)

CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL MINISTRY: THE LEADER'S RELATIONSHIP TO WORK

God is not only interested in what we do, he is concerned with how we do things. We can do our ministry for God either with the right attitude or with a wrong attitude. In 1 Cor. 3:10-15 Paul warns us that all of us play our part in building God's house. Some are building with precious stones and gold. Others are building with non-precious things like wood, hay, and straw. All of us will have our ministries evaluated by Jesus Christ. If the ministry is made up of precious stones, then they last forever. But if our ministries are made up of non-precious things, then they get destroyed and we are not going to be rewarded for those ministries. What is the difference between one that is precious and lasts and another which is non-precious and is destroyed? It is not only "what" we do that makes a difference. Rather, Jesus will reward us based upon three things. First, he will evaluate whether or not we did something with the gifts and abilities he has given to us. If we do not use these gifts and abilities to serve him, like the man who hid the master's money, we will not be rewarded. (See Mt. 25:14-30) Second, Jesus will examine "why" are we did something? If we are working with wrong motives, for our personal glory rather than to bring glory to Jesus, then it will not be rewarded. Third, we will be evaluated by "how" are we did something? If we worked with less than the maximum of our ability, then our ministries will not be rewarded. For a leader to be used by God he must have learned the right attitude towards his ministry.

1. Excellence: The character of doing things to the best of our ability

Q. 11. a) Illustrate the difference between doing something half-heartedly with minimal effort and quality work to the best of our ability. b) Describe how some church leaders lead without focusing on quality but rather on only getting something done. c) Read Mal. 1:6-14. What did God accuse the priests of doing? How is this similar to doing something without excellence?

During the days of Malachi, the leaders were carelessly worshipping God. They sacrificed animals that were lame and crippled which they could not sell for a good price at the market. "God is satisfied with anything we give to him, so we will give to him the skinny and the lame sacrifices" they thought. But God told the Jews that he was insulted by their attitude. They would not give less than the best animals as a gift to their governmental leaders. Why should they think that God would be satisfied with what was less than the best? Isn't he the greatest leader of all? Shouldn't we honor the Lord of heaven and earth?

Church leaders must realize that God is only pleased when we do something to the best of our ability. Abilities will differ from person to person. However, God expects each of us to do our best. We must develop the character of excellence. It is only when we do our ministry with excellence and quality that we honor God. This means that when we preach, we must prepare well. We should carefully study God's Word so that we know how to interpret it. We organize our thoughts so that the message can be clearly

understood. We choose good words that are tasteful to the ear. Or when we are in the choir or playing a musical instrument, we prepare well so that we all sing at the same pitch or do not spend time fumbling with the chords to get the right sound. Or as treasurer of the church we keep good records so that we know where the money is being spent. Lack of adequate preparation is a great insult to God because it means that we are not offering our best. If we want to be godly leaders who are used by God, we must be committed to doing everything to the best of our abilities.

Q. 12. a) Make a list of things which you do in ministry for God. b) Review your list and ask yourself whether or not you are doing each of them to the best of your ability. If not, confess this sin to God. c) How would your ministry change if you begin to do everything with quality?

2. Optimism: The ability to look in hope to God to make all things work out for good

There are two types of people. There are those who look at things and see the worst. They are called pessimists and always think that things will work out badly. Unfortunately, it seems that most people, even most leaders are like this. When talking about doing something new and different for God, they can list hundreds of reasons why it won't work. But the most effective leaders are those who are optimistic. They look at the same problems, but they see many possibilities of how it can work out.

It is important that the major leaders of the church be optimistic. Optimism is the result of spiritual maturity. It comes from having developed a deep faith in God, trusting that no matter how difficult the situation might be, that God will work everything out in a way that glorifies himself. Like Paul we will be able to say "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*" and "*If God is for us, who can be against us.*" (Rom. 8:28,31)

A sense of optimism is very important as leaders seek to guide the church to be and do what God wants. If the major leaders of the church are pessimistic, they will never try anything new. And since the spirit of pessimism is passed on to the church members, the members will never reach out in faith and try something new for God. But when the leaders are optimistic, then they and the church members will trust God to overcome the problems and do something great. Like Nehemiah who said "the God of heaven will give us success" we step out in faith and rebuild walls that seem impossible to those who are pessimistic. (Neh. 2:17-20)

There are two cautions about optimism when it comes to plans leaders make, however.

First, optimism is not having ideas which are not realistic. There are some leaders who dream up big projects which have little chance of success and no clear indication from God that the plan is his will. Often those projects are for the wrong reasons; for the glory of that leader or the church or for the selfish benefits of the people. God has given us our minds to be able to think through things so that our plans are realistic. When leaders who make fine sounding plans which have little chance of success and therefore fail limits the future ability of people to trust God to do something beyond their ability. Our optimism must come after we have carefully determined the will of God in the situation. Once God has given us unity of mind, then we trust him for the outcome.

Second, optimism does not mean that we are confident as leaders that all we want to do will take place. Rather, it is confidence in God that what he promises he will accomplish in his time. So for leaders to be optimistic that something will take place, they need to carefully seek God to know it is his will. Only after the leaders understand that what they seek to do is God's will can they have the optimism that God

will give that specific ministry success. There are some leaders who have started to build a church that is far beyond the ability of the members. When the building can not be completed, the non-Christians laugh at the believers for their foolishness and the name of Christ is defamed. This type of "optimism" is dangerous and is an enemy of the Gospel.

Q. 13. a) Illustrate how you have seen a pessimistic leader hinder the growth of the church. b) How have you seen an optimistic leader encourage people to step out in faith and do great things for God? c) What is your character like? Have you learned the optimism which comes from trusting God to do things for his glory? If not, what do you need to do to learn to trust God more? d) Illustrate how you have seen the two types of wrong optimism bring disrepute to the church.

3. Knowing our spiritual gifts and focusing upon the ministries which are based upon our primary spiritual gifts

Q. 14. Read 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 27-30; Eph. 4:11-13. a) What does Paul say the Holy Spirit gives to each believer? b) What is the purpose of the spiritual gifts? c) List the spiritual gifts which reflect leadership in the church. d) Explain why knowing and understanding our spiritual gifts is important for church leaders.

Often when we think about spiritual gifts, our minds go to the spectacular gifts of healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. But Paul says that there are many spiritual gifts. These spiritual gifts are given to each believer at the discretion of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of these gifts is that each believer has a place of ministry in the church. Some of these spiritual gifts are leadership gifts. Paul mentions the leadership gifts of apostleship, prophetic ability, evangelism, administration, and pastoring and teaching. (See the TEE book on the Holy Spirit for a more complete teaching on spiritual gifts.)

It is very important that each church leader understands what his spiritual gifts are before he begins to serve in leadership in the church. Understanding our spiritual gifts will help leaders in the following ways:

a. When we understand our spiritual gift or gifts, we know where the Holy Spirit wants us to focus our energy in serving the church. If the Holy Spirit has gifted us in evangelism, but not in teaching, the Holy Spirit is clearly saying to us that we should not accept a ministry in the church which emphasizes teaching. When we try to minister outside of the gifts which the Holy Spirit has given us, both us and the church suffer. We suffer because we get frustrated when we are uncomfortable in ministry and lack fruit in our service. The church members suffer because their need for good teaching is not being met if that is not our spiritual gift.

There are times when God will ask us to work outside of our spiritual giftings. But usually this is a temporary ministry. And the Holy Spirit will give us added ability to make up for our weaknesses in this area of our leadership. Unless the Holy Spirit clearly tells us to work in an area where we know we are not gifted, we should focus on areas where we are strongest and have been equipped by the Holy Spirit.

This truth means that we should only accept the type of leadership positions which are the same as our gifts. And it means that when we appoint people into ministry positions, we appoint them according to their spiritual gifts. Too often churches will hire a graduate from a Bible school without understanding what his spiritual gifts are. The graduate may be gifted in teaching, but he is appointed as an evangelist. Or the graduate is good at evangelism, but he is appointed as an administrator. Afterwards the elders wonder why the person is not happy in ministry or effective! We are working against the Holy Spirit when we do this. If God the Holy Spirit is the one who determines the spiritual gifts of people, we must submit to his

desires and put people into ministries where he wants. And he reveals his desire for ministry usually by gifting a person for that ministry.

b. Understanding what our spiritual gifts are helps us work better as a team with other leaders who are gifted in different ways. In a later lesson, we will briefly discuss how to work as leaders in a team. The Holy Spirit knowingly limits the number of gifts he gives to an individual. That is so no leader should think that he alone can lead the church. Each of us must depend upon and work together with people with other types of gifts. For instance, if an elder is elected as chairman who does not have the gift of administration, rather than try to do the administration of the church, he needs to work closely with another elder who has the gift of administration. If the elder is gifted in evangelism, he must work closely with the elder who is gifted in teaching. Only as those with the gifts of administration, evangelism, and teaching all work together will the church be balanced in its ministries and bring glory to God.

c. When we understand spiritual gifts, it helps us know how to choose or elect people for ministry. The New Testament gives little guidance as to how we are to choose and appoint church leaders. But it clearly tells us that the Holy Spirit gives certain gifts to different individuals. And all of the leaders with different types of gifts are important for the health of the church. So a healthy church must deliberately choose people with the different types of leadership gifts needed to lead the church. Each church should have an elder who is gifted in administration and another elder who is gifted in evangelism. It should have another elder who is a gifted teacher and pastor. The church needs another elder who is gifted in mercy and helping the poor. As these four types of elders work together, they will balance the ministries of the church so that all the important church ministries are taken care of. Our churches would be healthier if we choose people with these different types of gifts.

This of course will call for true humility on the part of the major elder. He must be willing to admit that he is weak in some areas of ministry and knowingly ask people who are stronger in those areas to come and help him. He must be willing to delegate things to other elders and trust them to do the work well. Only in this way will God 's work be done in a way that brings great honor to him.

Q. 15. a) Explain how this understanding of leadership and spiritual gifts is different to how people are normally chosen into leadership positions in the church. b) What benefits are there in choosing church leaders this way? c) List weaknesses in choosing leaders this way. d) What are your spiritual gifts? What are the spiritual gifts of each of the other leaders in the church? Describe how the spiritual gifts of other leaders brings balance to leadership. How does it help the ministries of the church be more effective? e) What would need to change in the understanding of the elders for leadership to be more effective because people with different spiritual gifts are working together as a team?

4. Balancing our character and our lives

King Solomon once said that being too religious or righteous is harmful. (Eccl. 7:16-18) Solomon meant that godly wisdom and godly character must be balanced in all of our lives. Any time we focus on one thing, we bring ruin upon ourselves. For instance, if we focus on "love" and "unity" so much that "truth" and "holiness" do not matter, then we become tolerant to false teachings and impurity. However if we focus on "truth" and "holiness" but not also on love, then we forget that God is gracious to sinners, and we become harsh and judgmental. Balancing these two characteristics is important. So to be effective leaders, we must also keep our **character** in balance.

But effective church leaders must realize that all of our **lives** must be in balance to be effective. Often

church leaders spend all of their time in ministry and neglect their families. "Didn't God say that those who leave their wives and children will be blessed?" we ask as we misinterpret this verse. But Paul also said that a leader who did not properly manage his family and bring them up in the way of God was not qualified for leadership. (1 Tim. 3:4) He even said that those who did not take care of their families should be treated as unbelievers. (1 Tim. 5:8)

To be effective church leaders whom God can use without bringing disrepute to the church, all areas of our lives must be kept in balance. We must balance time with our family with ministry for God. If either one of these becomes imbalanced we will not honor God. We must balance time with the church with time in the community. If we spend all of our time with Christians and in church ministry, we lose our ability to be salt and light in community. We must balance the church ministries of evangelism, teaching, and helping those who are hurting (development). If any of these is focused upon to the neglect of the other, then we are not a church which brings honor to God. If we focus upon a certain truth of God's Word or a certain spiritual gift (e.g. speaking in tongues, healing) and not equally other truths or other spiritual gifts (teaching, helping, evangelism), then we cause problems in the church.

Q. 16. a) Describe how you have seen the lack of balance in character cause problems for a person or the church. b) Illustrate how you have seen imbalance in doctrinal emphasis bring problems into the church. c) Describe how you have seen imbalance in ministry bring problems to a church. d) Explain how you have seen imbalance in time spent with Christians and time in the community lessen the effectiveness of a leader or a church. e) Examine your life. What are the areas where you tend to be imbalanced? What can you do to restore a godly balance?

The Bible teaches about many other characteristics which leaders should have. For instance, in Mt. 5:3-12 Jesus lists other characteristics which he wants all of his followers, especially church leaders, to develop. The book of Proverbs teaches us how to have godly wisdom so as to lead God's people in the path of wisdom and not in the ways of the world. Throughout the New Testament, we are commanded to love each other, so love for God and love for others must become part of our character. (Mk. 12:29-33) As we read through God's Word we will see important characteristics which we need to make a part of our lives. As we read, and as we pray, the Holy Spirit will change us making our character to be like Jesus. (2 Cor. 3:18) May God bless you as you continue to grow in Christ-likeness.

Q. 17. a) Make a list of all of the characteristics we have studied which make an effective leader in the church. b) Add to this list other characteristics you can think of which godly leaders should have. c) Prayerfully read through the list. Which of these characteristics are you strong in and which are you weak in your life? d) With the help of the Holy Spirit, what will you do to grow in those characteristics where you are weak?

THIRD DAY

SINS OF WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 1)

David was a man after God's own heart. (Acts 13:22) He was a skillful musician, a courageous warrior, a wise administrator, and a godly spiritual leader. After about 20 years of his leadership, the nation of Israel enjoyed a time of unprecedented peace and prosperity. The border of the nation was greater than ever before in history. At the height of his success, David relaxed both physically and spiritually. Suddenly he

committed adultery and became a murderer.

Q. 18. Read 2 Sam. 12:7-14. a) Although God forgave David of his sin, what did God say would happen to David and his family as a result? b) From what you know of David's life, describe how God's prophecy was fulfilled. c) What does this teach us about the leader and sin? d) Read James 3:1. What does this verse teach us about God's judgment upon those who are leaders?

Although God forgave David's sin and did not punish him with physical death, God told David that his sin would have terrible consequences both in his family and in the nation. For the last 20 years of his reign, David suffered the consequences of his sin. One of his sons raped his half sister. Another son killed his half brother and tried to take the throne away from David and kill him. Absalom was unsuccessful and was later murdered.

What a horrible price to pay for sin! Never think that forgiveness means that we and others do not suffer the ongoing consequences of sin. Forgiveness restores our relationship with God. But it may not stop the consequences of sin from following us. This is similar to how a carpenter puts nails into a board. He is able to pull the nails back out of the board, but he is not able to hide the holes that are in the wood. We can get the nails of our sins removed by asking God to forgive us. But often the holes, or the painful results of those sins, will continue on in our lives. As Paul said, what we reap, we will one day sow. (Gal. 6:7-8) And often the consequences of our sins hurt innocent people. It hurts our wife, our children, church members, etc. Never believe it when Satan tells you that sin does not have far reaching consequences. Just like two oxen fighting often hurt the child who is watching them, so also the sin of church leaders hurt many others. That is why James warns us that we should not want to be teachers (or church leaders), for such a position brings us greater judgment.

Why did God punish David so severely for this sin? There are several reasons for this:

1. The sin of leaders destroys the glory of God in the eyes of people more greatly. When the world sees leaders sin, they not only make fun of the leader, but they despise Jesus. By ruining the honor of Jesus in the world, the sinning leader has tarnished his glory in the world. One man wrote "The plain and sobering lesson is that God deals more stringently with the sins of leaders, especially when their public actions involve his glory."

2. God holds leaders to a higher standard than he does non-leaders. Just like he demands that church leaders have godly characteristics and be spiritually mature, God also requires that we be more holy. God told David that his sin caused God's reputation among the nations to be harmed. Even unbelievers expect church leaders to be different. When leaders fall into sin, the name of the church, and more importantly, the name of Jesus, is mocked.

3. The fall of leaders into sin affects many people. Church members look to leaders as their example in how to live for Christ. But when a leader falls into sin, the church members soon think that they do not need to live in holiness either. When church leaders selfishly fight, then church members soon divide into groups and the church is divided. And Satan wins a victory.

Q. 19. Read 2 Sam. 24. a) Whom was God seeking to punish in this story? b) Whom did God use to bring that punishment? c) What does this teach us about the leader and the results of sin upon others?

This story demonstrates how the sin of a leader brings judgment upon others. We don't know the details, but Israel sinned against God and God determined to punish them. But he chose an unusual way of punishing them. God allowed Satan to tempt David to be proud of his military might. By seeking to count his troops, David was boasting in the power of his army. He was no longer depending upon God for victory, even though he had written songs like Psalm 3 and 91 declaring that it was God who gave victory. Through the sin of the leader, David, God judged Israel and 70 thousand people died.

It is a serious thing to be a leader over the people of God! All of our actions have long-lasting impact in people's lives. When we are holy and follow God's desires, we impact many others positively to follow God. But when we sin, we impact others negatively for evil. When leaders carelessly guide and do not stand for the truth of God's Word, their congregation wanders into false teaching. When leaders misuse money, the whole congregation stops giving their tithe. When leaders do not have a clear understanding of God's goals in a church, the church wastes its money on non-essential things. So everything leaders do has a great impact on the church.

Q. 20. Read 2 Cor. 2:11. What does Paul say we are to do in our relationship with Satan?

It is not enough to pray against Satan and demand that he leave us and our church alone. Paul tells us that we must be aware of his schemes, his ways of bringing defeat to the church. Once we are aware of how Satan usually attacks us, we are better able to watch for those attacks and defeat them. If we are not alert to how Satan will attack us, we are often taken by surprise and easily defeated.

One of the best ways to overcome Satan's attempts to defeat us is to know ways that he attacks and overcomes Christians, especially Christian leaders. Satan knows that if he can defeat a leader, he can impact many lives. Therefore he attacks leaders more strongly than he attacks the ordinary members of the church. In America there is a church called the "Satan church." One day the members decided to look for a way to weaken the evangelical churches. The leaders of Satan church decided that they would focus their prayers to Satan asking that the key Christian leaders in America would fall into sexual sin. For months they prayed, and then one by one, many of the key leaders of American Christianity fell into sin and were disqualified, at least temporarily, from leadership. Satan is attacking Christian leaders all over the world, and it is important for us to be aware of his schemes and his methods of attack, so that we can overcome him and continue to serve as pure and useful leaders.

Q. 21. a) Make a list of sins which many church leaders commit. b) What impact do these sins bring to the church and to the witness of the Gospel? c) What could the church leaders have done to overcome Satan's attacks?

For the next two lessons, we will be looking at different ways that Satan attacks and overcomes church leaders. Although you might disagree with the perspective of the author of this study guide on the application of some of these truths, use this time to carefully examine your own heart to see if the sins, like weeds, are growing in your heart. No leader falls suddenly into a pattern of sin. Rather, our fall is slow as we begin to allow wrong attitudes to continue unchecked in our hearts. Just like weeds do not immediately destroy the crop when they are small, so also these sins might be in the small stage in your life. But when weeds grow large, they become destructive. In the same way, if you do not ask the Holy Spirit to help you pull the weeds of these sins from your lives when they are small, they could destroy you, your ministry, your family, and your church. How about taking time now to ask the Holy Spirit to examine the deep parts of your heart to show you if any of these sins have begun to grow.

You will remember that a sin is anything that is not in line with the desires of God. Those things might not seem wrong to us, but when we look at the attitudes behind our actions, we might be not in line with God's desires. In the next two weeks, we will look at the sins which leaders tend to commit from different perspectives. First, we will look at the sins leaders commit in their heart and in the purpose for why they lead. Second, we will look at the sins leaders commit in how they relate with other leaders and church members. Third, we will look at the sins which leaders commit in how they lead in the church.

SINS OF THE HEART AND PURPOSE OF THE LEADER (PART 1)

1. The sin of desiring people's recognition, honor and praise

Q. 22. Read Mk. 12:38-40. a) Make a list of things the religious leaders did for appearances before people. b) Describe ways that church leaders today can do the same things. c) What are other ways church leaders can do something seeking to appear spiritual in the eyes of others?

In Jesus' day, the teachers of the law were like the preachers and the evangelists in our churches today. They had studied the Bible and were supposed to teach the people how to follow God. However, Satan tempted them to desire the attention and the honor of people rather than serving God in humility. Notice the areas where they sought to gain the honor of people because it is easy for church leaders today to fall into the same sin of seeking the attention of others and the sin of wanting to look spiritual and special.

a. Wearing different clothes to show that we are special: The religious leaders of Jesus' time dressed in a special way to impress people. They wore long, colorful robes. And they even put bells on the bottom of the robes so everyone would know they were coming. There is nothing wrong with dressing nicely, but we must be careful what our purpose is. If we dress up to impress people, then it is wrong. For instance, some speakers refuse to speak in church unless they have a suit and tie. Why do they refuse? If it is to give honor to the role of speaking God's Word rather than showing their importance, then there is nothing wrong. But if it is because they are embarrassed to stand before people unless dressed in their best clothes, or if they want to show off their importance by the clothes that they wear, then they are in danger of the sin Jesus warned against. If graduates of theological schools want new clothes when they graduate to impress people with their new importance through wearing new clothes, they have fallen into the sin like the teachers of the law in Jesus' time. It seems that choir clothes started with a good purpose. Church leaders wanted all choir members to have the same dress to keep those who were poor and did not have good clothes from being embarrassed. But could it be that now these choir robes have become a way for choir members to show that they are special? Has it become a way for them to get glory from man? Satan often uses something good to cause us to fall.

The youth of today must be very careful of the trend to be fashionable to appear special. Wearing beautifully braided hair, wearing dark sun glasses, having fashionable clothes, etc. does not make any of us more special in God's eyes. Perhaps Satan wants us to concentrate on the external things so that we do not focus upon becoming beautiful people in our hearts; in our personalities and characters. 1 Pet. 3:3-5 warns women not to be too concerned with external things, but concentrate on making their character beautiful in the eyes of God and people. This is a good warning for all of us.

Q. 23. a) Describe how you have seen special dress become a way of attracting attention to church leaders. How about attracting attention for Christian youth? b) What is the difference in an acceptable perspective in dressing well and dressing with the desire to gain other's attention?

Q. 24. Read Mt. 23:5-12. a) What does Jesus warn us against doing? b) How do we often disobey this in our churches?

b. Seeking special greetings and honor from people: When the Jewish religious leaders walked around in their fine clothes, common people liked to greet them, and shake hands with the famous and powerful religious leaders. The religious leaders also liked to be addressed with great respect as "Rabbi so and so." Jesus said that those who enjoy and demand such respectful greetings would be punished. In fact Jesus told his disciples that they should never allow themselves to be called, or call others, special honorific titles. Rather, they were to emphasize being brothers and sisters, and being equal with each other. Church leaders should focus on being servants of others, not showing that they are different or greater than others through their titles.

But don't we often disobey what Jesus taught and follow the ways of the religious leaders? Don't we say things like "Hello **Dr.** Tesfahun. How is your family **Evangelist** Yohannes? Have you met our church **elder** Ghirma? Today we are hearing **Preacher** Sintayu. He is a graduate of a great theological school, he has written books, and is currently the pastor of such and such large church which has over 1000 members. **Pastor** Tesfaye will now come and pray for us." Or church leaders want people to use the polite form of address (e.g. "Sir") when we talk to them. These are all illustrations of how we use special titles for different types of church leaders. Even if the individuals do not demand that people use these honorable names, these titles are often used by Satan to bring sin into the life of the church leaders. It is difficult for church leaders who are treated with great honor and called special names to remain humble before God. Satan often tempts us to become prideful. Is our desire to honor those in leadership being used by Satan to cause them to become proud? If so, aren't we a tool of Satan causing them to sin?

And watch how people give greetings in church. Many will go up to shake the hands of the preacher or the elders. But how many will go and shake the hands of the poor widow? Doesn't this cause the poor in the church to think they are less important in the eyes of God and the people of the church? This shows that we are not following the teaching of Jesus when we do not treat all people equally in the family of God.

Q. 25. a) What are acceptable ways to show respect for those in leadership? (Phil. 2:29-30, 1 Tim. 5:17)
b) What ways do you think are not acceptable to emphasize the position of church leaders? c) What is the difference between acceptable honor and unacceptable honor?

c. Special seats show that the leaders are important: Leaders need to be readily available to people if they have questions or issues they need advice on. However, leaders must be very careful that we do not think that our positions as elders or choir members entitles us to the best seats or to sit in front of all other church members. If we claim special privileges as a right, we have fallen into the same sin which the teachers of the law committed. We have fallen into the trap of sitting in front of people so that people can look at us. We have fallen into the trap of thinking that somehow we were better than others and therefore should sit on the best seats. The major issue Jesus is concerned with is not "where" leaders sit. Rather it is the heart of each elder. And if the elder forgets that he is to be the servant of all of the other members in the church, and if sitting in front of people causes his heart to think that he is different and more important than others or creates jealousy in other people's hearts, then sitting in the front of the church becomes a tool of Satan to cause sin in the heart of people.

d. Lacking compassion and generosity. The religious leaders during the time of Jesus had become indifferent to the problems of others. They thought that if a person had a problem like poverty or being a

widow or an orphan, it was the judgment of God. (Jn. 9:2-3) This meant that godly people did not have to care for them. Because the religious leaders were often rich, the poor would come to them for help. But the leaders hearts had grown cold. Not only were the Pharisees indifferent to the poor peoples' problems, they actually worked with the rich and powerful people (government officials) to take advantage of the poor rather than helping the poor receive justice.

One of the ways that Satan often defeats church leaders is by making us indifferent to other people's problems. After awhile, our hearts become hard. Full-time Christian workers often think that since they are "servants of God," that others should meet their physical needs instead of them being generous to others. In some countries, church leaders have a reputation for being stingy and indifferent to the problems of others.

Perhaps one reason church leaders become indifferent is because they are the ones to whom the people go with all of their problems. And many of the problems are related to money or the result of the individual's sinful lifestyle. Satan often gets church leaders to think that people are poor because they are sinners but church leaders are rich because they obey God. The leaders become proud in their "blessing" and look down on others for their poverty, sinfulness, and perceived lack of faith. They see people dying with AIDS, and the leaders think "They have sinned and deserve what they get." But aren't we all sinners who deserve eternal punishment? Shouldn't we all be punished by God? It is only because of God's mercy that we aren't all punished by God. And what about the people who suffer innocently, the wife or the child who gets AIDS because of the unfaithfulness of the husband? Although Jesus did not approve of the sinful lifestyle of people, and after healing them told them not to continue in their life of sin, Jesus maintained his heart of compassion and helped those he met who were suffering. (Mt. 9:35-36, Mt. 15:32, 20:29-34) Beware of allowing your heart to become hard at the problems people face. Those problems can be physical (poverty, sickness, death) or spiritual (habitual sinful patterns (drink), falling into sexual sins). As church leaders, we are to be like the shepherd who goes looking for lost sheep rather than judging them for wandering away. (Mt. 18:10-14) We should be like the father who longs for the return of his son and freely forgives him when he does return, rejoicing at his return rather than accusing him of sinfulness. (Lk. 15:16-32) Too many of us are like the older son, rather than like the rejoicing father.

Q. 26. Look at the following verses: Mt. 9:35-36, Mt. 15:32, 20:29-34. a) What can we learn from these verses about Jesus' heart of helping people? b) Do you think most church leaders' attitude is like Jesus' heart? Explain your answer. c) What are ways you have seen your heart grow cold to other people's problems? What can you do to make sure your heart is always tender towards those who are suffering?

e. Not doing what we teach others to do: Although Jesus did not directly accuse the religious leaders of this, it is assumed. The religious leaders were very familiar with their Bibles. They knew that God had told the Jews to take care of the poor. In fact, God had told people that true religion must include taking care of those who needed help; people like widows, orphans, the poor, and the strangers. (Is. 1:17, 23; Malachi 3:5) And no doubt the religious leaders taught people to help the poor. In fact, one of the sermons they frequently taught was on the value of giving money to the poor. But it does not seem that the religious leaders actually helped the poor themselves. If they did, it was only out of a selfish desire to gain credit with God for helping the poor.

As church leaders we sometimes even use good sounding words to avoid God's requirement to take care of the widows and the poor in our midst. "God hasn't told me to give" we piously say. Or we pray before our meals "Remember those who do not have anything to eat" but never think of taking some of what we

are eating and giving it to the person on the street who is starving. God helps the poor through the generosity of his people. He does not rain down food from heaven for them! We preach that people should be kind to the poor- but often it is the elders of the church who give the least to the poor and destitute.

It is very easy for church leaders, especially those who preach and teach, to say one thing and do another. We preach about topics like needing to pray regularly, study God's Word, give to those in need, tithe, etc. But often we do not do what we preach. We ourselves do not meet with God every morning in prayer and Bible study and do not give generously to the poor and seek to help them out of their condition. This sin of not doing what we tell others to do is hateful to God.

Q. 27. a) Are evangelical church leaders in Ethiopia known for their generosity to the poor? Explain your answer. b) If not, why do you think they do not give generously to the poor? What excuses do they make for not giving? c) Think about your giving this past month. List ways you have been generous to those in need.

It is important to understand what the Bible means by "helping" the poor. God wants us to help the poor to become self-sufficient and able to take care of their own needs. The Bible does not teach that people should beg for things rather than work. We are told that if a person is not willing to work, they should not eat. (2 Thes. 3:6-10) In the Old Testament, God told the Jews to always leave the edges of their fields and what dropped out of their hands when harvesting for the poor. The poor who were able were to go to the fields and harvest for themselves and not expect people to just give them food. (Ex. 23:11; Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22) So what can we learn about what the Bible shows about helping people in need:

1) Rather than give money, it is better to create work. Working maintains a person's dignity and keeps people from expecting free help without having to work. It stops the feeling of dependency. Free assistance should only be given to those who cannot work because of physical disabilities or other constraints. This means that the church elders should be looking for work that they can give the poor to do to earn money, things like cutting grass around the church, mudding the walls to repair cracks, etc. If a person is not willing to work, then obviously they are not really in need of help.

2) Church leaders should try to help the person get out of the lifestyle of poverty. A Chinese proverb says "Give a person a fish, and you will feed him for a day. Teach a person how to fish, and he will eat the rest of his life." We should look for ways to help people so that they can take care of themselves and their families' needs. That might be helping them learn how to be a carpenter, buy a donkey drawn cart, start a small tea shop, get land for them to farm, etc. The true goal of development ministries in the church is to encourage people to become independent and help themselves. The real goal of church-based development is not to meet the financial needs of the church (e.g. get money for evangelists) or just provide temporary relief for people (e.g. famine relief.)

Q. 28. a) How does your church help the poor in your community? b) In light of the two points above, what suggestions do you have of ways to better help people so that they can get out of their life of poverty?

f. Showing spirituality through lengthy prayers: One of the sins that often defeats church leaders is the desire to show our spirituality to others. As a result, we begin to change how we pray and preach. During the days of Jesus, the religious leaders liked to be seen as being very spiritual. So whenever they were asked to pray, they would pray for a long time. And they would loudly pray. Jesus hated this because it abused the purpose of prayer. Prayer is supposed to be communication between a humble person and the great God. It is not intended to be a tool for showing off our spirituality. It is easy for those of us who

often pray in public or preach and teach to fall into this same sin. Following are some examples of how we can fall into the sin which the teachers of the law fell into:

1) Praying lengthy, spiritually sounding prayers when in church. If there is a difference between how we pray in private and when we pray before others, there is a good chance that we are praying sinfully. For instance, if our personal prayers are short and to the point (e.g. God, so and so is sick. Please heal her.) but before others our prayers are filled with added language, then we are probably sinning. There is no added power in prayer by our repeating our prayer request in different ways for 15 minutes.

2) If we are filling our prayers with "religious" vocabulary which most people do not understand, then we need to examine our hearts. If we are repeating "hallelujah" or "amen" in unnatural ways, we need to ask ourselves why we are doing this. There is no added power to prayer if we use these types of words without meaning. If we are not praying like this in private, then why do we do it when we pray in front of others?

3) If we change the manner in how we pray in public, we could be sinning. If we are praying and want to impress people by lifting up our hands, raising our heads towards heaven, making our voices waver, start crying without our hearts really feeling pain, etc. we have become like the teachers of the law in Jesus' day. There is nothing wrong in holding up hands in prayer, raising our faces towards heaven, or crying when our hearts are overwhelmed by sin or the needs of another person. But if it does not come from our hearts but only done to show others that we are spiritual, or seeking to get others to cry with us, then we are sinning.

4) Saying phrases without meaning. Any words said repeatedly are called "vain repetition." (Mt. 6:7) For instance, if we frequently say one of the names of God in an unnatural way in our prayer, we are probably using God's name without thought. This could actually be breaking the third commandment where God tells us not to take his name in vain. (Ex. 20:7) (Note: We often disregard God's command not to take his name in vain when we say "In the name of Jesus" whenever something startles us. Has the name of Jesus become so common that you use it in such ways without thinking? Stop it! Only use the name of Jesus or God with thoughtfulness and reverence! The same is true about words like "hallelujah" which means "praise the Lord." If we say hallelujah without thinking about its meaning, or "amen" which means "I agree with what has been said, let it be so" without thinking about their meanings, saying them is useless. And it could be sin in God's eyes!

5) Using prayer to preach at people. Prayer is meant for communication between us and God. It is not intended to be a tool for preaching, or as a way to confront people of sin, etc. Nor is it a place to show off our knowledge of the Bible. Prayer is a time to share what is in our hearts and to lift up the needs of people in the church before God.

All long prayers are not wrong, especially if there are many things which the Holy Spirit has shown you to pray for. Nor is it wrong to say hallelujah or amen. But we must be careful that Satan does not defeat us by causing us to pray with wrong attitudes, concerned with showing off our spirituality rather than sharing with God what is in our hearts.

Q. 29. Think about how people often pray in church. a) Make a list of how they could be praying in a special "religious" way seeking to impress people. b) List words or phrases that we repeat without thinking about them. c) Give examples of ways we can use prayer to preach or accuse people rather than pray to God.

d) How can we make sure that when we pray it comes from our hearts and not to impress other people?

2. The sin of being more concerned with other people's views rather than what God wants

It is easy for church leaders to become too concerned about the views of church members or other elders or the government. They allow their standards and beliefs to change, or they hide them, so that they will not upset other people. As we saw earlier, church leaders often begin to focus on pleasing people rather than pleasing God. Paul refused to become the slave of people, choosing instead to be the slave of God. (Gal. 1:10) Being the slave of God meant that there were times that Paul had to confront people for wrongdoing. In Galatians 2:11-14 we read that Paul had to stand against his friend Barnabas, who because of fear of others had started to allow false teachings to spread in the church. Paul publicly confronted Peter who was the greatest apostle in the early church and the leader of the Jerusalem church. Paul knew that to obey God and protect the integrity of the Gospel, he could not be afraid of people, but had to obey God.

How do we see this similar attitude of fearing people in the church today? There are many church leaders who do not believe that some of the extremes in worship is Biblical. But they refuse to take a stand. "If we do, the youth will leave the church and go somewhere else" they say. These leaders have allowed the fear of men to prevent them from taking a stand against what they believe is unbiblical.

It is important that these elders take a stand against an issue only when they know that it is unbiblical or imbalanced. They should not be fighting just because someone is doing something that they are not familiar with or do not personally like. Church leaders must know the Word of God. And when the Word of God clearly teaches against a practice, they must firmly resist allowing it in their church. [e.g. Those who teach against the Trinity (Jesus Only), speak in tongues in the pulpit without interpretation (see 1 Cor. 14:27-28)] But in issues where God's Word is not clear, we must use godly wisdom in how to teach and what stand to take. (e.g. Going to a cinema)

Q. 30. a) Make a list of things in the church which are being taught which are clearly not in God's Word. b) Make a list of things which some believers do not like, but which the Word of God does not clearly prohibit. c) If you were a church leader and you saw church members doing things which do not follow God's Word, how would you try to correct that situation? How would you both be firm in demanding they follow the truth, but gentle in seeking to return them to the way of truth? (2 Tim. 2:23-26)

The fear of men goes even deeper than not addressing problems in the church. Many church leaders are afraid to take a stand on something that their family member or tribe resists. For instance, if one of their family members falls into sin, the leader arranges that the church does not bring church discipline upon his relative. Or when someone says "You are from such and such a tribe and so you need to do this thing for your tribe" the leader is afraid that people will think that he is not supporting his tribe, and so he shows favoritism to one tribe over another. The leaders forget that God's Word teaches that in the church there is no "Greek or Jew" but that all tribes are equal. (Gal. 3:28, Col. 3:11) Or some church leaders know that God has accepted the despised castes (e.g. potters, blacksmiths, leather workers, menjas) But out of fear of being ostracized by others, they continue to treat these people as if they are cursed. They won't talk to them, eat with them, visit them in their homes, or sometimes even let them enter the church. What is important is whether or not a person is a child of God, not what tribe or caste they belong to.

Or perhaps a church leader witnesses another elder committing a sin. For example, he knows that the elder has taken money from the church, but he does not want to fight with that elder or have his family

angry at him. So he remains quiet and does not confront the elder or suggest church discipline. Or he and the other elders bring secret discipline upon the elder so that he is not embarrassed by all of the church members knowing about the sin. There are times when rather than discipline a church leader who has clearly done wrong, the church will reassign that church leader to another area where people do not know about the matter.

All of these examples show that the leaders fear men more than they fear God. All of these sins are tools of Satan to continue the spread of sin in the church, rather than have a church that is both pure and united.

Q. 31. a) List other ways you have seen the fear of man influence how leaders lead. b) What was the result to the purity of the church and the thinking of the members? c) If you were a church leader, illustrate how "fear of God" rather than the "fear of man" would influence how you would handle the matter.

3. The sin of unhealthy ambition: seeking to increase in status

It is natural for people to want to grow in leadership positions or in public respect. And it is even healthy for us to want to grow to be used to the maximum of the gifts and abilities that God has given us. But it is easy for church leaders to fall into wanting to grow in leadership positions or respect according to the standard of the world. It is easy for our hearts to seek "growth" as the world defines it. Many church leaders want to grow from being the leader of a local church to leader of a church fellowship, or from leader in the zone to becoming a national leader. If that desire is in our hearts, most likely our motive for leadership is not biblical. In the same way, if we want our reputations before others to grow because of external qualifications we receive, then we probably have a sinful understanding of leadership.

The world defines success as advancing in leadership positions, from being an ordinary worker, to running a small department, to managing the office, etc. Many church leaders assume that this is natural and want to keep advancing in leadership positions as well. They want to go from being an ordinary member, to becoming an elder of a local church, then an elder over a church district, etc. And the world defines success as gaining the honor of people through achieving different things which the world respects, things like more education and more money. Often church leaders also seek to grow in "honor" and "status" by getting more and more education and more pay so that they enjoying the added respect it brings as well as the added benefits of a better life.

But the Bible defines success as being faithful to God, no matter where we are or how much we are honored by others. Isaiah worked in the palace but he was no more successful than Amos who was a farmer. Both were used by God as prophets. The godly people of old did not care if they were given more levels of leadership or more respect because of education. They wanted to be successful by being spiritual, by obeying God no matter what happened, etc. Many times God would ask them to give their lives in areas of ministry where no one noticed them and there was no external evidence of blessing or acceptance by the people. It does not matter to God if you are the pastor of a small rural church or a pastor of a large urban church. It does not matter whether you have no education or a lot of education. What is important is that we faithfully serve God to the best of our abilities wherever he has placed us.

If we are not careful, we can view ministry in the kingdom of God like the world looks at work. We push ourselves into greater and higher levels of leadership. And if we do not get that advancement, we become bitter. This is a sign that we do not understand servant leadership, but are following the ways of the world. If we seek more and more education so that we will receive greater honor the sin of wrong ambition has

overcome us.

What is the biblical way of advancement?

First, we must focus on the right thing. We are to seek to be absolutely faithful to God and to the ministry God has given to us. God rewards us for faithfulness, not for external things like education, length of service, family heritage, etc.

Second, we must allow God to use people to raise us up rather than push for our own advancement. If there is hurt in our hearts because people do not choose us for greater levels of ministry, this is a sign that we are serving out of selfish purposes, not godly purposes. If we trust God to raise us or lower us, if we only want to obey him, what happens in advancement will not matter to us. If we are hurt when not re-elected, it is a sign that we are serving out of selfish purposes, not godly purposes. We should be able to go from being the head elder of the church to being a common member with no feeling of hurt.

Third, we will seek to develop ourselves into the best possible tool for God to use. Although it is possible to cut wood with a dull ax, it takes a lot of work and is dangerous. We sharpen the ax so that it works better. In the same way, we must desire to be the best instrument for God as we can, given the abilities and gifts he has given us. That might mean that we seek more education, not as a way of advancement, but as a way of being better prepared for ministry. Having received that extra education, we readily go back to our previous ministry with no expectation of a higher leadership position or more pay. We should be careful that in our hearts we are not using more education as a way for more honor and more pay or physical benefits. We will also be content with the level of education God gives us as long as it enables us to do a good job where God has placed us.

Fourth, we must guard our hearts so that no matter where we serve, our desire is to honor God and be faithful to him. No one fights to be the greatest servant. In the same way, church leaders are the servants of others, a position we should not fight for, but humbly accept when God calls us into it. For church leaders, the only ambition we should have is to be the greatest slave of God and his people as possible.

Q. 32. a) How is this teaching on advancement different from the way many church leaders understand success? b) Illustrate changes which would happen in the church if we understood church leadership and ministry in this way.

Q. 33. Review the sins listed in today's lesson which leaders often commit. a) Which sins do you think Satan frequently uses to defeat you? b) Which ones are not great temptations to you? c) Spend 15 minutes in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to show you where you have sinned. Confess those areas to the Lord. Determine to change how you act so that you do not let Satan have a way of overcoming you.

WEEKLY MEETING

DISCUSSION

1. a) Make a list of the characteristics we have studied in this lesson which church leaders need to lead in a godly way. b) Describe why each characteristic is important for a church leader. c) Which of these characteristics do you think most church leaders have? d) Which of these characteristics do most leaders struggle with? e) List other characteristics which we have not studied which you think church leaders should have in order to be godly leaders. f) What can we do in the church to elect this type of

person into church leadership rather than electing people according to the world's standard?

2. a) How would ministry in the church change if everyone understood their spiritual gifts and worked in areas where their spiritual gifts could be used? b) How do you think church leadership would change if the leaders understood their respective spiritual gifts and led by seeking to use the different spiritual gifts each leader had? c) What are ways we can help each other understand what our spiritual gifts are so that we focus our ministry in these areas?

3. a) Why do you think God holds leaders more accountable for the sins that they publicly commit than the ordinary church member? b) Illustrate ways that the sin of leaders has tarnished the reputation of Jesus in the community. c) Illustrate ways the sin of leaders has brought great harm to people in the church. d) Why do you think church leaders prefer to hide their sinfulness rather than confess their sins?

4. a) Make a list of the sins we have studied which church leaders and ministers often commit in their attitudes and reasons for leading. b) List the results these sins have brought to the church leader and to the church. c) Which of these sins do you think are not very common in church leaders? d) Which of these sins do you think many church leaders struggle with? e) Why are they especially vulnerable to those sins? f) What can leaders do to help each other be victors over these sins which leaders often commit?

LESSON SIX

FIRST DAY

SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 2)

This week we continue our study of how Satan often focuses his attention upon church leaders, seeking to tempt them to sin. He knows that when leaders fall into sin, then the family of God is greatly impacted. The reputation of the church is damaged and people ridicule Jesus. And many church members no longer choose to live in holiness. So as church leaders, we must be extra cautious to make sure Satan is not overcoming us in any of these sins to which church leaders are especially vulnerable.

SINS OF THE HEART AND PURPOSE OF THE LEADER (PART 2)

Getahun was one of the first believers in the area. And he had been the leader of the church for over 40 years. He had even given the church the property to build their church building. When visitors came, Getahun would often share his testimony about how he had built up the church and given the property. A new generation of educated youth grew up in the church, however. And they wanted to take over leadership from Getahun. This greatly angered Getahun. "No one can lead like I can. If I turn over leadership to others, they will destroy this church. Plus this is 'my' church. I started it. I helped it grow. Therefore I deserve to lead it until I die" he thought.

Q. 1. a) In what way is it easy for leaders who have led a long time to begin to think that without them the church would not function? b) What sin is at the root of this type of thinking?

Today we will continue our study of the sins which church leaders often commit in their hearts and in the purposes. As you study these sins, ask the Holy Spirit to show whether or not the weeds of sin are found in your life. If so, confess the sin, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you overcome the sin so that you can live in a way that honors God.

4. Pride: the sin of thinking you are better than others

Q. 2. Read Ezek. 28:11-17. a) Of what sin was the king of Tyre accused and thrown to the ground? b) Read Prov. 8:13, 16:18, Is. 2:12-17, Mt. 23:12, James 4:6. What do all of these verses teach us about God's attitude towards pride? c) List ways that people, especially church leaders, can become proud today.

If there is a sin that God hates more than any other sin, it is probably the sin of pride. Pride is at the heart of almost every sin. It is pride that causes us to think "I will do what I want, not what God wants." When we are proud, we seek to control our lives. But when we are humble, we depend upon God and seek his control over our lives.

The very first sin ever committed was the sin of pride. Many scholars believe that Is. 14:12-15 and Ezek. 28:11-17 is an illustration of the fall of Satan into sin. What caused him to fall was his pride in wanting to be like God and to be honored as God. When Satan fell into sin, he led many angels to rebel with him, and then he tempted Adam and Eve to rebel against God as well. Throughout the Bible, therefore, there are many statements which show God's hatred of pride and his determination to humble those who are proud. If we do not humble ourselves willing before God, depending upon him and seeking to glorify and

obey him, God says he will forcibly humble us. That humbling process may be on the earth. But unless we repent of this sin we will be humbled in heaven. This sin of pride often overcomes church leaders.

There are many ways that church leaders can fall into the sin of pride.

a. Pride in the size of their denomination or church: Occasionally we hear statements like "We are the largest evangelical church." Or "Our church building is the largest of the evangelical churches in our town." Or "We are not like the other churches, we focus on evangelism." Or "We are more spiritual than the others, for the Holy Spirit is working in us with great power and miracles." These statements all reveal that we think that we are better than others, which is pride. Satan has caused us to think that size means we are especially blessed by God and better than other groups who are not as large as us.

b. Pride over the success of our work: It is very easy for church leaders to accept praise for the success of their work. We often hear statements like "I was able to take this little church and turn it into a large church." Or "I lead 20 people to the Lord this month." Or "It was because of my teaching that people are growing in the Lord." Or "I preached a good sermon today. Many people commented on how good it was." All of these show an attitude of pride. Paul reminds us that all things that indicate success come because of what God has done for us. (1 Cor. 4:7) God gave us the spiritual gifts and the power for ministry. God is the one who took the Word of God and caused someone to believe. God is the one who creates the hunger in people's hearts to learn. God is the one who starts and causes a church to grow. We are only his instruments. The hammer does not boast about how well it built the house. In the same way, we should not boast about any success we have enjoyed in our ministry. Like the hammer, God has used us. But the glory belongs to him. Let us be very careful to never take the glory of God away from him. God said that he would not allow his glory to be given to another. (Is. 42:8)

c. Pridefully thinking that without us, the work will not get done or will fail. This is a very dangerous type of pride for it is difficult for us to see it in our hearts. This sin tends to grow when we have been in a ministry for many years or when God has blessed our ministry. There are times that we are involved in a ministry and God chooses to bless the ministry. But then God decides to move us. Or perhaps the church office tells us to move. If we think "If I am not here, this work will fall apart. There is no one who can lead it as well as I can" then we have pride in our hearts. Just like God led us to the ministry and chose to work through us, so God can lead someone else into the ministry who will keep the ministry going and growing. And even if the work suffers for a time, God wants each believer to learn to trust him and not another human being. Other believers also need to learn to work for God and continue the ministry, rather than only work when the gifted individual is present. Often if we stay in a ministry for a long time, people begin to depend upon us more than they depend upon God. We end up building up our personal kingdom rather than the kingdom of God. If we find ourselves thinking that there is no one besides us who will do the work, this is usually a sign that pride has gotten into our hearts. The other side of the pride that only we can do the work is that we often look down upon people. We think that they can't do anything, at least not as good as we can. So we don't let people try. And so the church members end up sitting while a few leaders try to do all of the work.

d. Pride in our family or tribal heritage. It is easy to think that we are special because we are born into a certain family or tribe. "I am the son or daughter of evangelist 'so-and-so'" we hear. Does that make us special? God is looking at my heart and my obedience, not what he has done through my parents. "I am from this tribe. That is where the Gospel first was established. They have sent out hundreds of missionaries all throughout Ethiopia" we say as we boast in our tribal heritage. Again, our tribe and our heritage are not important in God's kingdom. The Bible teaches that in the church there are no tribes; no Jews or Greeks.

(Gal. 3:26-29) And just because God used our tribe in the past does not make us special today. We are accountable before God for whether we are proclaiming the Gospel in our generation, not for the successes of the past. Many churches used mightily by God in the past are now filled with selfishness and fighting. God cannot use them like this. But Satan wants us to boast about the past so that we will not examine our lives today and repent and obey God. We need to praise God for his work in the past while at the same time asking ourselves whether we are following the example of those who served God mightily in the past.

e. Pride that we are not from a certain subgroup like potters, metal workers, menjas, etc. Or taking pride in the fact that none of our forefathers were slaves. God is a God who has no favorites. He equally loves the potters as he does the farmers, doctors, or teachers. Any sense in our hearts that we are better than someone else is a sign of pride. Any sense that we would never give our daughter in marriage to one of them is a sign that we still do not understand how the Gospel has broken down all barriers. (Eph. 2:11-22) These are indications of pride, which is something God hates.

f. Pride in our educational level. Often we hear people boast about their education as if that makes them special. "I have finished the 12th grade." "I have finished my degree." "I have finished my second degree." "I am a doctor" are all examples which people either openly boast about or think in their hearts. Again, this is a sign of pride. It is God who gave us the opportunity and the abilities to study, we did not get them ourselves. And so what do we have to boast about? God gave these opportunities to us to use for his glory, not to further our status. Rather than create pride, they should humble us that God has chosen us in this way for his service. And it should create in us a determination to use these privileges for God's glory, not our own benefit.

g. Pride in thinking we are more spiritual or more holy than someone else. It is easy for church leaders to begin to take pride in the fact that they are not involved in some sins which others are involved in. "I do not drink." "I do not chew chatt." "I have never committed sexual immorality" we think as we meet both non-Christians and Christians who are struggling with their sin. We might even separate ourselves from those who are not as "holy" as we are. We forget that if it were not for the grace of God and his mercy in our lives, we would be as bound by sin as these people are. Rather than pride, we should be thankful that God is compassionate to those struggling with sin. Jesus was able to maintain his holiness, but still be kind to the sinner. Despised tax collectors, prostitutes and street kids loved to be near him because Jesus did not show pride in how he was better than they were, but offered friendship and compassion. How many "sinners" (both non-Christian and Christian) like to be near church leaders today because although these church leaders are living holy lives, they show friendship and compassion to them? Most often ordinary Christians and non-Christians are uncomfortable around leaders because they get the impression from us that we think we are better than they are. Our "pride" in our spirituality has caused a separation from them. Or we sometimes openly share with the church members "I pray for 2 hours every day." "I study the Bible every day." These types of statements can easily show how we think we are better than they are. As a result church members get loaded down with guilt, frustrated that they are not as "spiritual" as we are. Beware of becoming proud in your spiritual growth! Rather, humbly look at how far you still have to grow to be like Jesus.

h. Pride in thinking that as a leader our decisions are always right. One of the ways leaders struggle with pride is thinking that they do not have to listen to others and that once they have made a decision, it is right. In 2 Chronicles 18:1-19:4 we read a sad story of how the pride of godly king Jehosophat caused him to refuse to listen to God's prophet which almost cost him his life. Leaders who are proud often come to the meetings with their mind made up. They might let others voice their opinion, but they don't really

listen. They are determined to push their own decision through. So we need to learn to listen to others (both other leaders and common believers) and get help in making a decision. Solomon said that "*For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.*" (Prov. 11:14)

Or when leaders make a decision that later proves to be a bad decision, they refuse to take responsibility for their decision. Instead, they blame others for the failure. How rare it is to hear a leader say "I am sorry. I thought that was the best thing to do. But it was not the best. I made a mistake." Leaders need to remember that we are only human. And because we are human, all leaders will make a mistake. We do not have all of the information or skills needed to always make a good decision. Rather than pretend that we did not make a mistake, or blame others for our errors, a leader should admit his faults. We usually think that if a leader admits that he did something wrong, that people will no longer respect us. Usually the opposite happens. Everyone already knows that the leader has made a mistake. When he admits it, they admire his courage. But if the leader keeps making the same mistake, that is when he loses the respect of the people.

Q. 3. a) Describe how you have seen these types of pride in the lives of church leaders. b) List other ways that church leaders can show pride. c) Which of these types of pride do you struggle with the most? Examine your own life and confess the sin of pride to God. Ask him to help you overcome your pride so that you can live in humility.

i. Pride that we do not have to learn anything new. Often leaders think that we know everything, and that we do not have to keep learning. Instead, we think it is the common people who should go to Bible school, not themselves. Amazingly, even though they tell others that it is important for people to join a Bible study group or go to Bible school, there are few church leaders who themselves are in a Bible study group or in a Bible school seeking to grow in their knowledge of God's Word.

It is often difficult for leaders to recognize pride in ourselves. That is why it is good to have close friends who will be honest and tell us when we are proud. But there are things which often reveal our pride. Do we speak often about ourselves and our ministry and what we have done? Do we get angry when someone else gets recognition for something we have done? Do we get angry or jealous when someone else is given a position of leadership which we wanted? Do we see the faults of others but rarely our own faults? Are we able to be criticized without getting angry? Do we accept credit for what others have done, or are we happy to give the credit to others for what they have done? Do we frequently praise others or do we want their praise? Do we naturally focus on giving God the credit for things done or do we like to listen to people giving the credit to me? If the answer to these questions is "yes" then we have fallen into the sin of pride.

We are told in Jer. 9:24 that the one thing that we should boast in is that we understand and know God. That is all that matters. None of the external things which we often take pride in will change how we spend our lives in eternity. These things do not follow us after the grave. But the depth of our relationship to God impacts us now and throughout eternity. Shouldn't we focus upon getting to know God better rather than take pride in thinking that we are more important than someone else?

5. The sin of believing we can enjoy the authority of leadership without being responsible for the work

Although we would rarely call this a "sin," one way Satan defeats leaders is by getting us to enjoy having a title of being a leader, but not fulfilling the responsibility which leadership brings. This is another way that pride evidences itself in a leader. In the Bible we always see that if a leader has the title and authority of a leader, he is responsible to fulfill the ministries which that role brings to him. God is holding

him accountable for how he fulfills the responsibility God has given him as a leader. God does not focus on the authority of leadership as much as the responsibility of leadership.

Satan, however, often gets leaders to focus upon their authority as leaders. Many leaders are quick to agree to a leadership role. But they hesitate fulfilling the responsibility that comes with that leadership role. Following are some illustrations of how Satan can overcome leaders by causing them to focus on their role as leaders rather than the responsibility of leadership:

a. A person is chosen to be an elder. This pleases him, for he sees it as a sign that people respect him. But except for coming for the monthly meeting, that person does little work as an elder. The Bible teaches that the elder is responsible to "shepherd" the people in the church, helping them to grow in their faith. This takes hard work as the leader sacrifices himself for the people. Since the person does not want to sacrifice himself and his time for others, he does as little as possible in his role as an elder. Such a leader has forgotten that God is holding him accountable for fulfilling his responsibility as an elder.

b. A person is hired to be a pastor of a local church. Not only does the person enjoy the status of being called "pastor," he is pleased with the salary that he has. He is not very concerned, however, about how well he does his work as long as he maintains his job. God, however, looks at the commitment that the person has made when he accepted the ministry of pastor. He is now responsible for the spiritual lives of everyone in the church. God is holding him accountable for making sure he knows the people and is helping them overcome problems and grow in their spiritual lives, using their spiritual gifts to serve God.

c. A person is hired as an evangelist. Whereas he usually focuses upon his title as "evangelist," God is holding him accountable for sharing the Gospel with all of the people in his area. If he is hired by a local church, he is responsible for the Gospel in that kebele. If he is hired by an awraja, he is responsible to see that the Gospel reaches throughout the awraja. He has accepted the role of sharing the Gospel to the lost, and God is holding him accountable for how faithfully he shares with the lost in the whole awraja.

d. The local awraja and zone have a piece of property which they both share. An argument arises over whom that property belongs to. After months of bitter arguing, they decide that the property "belongs" to the awraja. The leaders of the awraja rejoice that they now "own" the property. But they take no responsibility to keep the fences mended, cut the grass, or maintain the property in a way that honors God. They focus upon "ownership" but God focuses upon the responsibility that ownership brings. They are being held accountable for how they take care of God's property. In God's eyes, it does not belong to the awraja or the zone, but to him. And if we do not take care of the property, or the church building- then he is holding us accountable for how we abuse his property.

Remember, for every leadership position that we enjoy, God is holding us responsible to faithfully fulfill the responsibilities that come along with that leadership position. And for every blessing God gives us which leaders are to be stewards over, he is holding us responsible to take care of God's property in a way that brings him glory. Authority brings responsibility and with it accountability.

Q. 4. a) List other ways people want to have a place of authority but not fulfill the responsibility that leadership position brings. b) What are ministries which God has given you authority over? What does that position make you responsible to do? How are you fulfilling your responsibility? c) What blessings has God given you and your church? What responsibility do those blessings bring to you? How well do you think your church is fulfilling its responsibility as stewards of God's blessings? What do you think it could do better?

Q. 5. a) Read Neh. 6:10-13. a) What sin was Nehemiah tempted to commit? b) Why do you think this was called a sin? c) How can church leaders be tempted to commit this sin today? c) Read Rev. 1:9. How did John describe himself? Why do you think he described himself in this way?

6. The sin of running during times of trouble

A sin often used by which Satan to overcome church leaders is the sin of expecting benefits which the members of the church do not enjoy. We pridefully think that we should have a better life than they do; a bigger house, more money, larger fields, etc. How different this is from how Jesus viewed his role as the leader of the church. He wanted to identify himself with even the lowest human. Paul said Jesus gave up his glory and honor and became a "slave." (Phil. 2:6-7) In Hebrews we are told that Jesus is our high priest primarily because he suffered just like we suffer. (Heb. 4:14-16) When leaders have a different lifestyle than do the members of their church, a gap develops between the leaders and the people. As a result the leaders are not able to minister effectively. The members always think "You just don't understand. You have all of that money to help you when you get sick. I have nothing. I can't even take my sick wife to the health center." The wide gap between us and the church members lessens our ability to encourage church members to remain faithful during times of difficulties.

This same thing happens during times of persecution. It is easy for leaders to work so that they or their family do not suffer in the same way as the ordinary members. This was seen during the time of the derge. Many leaders used their influence so their children were not sent to the war front. But the common member did not have this ability and many of their children were sent away. Perhaps one reason so many ordinary believers struggled maintaining their faith during the derge years was because they saw their leaders hiding their faith rather than maintaining their stand for Jesus.

When Nehemiah was told that someone was going to kill him and that he should hide, he said that for him to hide would be a sin. It was a sin because in his position of leadership, he had to accept the risks of leadership. If he hid it would have discouraged the other people working on the wall and the work would have stopped. The Apostle John, when writing the book of Revelation from the island prison of Patmos said that he was a "*companion in the suffering...and patient endurance.*" Being an old man, no doubt he could have left Ephesus so that he would not be taken captive by the Romans. Or he could have hid himself. No one would have blamed him. "You are the last living apostle. You should protect yourself. We need a leader. So hide for now and then when things are safe we will call you back" others could have argued. But John knew that as a leader over the people of God, he could not hide and let the ordinary believers face persecution alone. He had to show them how to face persecution faithfully. So he went to prison. Any time leaders seek to escape persecution which their church members cannot escape from, they end up bringing discouragement to the church members. With no model on how to remain firm in their faith, many church members will hide their faith. When leaders escape during times of difficulty and this discourages the common members, this is a "sin" in the eyes of God.

Q. 6. a) List ways church leaders can separate themselves from the ordinary members of the church and lose their effectiveness in ministry. b) List ways that church leaders can hide from trouble which the members cannot escape from. What effect does this usually bring to the faith of the church members?

SECOND DAY

SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 3)

SINS OF THE HEART AND PURPOSE OF THE LEADER (PART 3)

7. The sin of love of money: Not demonstrating integrity in money matters

Ato Sintayu was a respected church leader who was chosen to become the treasurer for the church. People knew that he was dependable, so they were happy that he was the one responsible for the tithes and offerings. One day Sintayu's daughter became sick and he did not have enough money for the doctor. "I will borrow from the church money and pay it back later" he thought, taking the money from the offering. But he forgot to return the money. Some time later, his oldest son got married. He did not have enough money for the celebration, so he "borrowed" church money again. "Sometime in the future when I sell my cow, I will repay the money" he reasoned. But when he sold his cow, there were other pressing needs, so he never did return the money. One day the church elders decided to add on to the church building. When they asked Sintayu for the money for roofing tin, however, there was just a little money. The elders knew Sintayu had taken the money. But in order to not be found out, Sintayu started an argument with the church elders over another matter and left the church and joined another church. Rather than confess his sins and look for ways to repay the money that he took, he was embarrassed and fled to another church. He never did repay the money he had "borrowed" from the offering. Sintayu was no longer respected or trusted. His reputation was destroyed.

Q. 7. a) What led to the sin of Sintayu? b) Why is it easy to slowly fall into sin, often by doing something that we do not initially think is wrong but which grows over time? c) Explain why money is often one of the major ways Satan overcomes church leaders. Describe how similar things have happened to respected church leaders in your church.

Q. 8. Read Prov. 22:1. a) What does Solomon say is more important than becoming rich? b) Why is having a good reputation important for a church leader?

A good reputation is the basis for godly leadership. Previously we saw that one of the major ways to lead in our churches is through the example of our lives. Or we could say we lead others through our reputations. One of the wisest man who lived on the earth, wealthy King Solomon realized this truth. So he wrote that having a good reputation is better than having all of the money in the world. People honor us because of our good reputation and want to follow our example. A poor reputation causes church leaders to lose their ability to lead. People stop trusting them and stop trying to be like them. Unfortunately, when church leaders fall into sin, church members also tend to sin more and the reputation of the church and Christianity is damaged.

It is very important for church leaders to remember that we are leading with our good reputations. We must remember the following truths about gaining and maintaining a good reputation:

1) It takes a long time to gain a good reputation. We must show consistent godly character over a long time for people to really trust us and want to follow our example. One of the reasons church leaders in the New Testament are called "elders" is because the Bible assumes that it takes time for people to develop godly character and a good reputation.

2) A good reputation can be lost in a short period of time. Whereas it takes a long time for people to trust church leaders, trust and respect can be quickly lost when they see something or hear about something that is sinful. One fall into major sin undoes years of developing a good reputation.

3) In order to maintain a good reputation, we must be concerned not only about sin, but the appearance of sin. One translation of 1 Thes. 5:22 says "Abstain from all **appearance** of evil." So it is important not to commit sin by taking money from the offering. But it is also important to be careful that people do not assume that we are taking money from the offering. And it is important to be sexually pure; but it is also important to never find ourselves in situations where people will assume that we have committed sexual sin. So if an elder prays with a woman, he should make sure that everyone knows nothing sinful is happening. If we shut the doors and windows, and someone sees us come out of the house alone, they will assume the worst. Or if two choir members, a girl and a boy, are in a house alone practicing to sing on Sunday, people will often assume that they have been sexually involved. Once people **assume** that we have sinned, it is very difficult to prove our innocence or get that thought out of their heads. As long as they believe we have sinned, people will not trust us. We have lost our good name.

Q. 9. a) Explain how the reputation of a church leader can easily be damaged by one act of sin. b) Describe how you have seen the reputation of a church leader destroyed because people assumed he had done something although he did not do it. c) What could that church leader have done differently to make sure his reputation of godliness was unchanged? d) What are things you are doing to develop and maintain a good reputation among believers and non-believers?

Q. 10. Read 1 Tim. 6:3-10. a) What warning does Paul give here about the impact of money upon people's lives? b) Explain how Paul's warning has proven true in your church.

There are few things in life that destroy the reputation of a church leader more frequently than how personal and church money are used. In 1 Tim. 6:5-10 Paul warns Timothy against those who use religion in order to gain wealth. He encourages church leaders to learn to be content with what God gives them rather than focus upon getting more money. Paul shared that money had become a stumbling-block to many believers. So we also must learn to be careful in how we use money if we do not want to lose our reputations. How can the emphasis upon money lead us astray?

a. The problem of over emphasis on pay or benefits when we work for the church: For those who are paid employees of the church, how we view our pay can either earn a good reputation or destroy our reputation. What are some things church employees like evangelists and pastors should remember concerning wages?

1) The amount of our wages must not ruin our reputations. If the amount of money that we get for working as evangelists or pastors gives the impression that we are serving God for money, then the people will not respect or follow us. They might enjoy our teaching. But in their hearts they will not say "I want to be like so-and-so, serving God sacrificially." Other people's motives for leadership will be selfish even if ours isn't. In 1 Cor. 9:6-18 we read how Paul refused all money except occasional gifts because he did not want anyone to question his motive for serving God.

2) The level of education should not be the primary factor in how much we get paid. It is the personal view of this author that it is very dangerous to assume that we must pay people in the church according to the same standard as the world would pay them. If we say "How can you only pay me such a small amount? I have a degree and am worth much more. That is an insult" then we clearly are not serving

God out of a call or from our love for God and his people. God is not impressed with educational levels but looks for someone who loves him with character who will do an effective ministry. Wages should not reward education levels but rather effective godly ministry. But even then we must never give the impression that we serve God and the church because that is a way to make a good living.

3) If getting more pay is our reason to change from one ministry to another, we need to question our motive in ministry. We most likely are no longer serving out of a call from God, but out of desire for personal advancement. It really should not matter to us whether we serve God in a large church or a small country church. If we get the chance to move to a larger church, we should only do so because, after we pray and ask God for guidance, we are convinced that is where God wants us to serve him. Our decision should not be made primarily on the basis of wages and status.

4) The amount of wages should not be a major reason for a church worker to minister in a church. If he asks questions like "How much money will I make?" or "Is there per diem, retirement benefits, health benefits, and education benefits?" two things happen. First, the church worker has probably allowed Satan to corrupt his motive for serving God and God's people. Second, the church members will get the impression that the reason he is serving is because of the amount of money he receives and their respect for him will lessen.

5) It would probably be best if a church worker is paid the "average" of what people in the church have to live on. Salary should not be based upon the church worker's education. In 2 Cor. 8:13-15 Paul said that the principle should be "equality," rather than one person getting rich and others remain poor. In the same way, if the church workers get higher wages than the ordinary members are getting, they become rich at the expense of the people. In the Old Testament, God established the principle of "tithing" to provide wages for the Levites. (Num. 18:20-32; Deut. 26:12-15) As 12 tribes gave tithes of their produce to God, a part of this was used to pay the priests for their services. This would mean that the Levites would always live at the same standard of living as the other tribes. When there were poor harvests, the Levites suffered equally with the people. When there was bountiful harvest, the Levites also got more. Isn't this a more equitable way to understand how much to pay a church worker?

6) A church must be sensitive to how much they pay those who serve in the church. Paul says that the "*worker deserves his wages.*" (1 Tim. 5:17-18) So the church must be committed to paying people who serve in the church a generous wage so that they can live at a level that the church members themselves live. (Note: Not to pay church workers adequately who are serving most of their time in the church is a sin in God's eyes, for he has commanded that we pay those who serve us this way.) To pay those who minister in the church poorly thinking that "God will take care of their needs" or "They are blessed because they are serving God" is not biblical. It will bring the judgment of God upon the church. And it is not showing love and respect to those who serve us in the church. If we cause church workers and their families to suffer by not paying them adequately, we become a tool by Satan to discourage and distract the church worker. He becomes discouraged, for he feels abandoned by God and his people. And he gets distracted from ministry, for he often must spend time looking for ways to get money for himself and his family to live which he could have given to serve the people of God.

Q. 11. a) Explain how a church worker's focus on wages is often an indication of their lack of sense of call from God. b) What is a fair basis for a church to use to determine wages for church workers? What about education, size of family, size of ministry, etc.? What way is most Biblical? c) Why do some churches think they do not have to pay their church workers the same amount of money as the members earn? Do you

think this is right in God's eyes? Explain your answer.

b. The sin of misuse of the tithes and offerings which are entrusted to us by the church: How often have you heard the complaint "The people are not giving their tithes and offerings to the Lord's work. Therefore, there is no money to pay church workers and do the ministries of the church." What is usually the reason the church members are not giving to God and his work as they should? Often the problem is caused by the church leaders. People tend to enjoy giving to God when they are excited about how their money is used for God's work. This is one of the major ways that we show our love for God. But the main reason that people do not give to God is because of the lack of trust between church members and church leaders. How we use the tithes and offerings is very important if we are to maintain the trust of the church members.

In 1 Cor. 4:1-2, Paul says that church leaders are "stewards" of God. A steward in the New Testament times was often a slave who had demonstrated himself capable of managing the affairs of his owner. The steward did not own the house or benefit from the management of the property of his owner. Rather, the steward was supposed to work to the best of his ability to benefit his owner. He used the other slaves, money, and all resources available to him to gain what would be the best for the master. So what is expected from a steward? Paul says that it is faithfulness. Faithfulness in this case is managing God's money to the best of our ability so that the people of God and the work of God get maximum benefit. We must remember several things as leaders who are stewards in the church of God:

1) The people, the property, and all of the money belong to God. They do not belong to us. Our goal is to see that God receives the maximum benefit from all of these things. We are to use the best of our abilities, our wisdom, and listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to encourage growth in the kingdom of God. If a little money from the church is used wisely God will bless it to get the maximum benefit.

Whenever we use this money for our personal benefit, then we are no longer working for God or for the sake of others, but for our own selfish interests. For instance if I use the church money to stay in a good hotel or eat special food when traveling, do you think that I am using God's money wisely? I am not trying to make the offering money do the most for the kingdom of God. Every time church leaders spend money, they should be asking themselves "Is this the best use of God's money? Will using it this way expand the kingdom of God the most?" And if we use the financial resources of the church for things which do not bring much spiritual benefit (e.g. choir robes, food for elders meetings) rather than things which bring a lot of spiritual benefit to the church (e.g. literature to help people grow in their knowledge, wages for church workers, hiring enough church workers to help disciple the believers.) then we are being poor stewards of God's money and will be judged by God. We are to use the money not primarily to buy things which are popular with people (e.g. choir robes, musical instruments, better church buildings) but to help people grow in their faith in Jesus Christ and reach the lost for Christ.

2) Church leaders are both stewards accountable to God and stewards accountable to the people of God. So we must understand that we are ultimately accountable both to God and to the church members for all that we do. God is expecting us to faithfully and wisely use resources he has entrusted into our hands. But church leaders are also stewards of the church members. People are giving their money to God, but they are entrusting it into the care of church leaders. The members expect us to use their money to the maximum potential for the work of the Gospel. Therefore church leaders are accountable to both God and to church members for how we use the resources entrusted into our care.

People are very sensitive to how church leaders use the money given for tithes and offerings. As long

as they trust the church elders, the members give generously. But if the people are suspicious that a) church leaders are taking from the tithe for their own personal benefit, or b) that the leaders are mismanaging the money by using it unwisely or for things that do not promote the Gospel, the members quickly stop giving. So as church leaders, we must be careful that we maintaining purity in how we use the money and not allow even five cents of it to go into our pockets. Determine to be totally honest, even down to the penny. And we must also be sure that we are using money in a way that church members believe is proper stewardship of their money.

If we lead with godly character, we will primarily lead by developing a relationship of trust between us and the church members. We must carefully guard that trust. Anything that might destroy that trust becomes the enemy of the church, a tool of Satan, and will be used to hinder God's work. Satan even uses us church elders to stop people from giving their offerings. And if the members do not give their tithes and offerings, then they do not receive the blessing of generously giving to God.

What important things should we remember when handling the tithes and offerings of the church?

We should never handle the money of the church alone. There should be a well-established system which limits any suspicion that might come upon an elder or deacon in handling the church money. "They trust us as elders not to steal. Why should we go to such extremes in handling money?" "Isn't a clear system of accountability a sign of lack of trust?" we might ask. But there are two reasons to have a good system of handling money where there are always at least two people handling church money.

First, it limits the temptation for the person handling the money to abuse church money. Satan so easily defeats us when we alone are responsible for the money, and it is easy to cheat and steal just a little with no one knowing. But if there is another person present, we can help each other to keep ourselves pure.

Second, it limits suspicion that we have taken money. It helps us maintain our reputation. Remember, we must be concerned with not only keeping from sinning, but avoiding all appearance of evil and maintaining our reputation.

In Ezra 8:24-34 we read how the king of Persia and Jews who remained in Persia gave Ezra money to take back to Jerusalem for the temple. Ezra knew that the money belonged to God and not to him, so he refused to use it for another purpose. And Ezra wanted no one to question his integrity so he refused to have anything to do with the money. Instead, he appointed 12 honest men to be responsible for the money. In front of all, he counted it and gave it to them. Then when the Jews got to Jerusalem, he counted the money again. Then it was handed over to the priests for the use on the Temple. If Ezra, a man known for his godliness, went to this extreme to maintain his integrity and reputation, don't you think we should do it as well? It is godly wisdom to have a good system for handling church money so that everyone knows what is happening to their money and trust both the people using the tithe money and the system of controlling the church money.

This means that when the tithe and offerings are collected, there should be at least two deacons or two elders counting the money. When they give the money to the church treasurer, the total amount of money that was given should be recorded in a book. It is often good for the deacons to sign the book recording the amount of money given. In areas where there is a bank, a bank account which requires two people's signature in which to keep the money is good. There should also be a financial record book showing how much money came in and how much money was spent on different things. If there is no bank in which to deposit the money, the treasurer should have a box in his house with two locks. He should have

a key to one lock and the head elder should have the key to the other lock. When money is needed, both men open the locks, withdraw the money, and sign in the book that they have withdrawn the money. They should state the purpose of why the money was withdrawn. At the monthly elders meeting, the treasurer should summarize how much money has been received, how much money was withdrawn, the reason it was withdrawn, and how much of God's money remains in the box. At least once every three months, the elders or their representative should count the money in the box to make sure it is all there. This system of accountability helps the two elders with the keys maintain their integrity and not misuse the money. And if the church members know that this is how their money is being controlled, they will trust the elders more and give their tithe will little suspicion that someone is taking it for their own use. (Note: We will look at a system of financial accountability in a later lesson.)

Q. 12. What is the system of collecting and counting money in your church? a) What is the church doing to keep suspicion from falling upon those collecting the money or preventing temptation for sin to those taking up the offering? b) What could they do better to make sure that Satan does not gain a victory in this area?

Tithes and offerings should be used for ministries of the church which the church members agree as being important. We tell people in the church "Give to the work of the Lord." But sometimes we take that money and use it on non-important things. For instance in one elder's meeting, in a financial report the treasurer shared that from the 100 Ethiopian Birr that they received the past month from the tithes and offerings of the church, the elders had used 40 Ethiopian Birr for food for their monthly meeting and feeding visitors and 40 Ethiopian Birr for transportation of the elders to the meeting. That left only 20 Ethiopian Birr "for the work of the Lord." Not only is this not good stewardship of the Lord's money, but what happens when the people find out that the majority of their money is being used in this way? "Why should we give our money just to feed the elders?" they think and stop giving. The people did not give of their precious money to feed the elders or visitors or to pay their transportation. They gave so that evangelists can go out and spread the Gospel or for other ministries that clearly help the church grow. As church elders, if it would limit the suspicion of church members, wouldn't it be better to pay out of our own pockets for transportation as our contribution to the work of the Lord? And wouldn't it be better to fast for the day of the meeting rather than having people question how we are using their money?

But what about taking care of visitors? In our culture it is important to properly feed visitors who come to visit. There are different ways to handle this.

First, do you remember how one of the character traits of church elders is that they be generous and show hospitality? So the church elders could see taking care of the food and lodging of visitors as part of their ministry to the church. Rather than always having the burden fall upon the elder living near the church, each church elder could look for ways to contribute to feeding the visitors. By sharing the burden, it is not too expensive for one church elder.

Second, in some churches, the leaders make an announcement in their church. "This week three visitors are coming from the zonal office. Are there any church members who want to serve God by taking the three into your homes and feeding them during the three days they are here?" they ask. Often members of the church enjoy having visitors and are very willing to take visitors into their own home. In other churches, church leaders will ask church members a) who will provide bed and supper for the visitors? b) Who will provide breakfast? c) Who will provide lunch? Members tell their leaders when they want the visitors in their home. By sharing the burden for taking care of the visitors among church members, it is not

too difficult on any one person. Although inconvenient to the visitors, the benefit to this approach is that church members get to know the visiting church leaders and develop a personal relationship with them. When this has happened to me, many years later when I meet the family who fed me supper, I know them and can ask about their children. This personal relationship also builds trust between church members and visiting church leaders.

Third, perhaps we could take this matter openly to the church. We could clearly tell them what the elders think is appropriate food for the visitors and how much that costs. We then ask them whether they approve of that coming out of the tithes and offerings. We should explain that we will use the money as efficiently as possible (e.g. feeding just the visitor and not all of the church elders and their families). If they approve, then church leaders will maintain their reputation before the church. If the church does not approve, then rather than ruin our reputation or cause people to withhold giving, we must find another way to feed visitors.

We should honestly tell the church members how we used the money entrusted to us. When people do not know the facts, they suspect the worst. So if people do not have a clear idea of how their money is spent, then they assume it is being spent in the wrong way. In fact, they often assume that the elders are stealing the money. Even if we are totally honest and don't steal the money, they will assume that we have. Therefore it is important to give periodic (perhaps every three months) financial and work reports to the church. We need to tell them clearly how much money they gave in tithes and offerings during that time. Then we need to report to them how the money was spent. It is also good to tell them things which the elders would like to do (which have been approved as important ministries of the church), but were not able to do because there was not enough money. This encourages the members to be more generous in giving to God.

Q. 13. a) Do your church elders provide a financial report on how much money was received and what the money was used for? If so, how often? If not, why not? b) Describe how church members become suspicious when they do not know how money is being spent or they hear a rumor that money was spent in a way that they think is inappropriate. What happened in the church as a result? c) How can your church improve the reports so the members will trust and not be suspicious?

Money must be used for what it was designated for. Sometimes we ask the people to give money for a special project. That could be to send out an evangelist, or purchase choir robes, a musical instrument, a church building, etc. Unlike tithes and offerings, this money has been given for a specific purpose. Church leaders must not assume that since the money has been entrusted to them that they are able to use that money for any need which the church has. The leaders are obligated before God to use that money for the purpose for which it was given. When we receive money from a person or a group for a special project, that money is given with the understanding that we will use it as specified. The money is received with our promise that we will use it as we said. But sometimes another problem arises and we take from that money for that purpose. For instance, the members gave for evangelism, but we need choir robes. Is it right to take the money and buy choir robes? The answer is no. The Bible says that we are to be people who keep our word. (Mt. 5:37) If we say we will use the money for a specific project, then we must use it that way, even if the church is struggling financially in another area. We will lose the confidence of people if we spend the money in a way other than what we promised. And it is a form of lying- and God does not bless anything that is based upon lying- even if we use it for an important ministry.

If an important need arises or the anticipated ministry does not develop like expected, church leaders

must go back to the church members or the person who first gave the money and ask permission to use the money in a different way. If the leaders only discuss among themselves and change how the money is used, they have broken trust with the members or the donor. If the members find out that the money was not used according to the purpose for which they gave, then next time the elders seek to raise money for a special project, the people will not believe them. The members will not give willingly. The church members' lack of giving is the fault of the leaders who have broken the trust people had in them. It is not the fault of the members for not giving.

Q. 14. a) List different special offerings for which your church has raised money. b) Do you think all of the money given for that need was spent to meet that specific need or was it used on other things as well? Explain your answer. c) What happens to the generosity of people when their offering is given to another need without their input?

We must never borrow or loan church money for personal reasons. Church leaders must realize that the money that is entrusted to us by church members does not belong to us, but to God. This money is not like a bank which people can borrow from to buy things like a cow, or build a house, or buy a car, etc. There are two things which should never happen:

First, church leaders should never "borrow" from the church's money. One of the ways which Satan gradually defeats a church elder is by getting him to "borrow" money from the church without permission. For instance, suppose the church treasurer's house needs a new tin roof. He does not have enough money, so he takes from the money in his care thinking "when I get my pay over the next three months I will repay the money." But every time he receives his pay, there is something urgent for which he needs the money. Eventually he gives up trying to return the money, for whenever his conscience reminds him of the money, he makes an excuse.

What started with borrowing has now become stealing. This elder has stolen not just from people, but from God. It is God's money once it is given to the church. We have no right to take even one "sentem" of it. One day our sin will be found out. Not only will our reputation be destroyed, but we have caused a general distrust against all leaders in the church. Once people distrust leaders, it is very hard for the leaders to regain that trust. And with no trust, church members do not give to God's work. Satan has used us to cause the members to stop tithing, and without money God's work is limited.

Second, the elders should never let another elder or church member borrow from the church money. People did not give money to the church to set up a bank from which people can borrow money. It is for the work of God, not to be treated as a "general fund" for people to borrow from. When we do loan out church money, Satan uses this to destroy the church in different ways. First, often people take the money and do not repay it. So they have become thieves, stealing from God. And we have allowed them to do so. Church leaders have no godly way to force people to give back the money. So Satan has used us to lose money that could have sent out evangelists or paid the salary of a pastor. Second, it opens up the leaders to many accusations. "You gave to your relative. You must give to me." "Why did you give that person the money. You know he won't pay it back" are just some of the accusations which they will face.

If the leader believes someone needs money, he should give of his personal money. Or the believers can form their own local saving groups from which people can borrow. But they should never borrow from money which belongs to God.

When a church leader has stolen from the offering, church leaders must make sure public discipline takes place. When the leaders guilty of stealing from the offering are caught, they often "repent" with a lot of tears. They fall down in front of the elders in the elders meeting and confess their sin. If the elders demand it, they fall down in front of the church and confess their sins. Rarely do they do this before their sin is known, but only afterwards. Are they really repenting of their sin against God and people, or is it only a response so they will not be punished now that they have been caught? Often one wonders if there is genuine repentance. Amazingly, the person often thinks that "repentance" means that they do not have to repay the money which they have stolen. If they can get people to say "We forgive you" they assume that they do not have to give the money back. But this is not what the Bible teaches. What is Biblical repentance?

First, when a leader sins by taking money from the church there must be public confession. (See 1 Tim. 5:19-20) True repentance means that he not only confesses the sins others know about, but even things that the other elders may not know. If the elders try to protect the reputation of the elder who sinned, then they are allowing sin to spread. People will continue to distrust elders if they think that the elders are not punished for their sin. Elders who are guilty of this type of sin must be openly reproved, should be temporarily removed from office, and put under church discipline. Even when that elder is restored to his position as an elder, he should not be given the responsibility to handle church money until he has won back the peoples' trust. If he gets his role as treasurer back, church members will always have a question in their minds as to whether he is stealing their money. And they will no longer give freely to God's work. (Note: When determining how long to "punish" the elder by removing him from office, the major question the elders must address is not how long should we punish the person. Rather it is how long will it be before people trust the person again. Until that trust has been regained and the man qualifies for leadership by being "above reproach" in the eyes of people, he does not meet the Biblical qualifications of leadership.)

To try to keep the matter a secret from the church members means that people do not learn that there are consequences for sin. And sin seems to be a simple matter rather than something to be feared. As the sin becomes known through rumors, people lose their respect for all elders. The only way the other elders maintain peoples' respect and trust is by showing that they have fairly and honestly addressed the sin of another elder. If we keep quiet because we fear the anger of the elder or his family or we don't want to bring shame to the person or the body of elders, this means that we are fearing man more than God who demands holiness among his people.

Second, if there is true repentance, the elder should commit himself to repay all of the money he has stolen. This was so important in the Old Testament that God told people that when their actions caused financial difficulty to another person, they not only had to return the money but add 20% to what they had stolen when they returned the money. Only then could they offer a sacrifice to God for forgiveness. (Lev. 6:1-7) So God demands that our actions agree with our words in order for true forgiveness to take place. Until he returns the money, the elder is still a "thief." The elder should be committed to personally suffer rather than allow the money of God to be lost. He may have to sell his house, his cow, his coat, his ring, or other possessions to be able to right the wrong. The other elders should work with the elder on a fair way to return the money, but he must be determined to pay back every cent he stole. If the elder truly wants forgiveness from God, and if he wants to regain his integrity, he must work to return the money.

We are often tempted as elders to simply forgive the person and let him keep the money. But this is not right for three reasons. First, the money does not belong to the church elders so that they can say "never mind." It belongs to God and the church members. Since we cannot ask God to say "never mind" about his money, those who have stolen from God must be required to pay it back. Second, it is not right

for the one who stole to benefit financially with a tin roof house or a cow which he has gained from stealing God's money. He should suffer rather than God's work suffer. Third, to not require the return of the money encourages people to steal and not return things. If we allow one person to do it, then we open the door for many others to steal and think they can get away with it by just saying "forgive me."

Probably the elders should only release a person from repaying what he has stolen from the church if returning the money leaves the person destitute and without any way to feed his family. And if that is what the elders decide, it should be done in consultation with all of the church members. The money really belongs to the church, and so the church members should make a corporate decision to release the sinner of his obligation to repay the money.

(Note: When I have sinned against a person and want forgiveness, not only must I come asking for his forgiveness, asking him to get rid of the anger that is in his heart against me. But I must be committed to doing anything necessary to right the wrong I have committed. If that wrong was stealing money, then I come seeking to return that money. If I have told lies about the person and ruined his reputation, then I look for ways to undo the harm I have caused to his reputation by telling others that I have lied. As the one who has sinned, I must seek to undo what I have done. On the side of the one who was wronged, however, that person has the right to release me from my obligations of restitution. He can say "Even though you stole 100 Ethiopian Birr from me, I release you from having to repay that. I will bear the inconvenience of losing the 100 Ethiopian Birr for you." Only then is the sinner released from his obligation to restore what he has taken or done. Otherwise, the stolen money (or other item) must be returned.)

Q. 15. a) Have you ever heard about or witnessed a time when someone borrowed money from the church? What happened? b) Are there times when people should borrow money from the church? If yes, when? c) Do you think they should go to the church and not to their relatives and friends? If not, why not? c) If a church elder takes money from the church, do you think he should be publicly reprimanded? Should he be required to pay the money back? Explain your answers.

Church elders should model generosity with their personal tithes and offerings. Unlike leadership in a government office or in a business, leadership in the church is primarily seen in teaching and modeling what it means to obey God's Word. This means that if the leaders want to encourage believers to give generously to God, then church elders must teach about the joys of giving to God. And it also means they need to give generously to prove an example for the people. If people see church leaders giving only a small offering (e.g. 1 Ethiopian Birr) when they know they make 700 Ethiopian Birr per month, the members will question whether or not the church leader is tithing. He might be giving his tithe in the church office, but since the people do not know that, they do not see him modeling generosity towards God and the things of God. As church leaders, we must show our generosity with money in a quiet but visible way so that people will follow our example. We should remember four important truths:

a) When giving our tithes and offerings, we should never do it in a way that creates competition between people or brings honor to people. Jesus warned that in giving, the left hand should not know what the right hand is doing. (Mt. 6:2-4) By this he means that tithing should be done secretly, rather than for show. This teaching provides a warning to how some churches raise money by openly reading the names of those who give gifts. It also goes against any pressure on people to compete with each other in giving. "Ato Yohannes" gave this amount of money. How much will you give?" is not a type of statement that God's Word allows. However, although there should be no seeking to show off how much they have given, people need to know that church leaders are generously giving their money so that they can follow the elders'

example.

b) We need to carefully consider our attitude toward our money to make sure that we are maintaining a generous spirit. The Bible shows that the love of money, like a weed, easily creeps into our hearts. So husbands and wives, students, etc. must all be making sure that they are giving generously to God.

c) It does not matter how much or how little we have, all believers should show our love for God by generously giving from what God has given us. Satan gets us to postpone giving until we have more money. Students think that since they are poor, they do not need to tithe their pocket money. But if they don't learn to give generously then, they won't give to God after they get a job, or when they are married, etc. Satan will always try to convince us that it is not convenient to give money to God, so we must learn to give now. It is also not good to tell poor people that they do not need to give since they are poor. When we pray "help those who want to give but don't have the money" we are encouraging people to make excuses to not give to God. Surely God has given all in the church enough money or crops to live on throughout that week. Shouldn't we encourage them to show their thanks to God by giving an offering no matter how little it might seem, to God. Jesus honored the widow who gave two little coins. He did not tell her to save the little she had so she could use the money for herself. (Lk. 21:1-4)

d) Because the New Testament is silent on the issue of tithing 10% of our money to God, many Christians think that we should not treat tithing like a command which we have to do in order to be obedient to God. Clearly Jesus encouraged tithing. (Lk. 11:42) But the New Testament's focus is upon being generous. (2 Cor. 9:6-15) Being generous is measured by how much it hurts us to give. So Jesus said that a poor person giving 2 Ethiopian Birr is actually giving more than a rich person who gives 100 Ethiopian Birr. (Mk. 12:41-44) For a rich person, 10% is not generous. If I make 1000 Ethiopian Birr per month, giving 100 Ethiopian Birr does not hurt me very much. Being generous would lead me to give much more. But to a poor person who only gets 200 Ethiopian Birr per month, giving a 10% of 20 Ethiopian Birr hurts more and demonstrates true generosity. God is also concerned with our attitude when giving. If we give our tithe with little thought or with reluctance, then we are not giving to God out of love, joy, appreciation for what he has done for us, etc. This is not what God wants.

It seems that 10% is a minimal amount expected for us to return to God. Generosity means that we give more than the minimum. Perhaps tithing is given to us primarily as a way to check whether or not the love of money has taken over our hearts. It is like a thermometer that measures temperature. If we find that we are not giving at least 10%, no matter how much or how little we make, there is a good chance that the love of money is in our hearts.

Unfortunately, there are many church ministers who are not giving generously to God's work. They preach about tithing, they encourage the people to tithe, but they themselves do not give to God. God will judge them for this hypocrisy. Why should we expect people to tithe if we don't?

Leaders must be totally honest with church money. It is easy to become casual with the church's money. Often we buy things which do not have a receipt. For instance, you buy lunch at a hotel for the visiting speaker. The lunch (for the two people) and the coffee cost 11.50 Ethiopian Birr. However, when giving a report on expenses, you claim 12.00 Ethiopian Birr for lunch. You have just stolen 50 cents. As James says, you have become a "lawbreaker." (Jms. 2:8-11) It does not matter if it is a large amount of money (100 Ethiopian Birr) or a small amount of money (50 sentem), if we take any of it, we are thieves. We are stealing from the church and from God. Beware that you do not listen to Satan when he tempts you to keep the "keep the change" thinking "They won't care and it is right since I worked for it by walking all of

this way." Such thinking will start a spiritual slide into sin which will eventually destroy the leader's reputation. Some church leaders even ask store managers to add a little on to the receipt to gain some extra money. This is just another way of stealing.

Leaders need to be careful in how they use personal money. Remember, we are concerned not just about sin, but a wrong appearance which causes people to doubt our integrity. So as church leaders we must be careful how we use our personal money as well as how we use the church's money. Suppose a person is elected to be the church treasurer. A month later he begins to build a new house with a tin roof. What will the people assume? Most likely they will think that he has taken from the church money to buy the tin. As a result his reputation of honesty is questioned. It could be that he did not take any money from the church. Perhaps he had been saving for years to buy the tin for a new house. But because people in the church were not aware of this, by starting to build his house at this time, he ruined his reputation. It would have been better to either wait until his integrity in handling money was established before building the house or look for ways to make it known that he is building with his own money. It is better to delay building a new home, buying an ox or sheep, etc. and maintain a good reputation than it is to have something we can rightly buy with our own money and yet ruin our reputation. Wisdom teaches us that we need to be wise as leaders so that nothing we do will bring the suspicion of wrongdoing.

Q. 16. a) Illustrate a way that Satan has overcome a church leader in the area of sin concerning money. b) How would the suggestions above have helped that leader maintain his integrity and not fall into sin?

8. The sin of not persevering to the end

Q. 17. a) Make a list of people in the Bible who started their leadership well, but for one reason or another, their leadership was ruined at the end. b) List the sins they committed that caused them to ruin their godly reputation. c) Describe ways that church leaders you have known started their ministry well, but ended poorly. d) Why do you think it is difficult to persevere and maintain our reputation as godly leaders to the end of our lives?

One of the saddest things in life is when godly church leaders who were used greatly by God end up falling into sin towards the end of their lives. In the church today there seem to be few believers who have lived their whole life faithfully for God. They began well. They served for many years. But for various reasons, as they grew older and more successful, they fell into sin. Blessed is the one who not only starts well, but can finish well! Church leaders especially seem to have the problem of faithfully serving God for their whole lives.

The book of Hebrews was written to believers who had trusted in Jesus and faithfully served him for many years. But because of increased persecution from the Jews, they were tempted to go back to their previous Old Testament beliefs. After telling the believers why this was not an acceptable way to be a follower of God, the author tells believers that they needed to run their spiritual race "with perseverance." (Heb. 12:1) Success according to the Bible is not how well we are doing now in our Christian walk or in our leadership. It is how well we end our lives.

One of the greatest dangers for leaders is success according to the world's standards. That success might be in the financial things our secular job brings us. Or it might be the development of a good reputation of being a good evangelist or a popular speaker or preacher. When we are popular and enjoy many physical blessings, that is often the most dangerous time in our lives. And that is when most leaders fall into sin. It is when things go well and when God has used us that we are in the greatest danger of falling

into sin.

As we read through the Bible, especially about the kings who ruled over Judah, we see that almost every godly king fell into sin once they were successful. Let us list some of them:

a. King Saul: God used him to bring defeat to the Ammonites. (1 Sam. 11) He was successful and respected by the people as a great military leader. But then partial obedience of God led to Saul being rejected by God. What a terrible end for a man chosen by God for leadership. In his last days we read about him going to a witch rather than to God for advice and dying by killing himself on the battle front. (1 Sam. 31)

b. King David: David was a man after God's heart, the greatest singer Israel would ever know, a great warrior who extended the boundaries of Israel far beyond it had ever been, and a great administrator who brought in a "golden era" for the people of God. It was after he was successful that he committed adultery and murdered one of his greatest warriors. (2 Sam. 7:1; 8; 11) (Uriah was one of the 30 great military warriors during David's time. [2 Sam. 23:39]) It was after he was successful that he took pride in his military might and numbered all of the men eligible for military service.

c. King Solomon started his reign by asking God for special wisdom to lead the people of God. He knew that he was not able to lead the people as he should in his own wisdom. He continued the expansion of the boundaries established by his father David. He built a great temple for God, an amazing palace, etc. But in his desire to expand his influence throughout the world and because of his love for sensual pleasure, he married many women who led him into idol worship. (1 Ki. 11:1-6) In the book of Ecclesiastes, as an old man, Solomon viewed himself as having wasted his time seeking the attractions of the world. Eventually his sin led to the division of the people of God into the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom.

d. King Asa: He was used by God to overcome the enemy and bring spiritual reform to the nation of Judah. But when he got old, he imprisoned a prophet who reprimanded him and began to oppress the people. (2 Chron. 14-16)

e. King Jehoshaphat: When he was about to be overcome by an army, King Jehoshaphat trusted God and saw the enemy defeated. He brought great spiritual reform to Judah. But for a political alliance, he arranged a wife who worshipped Baal for his son from the ungodly king of Israel. This woman introduced Baal worship to Judah, eventually leading to God's great judgment upon the nation. The wife he got for his son later killed every descendant of Jehoshaphat except for one child. Satan used this situation to almost cut off the line of the Messiah. (2 Chron. 18-20)

f. King Uzziah: He was known as one of the greatest military leaders the nation of Judah ever had. He extended the boundaries of Judah to where they had been during the time of David and Solomon. But he became proud and thought that as a leader he could do whatever he wanted. Contrary to the law of God, he went into the temple and tried to offer incense to God. This ministry was only allowed for priests. God struck him with leprosy and for the rest of his life he had to live separate from the people and his son ruled in his place. (2 Chron. 26)

These are just a few examples of great godly leaders who did not persevere in holiness until they died. They all started well and loved God. They were greatly used by God. But then they fell into sin, often the sin of pride or the sin of compromise with the world. Soon they became the enemy of God's people, and tools of Satan to bring destruction. If such great leaders could fall in this way, shouldn't this warn us that we too can fall into sin and become tools of Satan to harm the church of God? In our churches today there are

many church leaders, once used greatly by God, who are causing division in the church. Others are bringing in false teachings, much like Paul warned in Acts 20:29-31. Unfortunately there are strong church leaders who were used by God during the communist era who are known thieves who have stolen from the church. They have set up their own kingdom on earth rather than point others to following Jesus and his kingdom.

We live in days which make faithful perseverance to God difficult. It is difficult for two reasons.

First, we are living in days of great blessing. It is more difficult to be faithful to God when things go well than when things are difficult. It is more difficult to be faithful to God now than it was during the days of the derge. During the derge we were forced to depend upon God for our lives. But now with freedoms and material blessings, we often stop depending upon God and starting thinking about how to enjoy the physical blessings God has given us. Unfortunately during days of blessings, the hearts of church leaders often grow cold. They begin to manipulate situations so that they will enjoy even greater physical blessings. As a result many church leaders become like the church at Laodicea which boasted *"I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*" (Rev. 3:17) Jesus reminds us that we are to seek God's kingdom and his righteous rather than the physical things that so easily become the focus of our attention. (Mt. 6:33)

Second, we are living days which are steadily growing more evil. It is easy to withstand problems for a short period of time. But it is much more difficult to withstand problems that keep growing and beat against us day after day. During the second world war, when the Chinese wanted to torture prisoners, they would often lie a prisoner down and cause drops of water to fall upon the man's forehead. Initially, there was no pain and the prisoner thought "I can handle this." But after several days of water dropping on his forehead, the small drop of water caused more and more pain until the prison cried out for mercy. That is how evil is in our days. Think through the growing problems which our churches are facing that day after day beat against the leader. There is growing hypocrisy in the church and spiritual lukewarmness as second and third generation Christians enter the church. Many imbalanced or false teachings are popular with young people. Leaders who only understand what the world's leadership is like are now in places of leadership in many churches. Such leaders are more used to compromising for peace rather than standing for what is right. Tribalism is impacting not just our nation, but our churches as well. There are also new and strange teachings which demand a deep understanding of the Bible and the will of God- things like AIDS, abortion, the role of women in the church and society, the lowering of moral standards, rapid changes in culture as the youth accept the standards of the West, growth in Islam and other militant religions, etc. All of these beat against the godly church leader and cry out that he compromise and lower his standards to accommodate others.

All of these issues call for great perseverance on the part of godly leaders. We must daily examine our lives to make sure we are not allowing our spiritual fervor and our godliness to slip. We must daily make a commitment to live according to the teachings of God's Word rather than what is popular in culture. Often it will mean that the leader will have to stand alone against what the majority of people, even the majority of church leaders are doing and teaching. Christianity is often like trying to walk into the church at the end of the service while everyone else is walking out of the church. It is very difficult. Faithful perseverance will mean that the godly leader will resist the way the church is going, stand firm in his beliefs, and let God alone judge him.

The apostle Paul had one thing in his life that he feared. He did not fear persecution. He did not fear death. But he feared falling into sin and becoming disqualified before God. And so Paul tells us that every

day of his life he would carefully examine his life and beat his evil nature into submission to God, like a boxer hitting an opponent. (1 Cor. 9:24-27) At the end of his life, Paul was able to say that he had run his race of life well and fulfilled his ministry as an apostle. He had completed it and could in confidence look forward to the reward that God had for him. (2 Tim. 4:6-8) May all of us be able to say this at the end of our life!

Q. 18. a) Take time in prayer now to ask God to help you stay faithful to the end of your life. b) Examine your life. Are there areas of your life where you have begun to compromise with the world so that you could become disqualified for ministry for God? If so, confess those sins now. c) Describe ways that you can "beat your body" to make it your slave so that like Paul you can finish your life with confidence and no regrets.

Q. 19. Review the sins leaders tend to commit in their heart and attitudes as leaders. a) Which of these sins do you think has caused your church the most harm? b) Which of these sins do you think you are most susceptible to? c) If you have fallen into one of these sins, take time now to confess that sin to God.

THIRD DAY

SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 4)

SINS IN HOW LEADERS RELATE TO OTHERS (PART 1)

Leadership primarily involves working with other people. We work with other leaders who are elders with us. And we work with church members so that they are growing and ministering in the church. And we should be helping a new generation of leaders grow to replace us in eldership. Because we are working with people, Satan works hard to disrupt the relationship of the leader with others in the church. Following are some of the sins in relationships that Satan can cause leaders to commit in order to disrupt God's work in the church.

1. Jealousy: The sin of resisting God's using other people as he desires

Zerihun was the head elder in his local church. He had faithfully served God for many years and was loved and respected by his church. In his church there was a very gifted young person called Iskinder. He was more educated than Zerihun was. And when he preached, everyone, even the older people, were impressed. The young person was spiritually mature, more than some of the older people in the church. "We want Iskinder to be our pastor. Send him away to the Bible school and let him come back and lead us" the people said. As Iskinder became more and more popular, Zerihun became jealous. "I have worked for many years and they have never looked at me like this. Not once did they offer to send me to Bible school." So Zerihun began to spread false rumors about Iskinder. And he told those organizing the program not to give Iskinder any ministry opportunities. Eventually Iskinder became discouraged. He left the church and went to another church where God used him greatly.

Q. 20. a) Describe how you have seen church leaders become jealous of gifted people in the church. b) Read Num. 12:1-5; Num. 16. 1) Why do you think Miriam and Aaron and the sons of Korah spoke out against Moses? 2) How did God react to their sins? What can we learn about God's perspective when we become jealous when he chooses to use someone else other than us? c) Read 1 Sam. 18. 1) List the different reasons Saul became jealous of David. 2) What did Saul do because he was jealous? d) List reasons why church leaders become jealous today. e) What things do church leaders do to each other

It seems that there are disagreements among the elders or between different groups in most churches. Although there are many reasons, the source of most disagreements is the sin of jealousy. Church leaders become jealous when someone else is elected to be the head elder. Or they become jealous when someone of a different family or different tribe gets recognition or authority which they want for themselves, for their family, or for their own tribe. Or some leaders get jealous when another person becomes more popular than they are, or are more gifted than they are.

In the Old Testament there are many examples of when jealousy brought great problems to God's people. Although Miriam and Aaron used Moses' wife as an excuse to complain, they were primarily angry because they were jealous of Moses' special relationship with God and his authority as the leader of the Israelites. They complained saying "*Has God only spoken through you? Hasn't he also spoken through us?*" Not long afterwards, the sons of Korah, who were Levites and the same tribe as Moses and Aaron, began to complain against Moses and especially Aaron. They did not like the fact that the priesthood (leading the worship of the Israelites) was given to Aaron and his children and not to all of them. God had given a certain level of spiritual leadership in the community to the rest of the Levites, but the top religious leadership position was kept for Aaron's family. The sons of Korah were trying to overthrow Aaron's leadership as the high priest.

In both cases God's response was very severe. Miriam was immediately smitten with leprosy and probably would have died if Moses had not pled for her. (Most likely Miriam was the main complainer since she was the one punished.) The sons of Korah and 250 community leaders were all killed. Later when the Israelites blamed Moses and Aaron for the deaths of the sons of Korah and the community leaders, 14,700 more people died. Obviously God is not pleased when people become jealous of those in leadership and work against them.

King Saul, the first king of Israel, was jealous of David's popularity with the people and success as a military leader. From the day that David killed Goliath until King Saul died, his jealousy consumed him. King Saul could no longer lead his people effectively because his main concern was how to kill David. Saul was so obsessed with jealousy that he died bitter against all people and forsaken by God. The sin of jealousy, like the sin of unforgiveness, often harms the individual more than it does the one the person is jealous of.

Why does God become so angry at the sin of jealousy? To be jealous of another leader and speak out against them is to fight against God and his plan. It is God who raises up a leader, gives them their spiritual gifts and abilities, and then works through them. In the church, the power to lead and the choice to become a leader does not originate with the individual, but with God. Therefore, any time we complain against the leader or work against his leadership in any way, we are working against God. If we are not happy with our current leadership in the church or are jealous of the gifts of another person, it means that we are complaining against the way God chooses to work. As Paul said, how can the pottery complain against the potter who made it and established its position in life? (Rom. 9:20-21) David realized this in his dealings with King Saul. Although God had chosen him to be the king, David refused to work to displace Saul from the kingship, even though Saul was an evil king. God had raised Saul up and David waited for God to lower him. For David to kill Saul to become king was the same as rebellion against God, for Saul was still God's anointed until such a time as God lowered him. (1 Sam. 24:1-15; 1 Sam. 26)

There are several types of jealousy of which we need to be careful:

a. Jealousy over leadership positions. It is easy for one leader to become jealous of another leader when he is chosen by God and the people to be the head elder, or the leader of the choir, or the chairman of the board. To get jealous over another person's leadership position is to resist God's right to raise up one person into leadership and not another person.

b. Jealousy over another leader's spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to all believers. (1 Cor. 12:7-11) But those spiritual gifts are different in kind (e.g., teaching, evangelism, tongues) and also different in levels (e.g. ability of teaching or evangelism from one gifted person differs from another person. Some God uses greatly, some God uses less.) Often we become jealous of a leader who has a spiritual gift that seems greater than ours. We are jealous of those who can work miracles, or those who can preach well, or teach effectively when we do not seem to have the spectacular gifts or the gifts that make us more visible to others. To be jealous over someone being more gifted than we are is to get angry at the Holy Spirit who determines how to use us and who determines what type of spiritual gift we have and the level of gift that we have.

c. Jealousy over different levels of success. Often church leaders become jealous of each other when one is more successful than the others. So when one evangelist leads 100 people to Christ and the other evangelist only leads 10 people to Christ, it is easy for the less effective evangelist to get jealous of the other. When we do we have forgotten what Paul said in 1 Cor. 3:5-15 "*One person plants, another waters, but only God can give the increase.*" Or one elder will become jealous when people like another elder better and elect him to a greater leadership position. How often out of jealousy different church leaders spread rumors about another leader and labor to undo the work of another leader!

d. Jealousy over not being as popular as another leader. What initially caused jealousy in King Saul was the fact that David became more popular than he was. When the women of Israel began to sing "*Saul has killed his thousands and David his ten thousands*" (1 Sam. 18:6-9) we are told that Saul "*kept a jealous eye on David.*" This same type of jealousy is common among leaders. When people repeatedly ask for a certain leader to preach but not other leaders, or when people clearly show their love for a leader, or when they give special recognition or a gift to a certain leader, or when one person gets a promotion or a raise in pay- these are all situations that Satan often uses to cause jealousy in the hearts of other leaders. If we are those who are not as popular as others, we must be very careful not to allow this sin in our hearts. If we do, we will begin working against the person and against God who gifted the person in a special way. If we are really concerned about the "kingdom of God" and not our own reputation or kingdom, then we will rejoice that God is using someone in this way. Usually the person who is jealousy is the one hurt the most, not the one whom we are jealous against. That leader still is popular- just like David was always popular. But it was Saul, the jealous one, who suffered throughout the rest of his life with no peace in his heart, and with bitterness of spirit. Are you bitter in your heart because you are jealous over some other leaders' popularity? You will never have peace until you allow God to be God, to use anyone he wants. And remember, Jesus said that the "first will be last." God does not reward based upon popularity. He rewards based upon faithfulness. What is important is to hear the praise of God in heaven, not the praise of man on earth.

e. Jealousy over younger, more educated, more gifted leaders. Often older leaders are threatened by more educated and more gifted young people. As they see God using these young people more and more, they become worried that the church will reject them in favor for these young people. Often these older leaders think "These young leaders are proud. They think they know everything. But they don't know anything- so we can't let them into leadership." Sadly, in our days, often the most gifted young people who

love God and desire to serve him are being driven away by the elders. There are two things happening when we do this.

First, many older leaders forget how God used them just as mightily when they were young men. Many of the greatest leaders in the Bible were young people. Joseph became prime minister of Egypt when he was most likely in his thirties; Jeremiah started his prophetic work when he was thirty; John the disciple whom Jesus loved the most was likely only a teenager when he was called to be an apostle; Timothy was in his twenties when God used him to work with Paul in guiding churches. So God does not only use older people. He uses the youth as well. (Note: On the other hand, the youth must be careful not to think that education earns them the right to lead. God focuses upon spiritual maturity as his qualification for leadership. God uses both the young and old. He used Moses, Joshua, and Caleb who were over eighty.)

Second, when older elders resist new gifted leaders, they are no longer seeking God's kingdom and his glory, but their own. When this type of attitude is in our hearts, it is a sign that we are leading for selfish glory. We are concerned about our popularity. We are building our own kingdom, not God's.

Yes, youth do not have the experience which is valuable for leadership. And yes, they often have pride in their education rather than ministering out of a heart that is submitted to God and dependent upon him. And yes, in their zeal, they might make some mistakes. But don't we older leaders also make mistakes? And where will they get the experience to minister for God if we drive them away from ministry in the church? And who will help them understand how to minister with spiritual character if we do not spend time showing them the difference? And where will our future leaders come from if we drive all of the gifted youth away from the church? Rather than drive the youth away out of jealousy, how much better it would be for us to be like Barnabas who took young Saul and worked with him to help him mature. Who knows how many young men who could have been used mightily by God like Saul, later known as Paul, was? But they were driven away from our churches because we leaders are afraid and jealous of them.

When we are jealous, we are actually complaining against God, resisting his Lordship and his right to work as he desires. God is God. He has the right to raise up anyone he wants into leadership. He has the right to give any believer whatever spiritual gift of service that he wants. He has the right to work powerfully through one person and not as mightily through another person. Are you fighting against God by becoming jealous of another person? Have you forgotten that you are the clay and God is the potter? Be careful that you do not receive God's judgment for this sin of rebellion against God.

Q. 21. a) Illustrate how you have seen these different types of jealousy in your church. b) What results did the jealousy cause in the church? c) List the reasons why people get jealous of each other? d) What have they forgotten about God and his right to use someone anyway he wants? e) Examine your heart. Is there anyone you are jealous about? If so, confess your sin of resisting God's right to be Lord.

2. The sin of believing that we are more superior than the ordinary members

The world of medicine has determined that many of the diseases like AIDS originate in small things called viruses. Viruses are so small that powerful microscopes are needed to see them. Viruses frustrate doctors because they keep changing. As soon as medicine is developed to treat one type of virus, that virus changes and the medicine will not kill the new type of virus. This is similar to pride in the heart of the leader. About the time we conquer one type of pride, pride demonstrates itself in another format. One way that pride demonstrates itself in the heart of leaders is how we begin to perceive church members. Many church leaders secretly despise church members. Some leaders begin to think that they are somehow

better than church members in the following way:

a. Church leaders begin to think that only they are really spiritual. They alone know how to pray well, preach well, etc. Only they are sacrificially serving God. Whereas they are holy, they suspect that most church members are sinners, unable to separate themselves from the world.

b. Church leaders often think that church members do not want to serve God and do not know how to serve God. "There is no one besides us to work in the church" they complain. If we allow ordinary members of the church to work for God, they will mess things up. They don't know enough about God. They don't know enough about the Gospel. They won't do the work we ask them to do well. So it is all up to us" they say. As a result, church leaders refuse to delegate responsibility to others in the church. The people think they have to do it all. One of the sad results that comes from this attitude is that the people of God begin to believe this teaching. They think that as ordinary members they can do nothing. So they come to church, sing, listen to God's Word and then go home with no expectation that God can use them for his kingdom. People come to them to know about Jesus, but they say "I can't lead you to Christ. It has to be the evangelist." And so the church members to whom God has given many gifts and abilities do not serve God. They become passive, waiting for the church leaders to do everything in the church.

c. When a church member wants to serve God and is zealous for God, the church leaders make fun of their efforts. "Who gave you permission to have that Bible study? What use is it to work with street children- what good will they bring to the church?" they say despairingly.

d. Church leaders sometimes think that because people do not have the same level of education that they do, that they are useless. "What can these people do? Except for coming to church on Sunday and singing, we can't really expect God to use them in any way. They are poor, uneducated and useless. Isn't it good that God has us to do the work? Where would this church be if God did not have us- the educated and the rich- to do the work?" we say in our hearts.

As leaders we need to listen to our preaching, for often this shows our pride and whether we are speaking down to the people. How often our sermons give the impression that as leaders we are giving generously of our money but the people aren't, or we are holy and the people aren't, or we are diligently studying God's Word but the people aren't, etc. How easy it is to forget that God often chooses to use the less educated or the less gifted people, including the ordinary church member whom we despise. (1 Cor. 1:18-29) The missionaries who brought the Gospel to Ethiopia were for the most part uneducated compared to many of us today. The early evangelists, and even most of the current evangelists, whom God used to start the churches were uneducated compared to us. Some of the greatest work being done in the world today is done by those whom the world despises. So we must be careful against this sin of pride.

Q. 22. a) Describe ways that leaders often think that they are better than the members of their church?
b) How do they demonstrate this feeling of superiority in their leadership?
Q. 23. Read Mt. 15:23-32, Lk. 13:14-17. a) What sin did Jesus accuse the religious leaders of doing? b) How can this type of sin also impact church leaders today? Give illustrations of how you have seen this sin in leaders' lives. c) Why did Jesus get so angry about this sin when he did not seem to get as angry about other sins like adultery?

3. Hypocrisy: the sin of pretending to be spiritual

One of the most dangerous sins for the church leader is the desire to gain the attention and respect

of church members by doing something which appears spiritual. So we pretend to be spiritual in how we worship or pray rather than allowing the testimony of our lives, our love for God and service of him, to speak on our behalf. Jesus called this sin "hypocrisy," and it was the sin which Jesus spoke most strongly against in the lives of the religious leaders.

All of us want to be known as being spiritual. And this is especially important for the church leader, because we want others to follow the example of our godly lives. But this desire to be genuinely godly can be used by Satan for evil. Soon we fall into the sin of hypocrisy.

(Note: In the Greek language, the word "hypocrisy" comes from the word meaning "acting." It was used of actors in a drama when they pretended to be someone they weren't. So hypocrisy means pretending to be someone we aren't.)

Hypocrisy is most often seen in those who minister in front of people (e.g. church leaders, preachers, evangelists, choir members). We stand before others to lead the singing, to preach and teach, to pray, etc. Satan often works in our hearts to get us to try to impress others that we are spiritual by the things we do. It is when we start pretending something that we aren't or do something that we don't naturally do to impress others that we become hypocrites. The sin of trying to appear spiritual or special in people's eyes rather than authentically spiritual is probably the most dangerous sin leaders face.

The root cause of the sin of hypocrisy is not our actions, but the reason we do something. It is not in how we pray or preach or sing, but the reasons why we are doing these actions. There are many areas of the life of the church leader where we are tempted to pretend to be spiritual when that is not the reality of our hearts:

a. **Public Praying:** If we publicly pray in a way that seeks to cause people to think that we are spiritual, but it is not the natural way for us to pray, we are committing the sin of hypocrisy. This can be praying loudly, using excessive hallelujahs or amens, making our voice waver, cry, shaking violently as we pray, etc. It is also hypocrisy if we see others doing any of these actions and we begin to copy them to look more spiritual.

b. **Preaching:** Hypocrisy is often seen in our preaching. For instance, if we copy the style of a famous preacher and shout, cry, use dramatic motions, etc. it is there. It is also hypocrisy when we preach on a topic, giving the impression that we are doing it, but aren't. For instance, we are hypocrites if we preach on prayer and how important it is for us to spend time with God in prayer, but we are so busy we don't pray; or if we preach on the need to have family devotions, but we don't have any in our home; or if we preach on the need to study the Bible but we don't do it ourselves.

c. **Singing in the choir:** It is hypocrisy if we sing with closed eyes wanting this action to impress people that we are spiritual, or if we see other choir members from another church fall to the ground overcome by emotion during their singing and we start to do it too in order to impress the people in our church.

It is important to note that all of these actions are permitted **if they are natural expressions of what is in our hearts.** But 1) if in our hearts these are actions seeking to impress people with our spirituality, or 2) if we are copying others' actions, or 3) if there is a difference between what we say and how we live, then we have fallen into the sin of hypocrisy. Often others cannot tell whether or not we are hypocrites. Only God and we know when our actions are real and when they come from seeking to appear spiritual before others.

Q. 24. a) Describe a situation when you copied others because you wanted people to think you were spiritual. b) Give other illustrations of how church leaders can fall into the sin of hypocrisy. c) What can a church leader do to make sure he is true in his spirituality rather than pretending to be something that he isn't?

4. The sin of becoming too busy that we do not give adequate attention to our family

Q. 25. Read 1 Samuel 2:12-36. a) Why did God get angry with Eli? b) How was the prophecy fulfilled? c) What does this passage teach church leaders of the need to carefully raise their children to obey God?

One of the most difficult things for a church leader to learn is to balance all of his responsibilities. He is often responsible for work in the government or as a trader. He is responsible for his ministry to his family. And he is responsible for his ministry in the church. If the leader does not learn to balance these three major areas of responsibility, he will never be an effective leader.

The sad thing is that usually out of the three areas of responsibility, the area which suffers the most from imbalance is the family. A leader knows that if he does not do a good job at work, he could lose his job or there won't be enough money to live on. So a leader gives adequate time to this part of his life. A church leader also has many people in the church constantly coming to him for help. There are meetings that continue late into the night. The leader never has enough time to do what people think he should be doing in the church. So where does the leader get the time to work more in the church? He must reduce the time he spends with his family. They do not demand his time and attention as openly as people in the church. Nor do they complain because complaining is viewed as being disrespectful and opposing what people claim is the will of God. So a sin that many church leaders commit is a sin against their families. It is the sin of not taking enough time with the family to make sure that their needs are addressed, that they are taught to follow God.

The Bible shows how often leaders neglect their family, bringing eventual ruin to the leader and his family. Eli loved God and served him as the high priest. But he never took time to raise his children to be godly and follow God faithfully. So God gave the high priesthood to Samuel. Again, Samuel was so busy that he did not raise his children to love and follow God in obedience. (1 Sam. 8:3) So his sons were rejected from leadership. Even godly King David neglected his children which would later bring great pain to his heart.

When the children are small, this sin does not seem to have many negative results. We can leave early in the morning to go to work and come home late at night from our church meetings. In doing so, we do not develop the relationships with our children that help us teach our children from an early age how to love God and follow him. Scientists say that parents are able to influence their children the most up until they are about 10 years old. After that, the character of the children is less flexible to change. And after this, the children look towards their friends for guidance more than to their parents. Often our children will grow up resenting the fact that their father has taken no time to be with them. Rather than loving God, they begin to blame God for taking their father away from them. And they despise the church because the church got the time and attention of their father and not them. Once this bitterness is in their hearts, it is very difficult for the parents to win their hearts back and get them to love God. For the rest of their lives, these parents will suffer the bitterness of watching their children wander away from God and hating the church.

Paul warns us in 1 Timothy that church leaders must be those who have been able to balance their lives so that their family are given sufficient attention. The church leader must faithfully take care of his

wife and children so that they are secure in their relationship with the father. And because of his love for them, rather than rejecting God, the children learn to love and obey God from an early age.

So as church leaders, we must learn to balance our time so that we spend time with our children. This means that:

a. As fathers we must take a personal interest in our children. We must be carefully teaching them from a small age to love God. Just because the children are "in" the home of the church leader does not mean that they are being raised to fear God. Rather, the father must consciously teach his children. This will mean that we must change our cultural perspective of how fathers relate to their children. We will not say "It is my wife's responsibility to raise the children and teach them about God." Rather we will see it as our responsibility. And we will not let the children just run around the neighborhood with their friends. We will knowingly work with them so that our children learn to love God rather than act like the neighbor kids.

b. We will focus more upon our children when they are young rather than wait until they are old. Smaller children need more care and attention than older children. And it is when they are young that most of their character and attitudes are being formed. So if a church leader has small children, he will limit his time away from the home so that he can spend more time helping his children to grow to love God. But as they grow older, then he is able to give more time to church ministries.

c. A church leader's primary responsibility is to his family. His secondary responsibility is to the church. We must be careful that we do not reverse this and focus first on the church and give the family less attention. Even as the children grow up, there will be times when the needs of his family will clash with the desires of the church. Except in an emergency which can be easily understood by the children, the leader should chose his family over the church work.

Q. 26. a) Explain how you have seen elders and church ministers neglect their children so that they do not grow up loving God. b) What cultural understandings of the role of the father will need to change if we are going to take a more active role in raising their children to love and fear God? c) What understandings of the church will have to change so that elders do not sin in this way?

Q. 27. Read 2 Sam. 11. a) What sins did David commit? b) Did David commit the sin when he was a new leader or when he had been in leadership for a long time? c) Why do you think David was vulnerable to this sin at this time in his life? d) What lessons can we learn from this story about the leader and the sin of adultery?

5. Adultery: The sin of being sexually unfaithful to your spouse

The Bible clearly teaches that any sexual relationship outside of marriage is against God's will. This can be sexual sin before we are married. This sin is called "fornication" in the Bible. Or after we are married, the sexual relationship with someone who is not our spouse is the sin of adultery.

One of the ways Satan defeats many church leaders and destroys their families and their reputation is through sexual sin. Or the leaders lose their reputation by getting into a situation where people assume that they have fallen into sexual sin, even if they haven't. As church leaders we need to carefully guard ourselves both from the act of adultery and from the suspicion that we have committed adultery.

Many years ago a famous evangelist was in a situation where he realized he could have been accused of adultery. A single lady came to visit him in a hotel room to ask for his advice on an issue. He realized

that anyone who saw the lady leave his hotel room would automatically assume that he had committed adultery. So he made a vow with his fellow workers. If they ever saw a woman getting too close to him or if he started to spend a lot of time with someone, they were immediately to confront him and keep warning him until he had changed the way he acted. Or if they knew of a lady whom they knew staying in the same hotel which could give the appearance that they were meeting together, they would leave the hotel immediately and go to another hotel. The evangelist did not want his ministry destroyed either by falling into adultery or being accused of adultery. Now more than 50 years later, that evangelist has maintained a godly reputation and is viewed by many, including non-Christians, as the person with the greatest integrity in the world.

Leaders are often in situations where sexual sin is possible. First, we often travel alone, staying in hotels where there is a lot of temptation. We may assume that no one will know if we commit sexual sin with a prostitute. It is easy to give into temptation and fall. When we are staying where no one knows us, the temptation for sexual sin is much greater. Second, often wanting to be near a leader beautiful girls push themselves forward to spend time with a church leader, enjoying a sense of power by being close to him. Third, church leaders are often in constant contact with other women in ministry or in a counseling situation. This can lead to physical and emotional attractions. This is especially true of people in a choir who spend hours together in practice and ministry. If they are not careful, Satan can use this to lead them into sexual sin.

In Matthew 5:27-28 Jesus warns that adultery is not just the act of sexual unfaithfulness. Jesus said *"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* So sexual immorality also involves having impure thoughts about another woman. Therefore the church leader must not only guard himself physically, he must also guard his thought life. This means that a church leader must be very careful to not be in a situation where his imagination causes him to have impure thoughts. This can be prolonged looking at a beautiful woman. Or it can be taking a bath in the river where other women are bathing which can cause his mind to turn to impure thoughts. It means that we are careful that we do not look at videos or magazines which cause our minds to think sexually impure thoughts.

So what can we do to protect ourselves from sexual sin?

a. Maintain a good emotional and sexual relationship with your wife. Often church leaders fall into sin when there are tensions at home and their need for companionship is not met. In 1 Cor. 7:1-5 Paul warns church leaders to maintain their sexual relationship with their wives so that they do not fall into temptation and sin.

b. Be careful not to allow ministry to take you away from your wife for too long of a period. There have been church workers who have been tempted to sexual sin because they are living in one place and their wives live far away in another place. This opens both the husband and wife to sexual immorality. It is doubtful that long term separation like this is the will of God. Should a wife refuse to join her husband in his ministry lead to him having a sexual sin, she is partly to blame. No evangelist thinks that he will be unfaithful when assigned to work in an area without his wife. But he is putting himself and his wife in a risky situation. The natural desires for sexual relationships can easily overpower them. This sin will destroy the unity of spirit that the husband and wife are supposed to enjoy and it can disqualify the husband from ministry in the church.

c. Be careful about situations where you see things which sexually arouse you. Whereas a woman is

influenced towards sexual sin primarily out of a desire for a loving relationship, a man is influenced towards sexual sin often by things he sees. So you need to flee from situations where you see things which excite you. This means being careful what you see on a video or television or where you bathe, etc.

d. Beware of spending too much time together with a person of the opposite sex in close ministry. Make sure your closest friends, the ones you are praying with, are those of the same sex. Also develop your relationship with your spouse so she is your closest friend and you can share deeply with her.

e. Beware of the times when you are alone, especially when you are traveling. If at all possible, travel with another believer in Christ who is of the same sex as you. And never let another woman approach you when you are alone in your room. It is not a time for witnessing to another single woman at the hotel or a time for praying together in your hotel room. Even if you are able to overcome the temptation and not commit sin, others will assume that you have committed sexual immorality. Don't think that you are strong enough to withstand this temptation. We are told to flee, not to stay in situations like this where the temptation is possible. (Gen. 39:6-12; 1 Cor. 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:22)

f. When you are asked to counsel a member of the opposite sex, it is best to get someone else of the same sex to work with them. Women evangelists should counsel women and male evangelists counsel men. Especially if the counseling is of an ongoing nature, seek to get other people of the same sex involved to help the person. As you spend hours counseling a person, often physical and emotional attraction leads to sexual sin. In the west, most cases of sexual infidelity of church leaders is with their secretaries or with people they have spent time with in counseling. When a leader spends a lot of time with that person, slowly their heart is won over by the continued presence of the other person. If there is little option for a member of the same sex to counsel them, make sure that you meet in a way that there is no suspicion of wrong doing. For example, keep the door to the office open. Do not touch her in any way, even when praying for her. In one case an evangelist placed his hand on the breast of another woman while praying for her breast cancer. He was accused of sexual sin and had to leave his ministry in that area.

g. Meet in a group rather than alone with another person. There is little chance of a choir member falling into sin if all of the choir members are together. But the temptation comes when just two members are alone together. They begin to get emotionally attached and soon fall into sin.

h. Beware of the times when you are emotionally depressed. Studies have shown that many church leaders fall into sin when they are discouraged. When their relationship with their wife is poor, when things at work are not going well, when relationships with other elders are not healthy, and when the ministry of the person is not what they want, these are all situations that Satan often uses to tempt us to sexual sin. Satan will often bring along a member of the opposite sex who is willing to listen to us share about our discouragement. As the person expresses sympathy and prays with the church leader, an emotional bond develops which often leads to sexual sin.

i. Beware of the times when you are successful in ministry, when your dreams have now become a reality. This is another time when church leaders are vulnerable. David did not fall into sexual sin when he was fleeing from Saul, but after he had successfully defeated his enemies and was at the height of his power and success as the king of Judah. When successful, we tend to lower our guard against sin. We begin to think that we are not vulnerable to such temptations. We begin to rely on our own strength and not on God. Suddenly, we fall into sin, and our ministry is destroyed.

How easy it is to fall into sin, especially sexual sin! The pleasure and the excitement attract us. "We

are only going to pray together. We are just close friends" we say. Then as we fall into sin Satan gets us to think we won't get caught. "No one will know. I will only do it this once, but never again" we think. But one day the truth will come out. And after that happens your relationship with your wife will never be the same again. She will have a difficult time ever trusting you. Your children's respect for you will be destroyed. (Note: Perhaps the children of David were willing to sin, kill, and rebel because they saw their father fall into sexual sin and commit murder.) You will lose the ministry which God has given you. It will be very difficult to repair your tarnished reputation. And you will cause the name of Christ and the reputation of your church to be mocked by unbelievers.

Remember these bitter consequences before you sin. If David had realized that his sin with Bathsheba would bring such destruction in his family, do you think he would have done it? It is unlikely. Satan tries to get us to forget the consequences of our actions and gets us to focus on the excitement and pleasure of the moment. Are you involved in an adulterous relationship? Stop it now! Are you getting close to falling into sin? Run from that relationship! Never meet alone again. You won't be able to overcome the temptation. When facing the temptation of sexual sin, we are not told only to pray about it asking the Holy Spirit for strength to resist. We are told to "flee" from the situation. (2 Tim. 2:22) Run away—if not literally like Joseph did, then remove yourself from the opportunity to sin. Solomon warns us that we will be burned if we do not run from the situation! (Prov. 6:23-29)

Q. 28. a) Describe a situation when a church leader whom you have known committed sexual sin. What led to the attraction and the sin? How could the church leader have protected himself to keep from falling into sin? b) What was the result of sexual sin to his relationship with his wife, children, ministry, and the community? c) Examine your life and ministry. Are there areas where you could be vulnerable to sexual sin or of being suspected of sexual sin? What can you do to overcome the temptation and maintain a godly reputation?

WEEKLY MEETING

DISCUSSION

1. a) Make a list of the sins we have studied in this lesson which church leaders and ministers often commit in their attitudes and reasons for leading. b) List the results these sins have brought to the church leader and to the church. c) Which of these sins do you think are not very common in church leaders? d) Which of these sins do you think many church leaders struggle with? e) Why are they especially vulnerable to those sins? f) What can leaders do to help themselves and each other be victors over these sins which leaders often commit?

2. a) Make a list of the sins we have studied which church leaders and ministers often commit in their relationships with other people. b) List the results these sins have brought to the church leader and to the church. c) Which of these sins do you think are not very common in church leaders? d) Which of these sins do you think many church leaders struggle with? e) Why are they especially vulnerable to those sins? f) What can leaders do to help themselves and each other be victors over these sins which leaders often commit?

3. a) Make a list of ways in which pride is demonstrated in worldly church leaders. b) Describe how many of the same attitudes are in the hearts of church leaders. c) Why do you think God hates the sin of pride so much? d) What are changes church leaders need to make so that pride is not seen in their

leadership?

4. a) List ways of how money is handled can become a stumbling block to church leaders and church ministers. b) What procedure could your church put in place to limit the temptation for church leaders to abuse money? c) What are things church leaders can do so that the church members trust them and their use of money more? d) Discuss the suggestions on whether or not to pay church ministers and how much. Which do you agree with and which do you not agree with? Why? e) What suggestions do you have on how to pay church workers sufficiently so that they can work full time in their churches without how much struggle with making enough money to live.

5. a) List ways in which people in the church get jealous of each other. b) What are ways that church leaders often become jealous? c) What have they forgotten about God when they do this? d) How have you seen jealousy keep a church leader from gladly accepting a younger, more gifted person into church ministry? e) What does this reveal about the purpose why that church leader is serving God? f) Make a list of truths about God, spiritual gifts, and ministry which guide how we are to view each other in order not to get jealous.

LESSON SEVEN

FIRST DAY

SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 5)

SINS IN HOW LEADERS RELATE TO OTHERS (PART 2)

6. The sin of not forgiving others

Ato Tesfahun faithfully served as a church evangelist for many years. However he did not have the educational level which many of the young people wanted for their evangelist. So the young people asked the elders to hire in a new Bible school graduate to work with Tesfahun. The elders agreed. The new evangelist/pastor who came to the church thought that because he was more educated, he should be the main evangelist. When he made this suggestion to the church elders, they refused, saying that Tesfahun was his senior. The new evangelist decided to work so that he would become the head elder. He organized the youth who were the majority of the members in the church. The youth went to the elders and threatened that if they did not make the new evangelist the main evangelist for the church, that the youth would leave the church. Then the young evangelist spread false rumors about Ato Tesfahun, saying that he had stolen money from the church to build his house. At the next elders' meeting, the elders demoted Tesfahun and placed the new evangelist in charge of ministries in the church. Tesfahun was heart-broken. "I have served faithfully all of these years. And now this new man has taken my position. He has also ruined my reputation" he thought. He became bitter. In his anger, he began to yell at his wife and children. And every time that he met with his friends, he would complain against the elders and the new evangelist. He did not quit his job, but he did as little work as possible and had no joy in serving anymore. Tesfahun did all that he could to hinder the ministry of the new evangelist. Tesfahun, his family, and the whole church suffered because of the bitterness in his heart.

Q. 1. a) Describe how you have seen church leaders become bitter over something that happened to them in the church. What did they do? How did it affect them and others? b) Read Mt. 6:12, 14-15. What do these verses teach us about the relationship between our forgiving others and God forgiving us?

Every Sunday, many Christians hurriedly say the words "*Forgive us our trespasses, as we also have forgiven those who trespass against us*" as they close their time in worship. These words from the Lord's Prayer are easy to say, but there are hundreds of Christians in our churches who have not forgiven someone for wrong the person has done to them. And there are thousands from one tribe who have not forgiven another tribe for offenses which took place many years ago.

As we say the Lord's prayer, we rarely think of the implication of what we have prayed. In our prayer we are asking God to forgive us conditional to our having forgiven others who have hurt us. This means that if we are not willing to forgive someone, if we are angry at them for what they have done to us and want them to be punished, then we are willing for God not to forgive us for the sins we have committed against him.

In his teaching on prayer, Jesus clearly stated that if we are unwilling to forgive another person or

another tribe of the sin which they have committed against us or for the way that they have hurt us, then we cannot expect God to forgive us. Jesus knew that it was impossible to understand the Gospel and the greatness of God's forgiveness for us without being overwhelmed with thanksgiving for God's love. Once we have understood how God has forgiven our great and many sins because Jesus died on the cross for us, we understand that all wrongs that people do to us are small in comparison. (Read Mt. 18:21-35) Therefore we are willing to forgive the small sins people commit against us because we know that God has forgiven much greater sins that we have committed against him and others. A proper understanding of how much God has forgiven us causes us to forgive others. But if we are unwilling to forgive others, that is a sign that we have not really understood what great sinners we are and how much God has forgiven us. This indicates that we are not truly repentant of our sins and therefore not forgiven by God.

Q. 2. a) On one side of a piece of paper, make a list of sins you have committed against God and others this past week. Dig deep, looking at your thoughts and your motives, not only your actions. b) On the other side of a piece of paper, make a list of sins people have committed against you this week. c) Which list is longer, the sins you committed against God and others or the sins others have committed against you? d) Explain how this list reminds you of God's unending willingness to forgive you. e) How does this list remind you of how small the sins of others against you are in comparison to your sins against God? f) Explain whether that makes it easier for you to freely forgive others.

One of the greatest tests of a leader's character is when people turn against us and ill-treat us. Are we able to say "Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing"? Or do we become angry and seek to hurt them in return? The desire for revenge is the natural reaction when others hurt us. The willingness to forgive is a supernatural response, and a sign that God has truly changed our lives.

Church leaders are often caught in the sin of bitterness and are not willing to truly forgive. There will always be people who are jealous of leaders and work to destroy their reputation. Or there are people in the church who do not like the decisions that the leader made or are prejudiced because the leaders are from another tribe. Often people spread rumors and malign the leader's character by saying false things about the leaders which ruin their reputations. These people resist the church's leadership, refuse to obey, and try to gather people around them to fight against the leaders. If church leaders are not careful, we can fall into the sin of bitterness which comes from the refusal to forgive people when we are personally treated wrongly. So it is very important for leaders to learn to forgive others so that our relationship with God remains close and we do not become bitter.

BASIC TEACHINGS ABOUT FORGIVENESS

a. Often people do not know that they have hurt us. Leaders are often overly sensitive to others and are insulted when there was no insult intended. If a person we know walks by without giving us a greeting, we often think "That person is angry at me." As we try to think what we could have done to make them angry, our minds make up all types of reasons. But suppose that person is just thinking deeply about something, or did not sleep well, or was suffering inside, or perhaps he was not feeling well, or perhaps did not see us. We do not know what is in another person's heart. One of the sins we frequently commit is to presume that someone has an evil motive for something they do and say. We think we can read the heart of a person through their actions. But often we are wrong. Consequently, we are often hurt just because we guess that a person's words or actions are against us when in fact they aren't.

At other times, people say something that they do not realize is hurtful to us. We overhear them say something about our family or about our leadership. They say it carelessly, with little thought. But when

we hear it, we are deeply hurt inside. If we confront them for what they have said, they are confused and do not understand what they did wrong.

As church leaders, we need to discipline our minds to not guess people's motives or allow ourselves to feel slighted easily.

Q. 3. a) Describe a situation where you wrongly guessed about the action of another person which you thought was against you but it wasn't. b) What does this teach us about not being hasty to judge the reasons why people do things? c) Describe a situation where someone said something that hurt you when they probably did not mean it to be a hurtful thing. d) What does this teach you about being too sensitive to the words or actions of others?

b. The one who refuses to forgive and allows bitterness to grow in his heart ends up hurting himself. He is hurt twice. First, he is hurt by the action of the person. But then because he refuses to forgive, he hurts himself again. The person who refuses to forgive thinks in his mind that he is hurting the other person by his anger and by not forgiving them. But actually the one who refuses to forgive is being hurt the worst. Think what happened to you the last time you got angry at someone and did not quickly forgive them. First, you could not sleep because all night your mind was thinking about what the person did and how you are going to get even with the person. The other person, however, did not think about you at all and he slept deeply. Second, loved ones suffer because of your anger. You get up in the morning tired. You are impatient and yell at your wife and children. At work, you are impatient with people. But the one you are really angry with because he hurt you does not suffer for often you will not say anything or do anything to hurt him. Instead, innocent people suffer from your anger and bitterness. Third, if you continue to refuse to forgive, the bitterness in your heart changes your whole attitude towards life. You become bitter, suspicious, angry, judgmental, etc. People do not want to be with you because you have a negative outlook. So you lose your friends and you may lose your job because your work suffers and your relationship with people suffers. Fourth, over time your health will begin to suffer. Scientists have found that those who have enemies and harbor bitterness against another person often have more health problems than those who are not angry at anyone. If you do not forgive, you will get heartburn and indigestion in your stomach. Your blood pressure increases which affects your heart. So while you have many problems in your life because you refuse to forgive, the one who originally hurt you often does not know that he caused you pain and lives with no awareness of what is happening in your heart.

Q. 4. a) Explain how you have seen the unwillingness to forgive someone bring bitterness and some of the problems described above. b) What are the personal benefits of forgiveness from the above examples of the results of refusing to forgive someone?

c. The one who refuses to forgive is usually angry with God. He begins to blame God for the hurt and problems that he faces. This anger in our hearts means that we do not enjoy a good relationship with God. We do not pray because it seems that God is not listening to us. We cannot read the Word, for it becomes dry and has little meaning for us. And as Jesus said, when we are not willing to forgive someone else, then God will not forgive us of the many sins we are committing against him.

Clearly unwillingness to forgive hurts us deeply. It destroys a person's relationship with God, for as long as there is unforgiveness in our hearts, then we will not be forgiven by God for the sins we commit. It hurts our relationships with all those around us as we are overwhelmed with bitterness. And it destroys our health. The most important thing that we can do to repair our relationship with God and to help

ourselves maintain good relationships and stay healthy is to forgive.

Q. 5. Is there any person you have not truly forgiven? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal this to you. Stop right now and ask God to help you overcome your hurt and anger and to get rid of the root of bitterness that is destroying you. (See Heb. 12:15) You will be amazed at the release you will feel inside, the joy that will return, and the peace that will be in your heart.

d. What is forgiveness? Unlike reconciliation, which is when two people make peace with each other and seek to live in harmony, forgiveness only takes one person. Forgiveness is when we believe that we have been wronged by another person and make the decision to refuse to retaliate or harbor wrong thoughts about the person whom we believe harmed us. This wrong may be real, something that a person actually did to hurt us, such as lying about us or stealing from us. Or it could be something we only perceive that a person has done against us, like when he laughs at something and we think he is laughing at us but in fact the person might just be enjoying a joke with his friend.

To forgive means that we make a personal choice not to seek revenge against the person in any way. We do not gossip about the person or tell our friends what he has done against us. We agree in our hearts before God to accept the pain of what has been done to us without seeking to hurt in return. We turn the matter over to God who alone knows all men's hearts and is the righteous judge to do as he wants. And we determine in our hearts that we will treat the person as if he has done nothing wrong to us.

e. How do we know that we have not forgiven someone? It is easy to convince our hearts that we have forgiven someone when in fact we haven't. "God, I forgive that person, but I never want to see him again. I wish you would punish him for what he did to me" we say in our hearts. But the Bible does not call this forgiveness. If there remains hurt in our hearts and we avoid them when we see them at church or at work, then we have not forgiven them. If we internally rejoice when something difficult happens to them (e.g. their cow dies, we are happy when someone they love dies or they are falsely accused) then we have not truly forgiven them.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT FORGIVENESS

Q. 6. Read Mt. 18:21-35. a) Who does the master represent in this story? b) Who does the first servant represent? c) Who does the second servant represent? d) What is the major lesson of this parable?

a. Forgiveness is not an option, it is a command. (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13) The Bible commands us to forgive everyone. It does not tell us that we are to forgive if we want to, or if the person has asked our forgiveness, or if he has changed his ways, or if he has given us restitution. Rather, we are responsible to forgive without any demands made upon the one who hurt us. Notice how in these verses our forgiveness is linked to how Christ has forgiven our sins. As those who have been forgiven many sins by God, we must also be quick to forgive the perceived and the real hurts that people have caused us. In Mt. 18:21-35 Jesus told a parable about a servant who refused to forgive to demonstrate how we should understand forgiveness. We are like the servant whom the master, who represents God, forgave a huge debt (which represents sin) that we could never repay. The one who hurt us is like the slave who owed us a little money which we refused to forgive. Notice how angry the owner, or God, became when he heard how the first servant would not forgive the other servant his small debt (sin). When we refuse to forgive someone who hurts us, God gets angry with us as well.

b. God closely joins his willingness to forgive us with our willingness to forgive others. (See Mt. 6:12-15) We can only be assured that our many sins are forgiven by God when we forgive others for the sins they commit against us, or the sins we think that they have committed against us.

c. God expects us to go beyond forgiving the person to loving the person. (See Mt. 5:43-48) We are not told to be indifferent to those with whom we do not have a good relationship or those who hurt us. Rather, we are to love them and pray for them. We show our love for them by praying for them. We do not pray that God will judge them. Rather, we should pray that God will truly bless them. For others to be blessed they need to repent and ask forgiveness. So we should pray that the Holy Spirit show them what they are doing which is sin. This allows the Holy Spirit to keep working in their hearts to help them grow in spiritual maturity. But we also pray that God will bless them and their family in every way.

Forgiveness means that we no longer seek to harm the person. We give up our desire for vengeance. In its place, we truly want them to be blessed by God. One of the best ways to get over the anger we feel inside is to make praying for the person who hurt us a priority. Every day as we pray for them, asking God to bless them, their family, their house, their crops, their job, etc., we will find that the bitterness and anger will disappear.

Q. 7. If you are struggling to forgive and love someone, stop now and pray for him or her. Pray that God will bless them, both spiritually and physically. Notice how as you pray for them, the anger and hurt in your heart will begin to disappear.

d. When we forgive someone, we never mention the matter to anyone again. We have not forgiven if we gossip about what happened to someone else, or when we see the person, we raise the issue again. When we tell others about what the person has done to us, we are almost always seeking to hurt the person by ruining their reputation. We are told that love keeps no record of wrongs. (1 Cor. 13:5) God is our example. When he forgives our sins, he never brings them up again. They are totally removed. (See Ps. 103:12)

e. Forgiveness allows us to stop trying to do God's job and lets God work the situation out his way. The Bible tells us that only God is the judge. Vengeance is his work, not our work. (See Rom. 12:17-19) When we forgive someone, we release them into the hands of God. By forgiving someone we tell God, the righteous Judge, that we give the matter to him. He alone has the right to do what he wants with the person. God can punish them quickly, like he did for many of the derge leaders who persecuted the church. Or he can withhold punishment until the end times when he casts them into hell or holds them accountable for what they have done to us. Or he can forgive them and change their hearts when they repent. Whenever we refuse to forgive and seek to hurt the person through our words and actions or whenever we work against another leader who has hurt us, we are trying to do God's work for him. That is a sin against God for which we must repent.

f. Forgiveness pulls out the root of bitterness that has been growing in our lives. (See Heb. 12:15) The bitterness that comes from holding a grudge or refusing to forgive is like a weed. It starts small, but continues to grow until it overcomes our whole lives. Only forgiveness stops the growth of bitterness in our lives.

g. When we forgive, the power of the Holy Spirit is released into our lives once again. In Eph. 4:29-32 Paul clearly shows that the major way we grieve the Holy Spirit and limit his work in our life is by allowing

unforgiveness to remain in our lives. It is when we harbor bitterness in our hearts that we begin to speak angry words with others, slander them, and seek revenge. The only way to stop this is to forgive. And after we forgive, the Holy Spirit is pleased to work in and through us once again.

FURTHER CLARIFICATIONS ABOUT FORGIVENESS

- a. When we grant someone forgiveness, we are **not** saying that what happened is not a sin. Nor are we making excuses for their sin, for their wrong attitudes or wrong actions. Nor are we saying that they do not need to come to us to ask forgiveness of the wrong which they have committed against us for their relationship with God to be restored. Rather, when we forgive, we are admitting that what they did was as sin against God and against us. We make no excuses for them or seek to cover up what they did.

b.

(Note: In the same way, when we ask forgiveness of God or people, we must never come with excuses for our actions. We must acknowledge our sin. To make excuses means that we are not admitting that we are personally responsible. Rather we are trying to place the blame on someone else or some other situation. And as long as we are placing the blame on someone else, we are not admitting that we have sinned. Therefore we are not confessing our sin and cannot receive forgiveness.)

When Jesus forgave someone, he never told them that what they did was not wrong. Nor did he make excuses on their behalf. He acknowledged that what they did was a sin. After forgiving them, he told them to leave their life of sin. (Jn. 8:11) They had to leave their sin for their relationship to God to be healed. When Jesus asked God the Father to forgive the people who crucified him, he did not mean that these people did not have to do anything themselves to renew their relationship to God. They were responsible to confess their sins to God, ask his forgiveness, and put their faith in Jesus for the relationship to be restored.

In the same way, our forgiveness does not mean that the person who sinned against us or hurt us does not have to do anything about the sin which they have committed. For them to receive forgiveness from God, they must repent of their sin and change the way that they act. Rather, when we forgive someone, we are dealing with the hurt that is in our hearts and our reactions to the sins which others commit against us.

b. When we forgive, we are primarily dealing with our own life, not the other person. God does not hold us responsible for the actions or the willingness of another person to forgive or ask forgiveness. Those who hurt us are responsible for their own lives, and for the sin they committed against God and us. They are responsible to repent and ask God's and our forgiveness for their relationship to be restored. But we are responsible for our attitudes and actions when people hurt or disappoint us. When we forgive, we are taking responsibility for our attitudes. We are choosing to release the hurt and pain in our heart. We are saying that we will let ourselves be hurt without seeking to hurt the other person in response. (In a small way this is similar to how Jesus accepted the hurt of the cross for our sins so that God would not "hurt" us by judging us with eternal death.) When we forgive, we are getting rid of all anger, hatred, or desire for revenge that naturally comes into our heart. Instead, we want God to bless them.

c. When we grant forgiveness to someone, we are **not** pardoning them for what they did. Only God has the right to pardon someone's sin. To pardon means to be released from God's judgment for their sin. We are not able to tell the person that God will not hold them accountable for their sin. Nor can we say that God will not punish them for what they have done. Rather, we are telling them that **we** will not hold anger against them or allow what they have done to us to affect our relationship. We are releasing any desire for vengeance, wishing instead that they will repair their relationship to God and as a result gain his forgiveness and blessing.

d. When we grant someone forgiveness, we are **not** being "reconciled" to the person. To be reconciled means that both parties forgive each other and repair their relationship together. That is our desire when we grant forgiveness to another person. But we cannot force a person to accept our forgiveness and restore the relationship. That is their choice. That is why Paul says that "**as far as it is possible**" we are to live at peace with all people. (Rom. 12:18) By dying on the cross, Jesus made forgiveness and reconciliation possible for all people. God has done his part. He stands with arms open to receive his wayward children. (Lk. 15:11-24) He stands knocking on the door trying to get us to open the door of our hearts so that he can come and fellowship with us. (Rev 3:20) But it is only when people open the door to their hearts that reconciliation can happen. People are not reconciled to God until they repent and accept God's gift of forgiveness by believing on Jesus Christ. As believers, we are preachers of "reconciliation," begging people to restore their relationship to God. (2 Cor. 5:16-21) In a similar way, we are not reconciled to those who hurt us until they come and ask our forgiveness and then our relationship is restored.

e. When we grant forgiveness, we are not saying that we forget what the person has done to us. Often it is impossible to forget what someone did to us, especially if it is something that caused deep hurt. Rather, we are making a choice, a commitment that we will never raise the issue again. We will not keep any record of their sin against us. (1 Cor. 13:5) We will never seek to hurt them for what they have done to us. We will act towards them as if they had never done that hurtful sin against us. When we do not forgive, we usually keep a list of things which the person has done against us in our minds. When we forgive, it is as if we tear up the list of wrongs. We stop blaming the person for what he has done to us.

f. When we grant a person forgiveness, we are committing ourselves to the following:

1) We refuse to seek vengeance in any way against the person. We refuse to seek the hurt of the person in any way. Rather, we release the person into the hands of God to deal with them as he wants.

2) We refuse to tell anyone what the person has done against us. To tell someone else is a way of trying to hurt the person. We are trying to destroy their reputation in the eyes of others. This is the sin of gossip and is usually a sin of vengeance. God does not tell others about the sins that we have committed against him. Neither should we tell others how someone has hurt us or sinned against us.

3) Forgiveness means that we deal with the situation by seeking "mercy" rather than "justice." Justice means giving people what they deserve. Mercy means we do not punish someone even if they deserve it. God does not deal with us in justice. If he did, he would punish us for our sins, not forgive us. Rather God deals with us in mercy and grace. He offers us the gift of forgiveness and salvation that we do not deserve. It is only when we reject his mercy and grace that he brings a just judgment against us.

In the same way, when we forgive someone, our desire is not for justice in the situation. Rather, we are seeking to show mercy and grace. Our desire is to be reconciled. And we want God to forgive the person and bless them which means that they need to realize their sinfulness and ask God's forgiveness. At times it will mean that we have to confront the person so that they know what they are doing that is sinful- not for our benefit but so that they can grow. But when we share with them, we do it gently, not seeking to hurt or embarrass the person or cause them to become angry.

(Note: When should we go to a person and confront them with what they are doing, and when do we just deal with the hurt in our own hearts? This is a difficult question to answer and needs godly wisdom. If the person is not aware that what they have done has hurt you, then probably you do not need to go to them to confront them with what they have done and forgive them. Rather, you deal with your own attitude

and forgive them. But if the person knowingly has done something to hurt you, then you probably should go to the person and formally express your forgiveness. The purpose of this is to seek reconciliation, not to accuse the person. Or if what the person is doing is harmful to their spiritual growth and hurts others, you should confront them, seeking to help them realize their wrong doing so that they can grow. But you should only do this after you have been able to fully deal with the forgiveness needed in your heart.)

g. Forgiveness heals our hearts. Although we want to be reconciled with the person, the most important concern is that our relationship with God is not affected which it would be if we refuse to forgive someone else. And we do not want to lose the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives by becoming bitter against the other person. And we are also concerned that anger and bitterness do not begin to grow in our lives and control us, hurting us and people we love even more than the original hurt which the person caused us.

h. When we forgive or release our anger, we demonstrate our trust in God. Often when someone does something to hurt us, we turn our anger against God as well. "God, if you are in control, you could have kept this from happening to me" we think in our hearts. And "Why don't you punish so-and-so? Didn't you see what they did to me? Don't you care?" we complain. Any time we become bitter in our hearts, we are indirectly becoming bitter against God because it is a refusal to accept what God has allowed in our lives. (Note: Sometimes in a situation like the death of our child, our anger is focused against God and we become bitter against him. We need to release this anger against God, just like we release the anger we have against another person who sins against us.) When we release our anger, we are showing that we trust God to bring true justice out of a hurtful situation. We are saying that we trust God and his love for us even when we cannot understand why he has allowed the situation to take place. And we show our trust in God that even in bitter situations, he is able to turn the situation around to blessing. (Rom. 8:28)

i. We need to learn to forgive ourselves for wrong things we have done which have hurt others. There are times that we do something that hurts people greatly. Perhaps we had an abortion and killed our child. Or we got a divorce. Or we did not raise our children to follow God and now they have rebelled. Or we get angry and beat our child and he is now deformed. We are overcome with guilt, even after we ask God's and their forgiveness. We must also "forgive" ourselves. We do this by acknowledging that what we did is wrong. We know that God has forgiven us and will never hold our confessed sin against us. So we release the situation to God and trust God to change even these bitter experiences that were our fault around to bring glory to himself. Guilt is a way of refusing to forgive ourselves, and like bitterness, it can control our lives and stops the Holy Spirit from working in us in power. When we refuse to forgive ourselves, it is a sign of unbelief because it is a refusal to accept God's promise that he has removed our sins totally and does not hold them against us. (Ps. 103:12; Rom. 4:7-8)

Q. 8. a) Contrast how the above teachings on forgiveness differ from how most believers understand forgiveness. b) Why do you think it is important for believers to know these facts?

STEPS TO TAKE TO MAINTAIN OUR FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS

So when you believe someone has done something against you that causes you pain and you are tempted to get angry, bitter, and seek revenge, what should you do?

a. Refuse to mention the situation to anyone in a way that seeks to destroy the reputation of the person who has hurt you. When we tell others what someone has done to us, we are usually seeking to get even with the person by destroying their reputation. Also, when we tell others what happened, our sin of gossip

makes matters worse. Once the matter is public, because more people know of the matter, the one who sinned will struggle with his reputation and pride and will find asking forgiveness much more difficult. If you need to share the matter with a close friend as a way of gaining inner healing and peace, make sure it is a friend who will not tell anyone. Share your hurt in a way that does not seek to destroy the person, but helps you deal with the pain in your own heart.

b. Determine to be pleasant when around them. They might not know that they have hurt you or might not understand why you have been hurt by what they did. Even if they know that they have done something wrong against you, show your forgiveness by making them comfortable in your presence. The person might never become a close friend, but determine to treat them cordially at all times.

c. If you can, talk to the person about what caused your hurt. If the other person is uncomfortable, show your forgiveness by being gentle with them. Just as you would like someone whom you have hurt to treat you with gentleness and understanding when you sin against them, do so for them. Just like Joseph sought to ease the fears of his brothers by telling them how God had used it for good (Gen. 45:5, 50:15-21), share with them your hurt in a way that does not accuse them or make it hard for them to ask forgiveness. You are not seeking to punish them for how they have hurt you. Rather, you are seeking to help them grow spiritually by seeing things which they do to others which is hurtful.

d. Make sure they know that the issue is confidential between the two of you and that you will not mention it to anyone else. Often the person's biggest fear is that you will tell others what they have done and embarrass them. Help them overcome that fear by sharing that it is a secret between the two of you.

e. Make sure you forgive as quickly as possible. We are told that we are not to let our anger continue overnight, but get rid of it by the time the sun sets. In the same way, make sure that you deal with your unforgiveness quickly. When we don't forgive quickly, Satan gains a foothold in our lives to bring bitterness and lack of forgiveness. (Eph. 4:26-27) As soon as you are hurt, immediately forgive. Make sure you resist your natural desire to dwell on the pain that the sin has caused you because it will lead to bitterness growing in your heart. It is much easier to forgive if we do it as soon as we are hurt rather than when we have let the anger and bitterness grow. Attempts at reconciliation should be made as soon as possible rather than after gossip and anger has entered into the situation.

f. Begin to pray for the person immediately. Don't pray for their punishment by God- for that shows that anger is still in your heart. Rather, like Jesus, pray that God will bless them. This blessing is primarily that they will see the sin which they have committed, be restored in their relationship to God, and that God will bring peace and love into their hearts. Prayerfully seek God's true blessing for them.

Q. 9. a) Make a list of situations where Christians have difficulty forgiving others. b) Describe a situation in your life where someone hurt you greatly. c) Explain why it was hard to forgive the person. d) How soon were you able to forgive the person? If it took a long time, what negative things happened in your life because you did not forgive the person quickly? If you have still not forgiven the person, what are some negative things which have happened as a result in your life? e) How would the above truths have helped you forgive if you had known them? Why not take time now to go through these steps of forgiveness so you gain freedom in your heart. f) Do you think many Christians in your church have someone they refuse to forgive? If so, do you think they know what has happened to their relationship with God as a result of an unforgiving attitude? g) Why is this one of the most important truths that needs to be taught in our churches today? Write down your plan of how you will teach about Biblical forgiveness to Christians in your church.

FORGIVENESS AND RESTITUTION FOR THINGS WE HAVE DONE

There are different types of sins which Christians commit against each other. There are some sins which we can do nothing to lessen the hurt it has caused to someone. For instance, when we commit adultery, we cannot undo the hurt that sin caused to the husband or wife by any action that we now do. All we can do is go through the long process of winning back their trust in us. But there are other sins such as stealing and gossip where we are able to repair some of the damage our sin has caused. What does the Bible teach that we are to do in such cases?

Sometimes Christians misunderstand the relationship between forgiveness and restitution. There are some Christians who think that when we get someone to say "I forgive you" that they are saying that we do not need to undo the damage which we have caused. But the Bible teaches that when we have sinned against someone else and can repair some of the harm we have caused, we should be committed to undoing that hurt. For instance, if we have stolen money from someone, we are not really asking forgiveness if we come to the person and ask their forgiveness and at the same time do not try to return the money we have stolen. We can never undo the emotional hurt we have caused the person. But we can take away the hurt of the loss of the money.

The Bible teaches that if we are genuine in our asking forgiveness, we will always seek to repay the money we have stolen. In Lev. 6:1-7 we are told that when someone has caused harm to another person so that he suffered financial loss, before the person could offer an offering to God, he had to first repay the money plus add 20% to the cost. Only then could he offer a sacrifice to gain forgiveness from God. This teaches us that if we are genuine in our asking forgiveness for things which we have done against another person, then we must come with the desire to undo as much of the hurt which we have caused as possible. For instance, if I have gossiped against someone and told lies which ruined their reputation, not only should I personally ask the person's forgiveness for my sin of gossip, but I should go to all those who have heard the lie and tell them that what I said was wrong. I must seek to restore the damage to the person's reputation. Or it means that if I stole money from a person, that I repay that money. Even if it means that I suffer temporarily (e.g. I have to sell my tape recorder to get money to pay back what I stole.), I must be willing to do it. To not pay it back is to say that I can benefit from my sin at the expense of someone else, which is clearly not love. (Note: In the Bible, stealing means that I take something without the permission of the owner. It does not matter if he is using it or not. And it does not matter if the owner knows that I have done it. It is not a sin when it is found out, but a sin as soon as I steal it. And if I have promised to return something by a certain date and don't do it thinking "He does not need it," I am stealing. I am a "thief" for I continue to possess something against the will of the person I took from.)

So each person asking forgiveness must come seeking to undo the harm he has caused. However, it is the right of the person who has been sinned against to say "Never mind. You stole money from me. I will not ask you to pay it back. Rather, I will suffer the pain of the loss." But that is the choice of the person. It should not be expected or demanded by the person who has stolen the money.

But what if someone steals money from the church offering? Should that person be expected to pay back the money? Should the elders force that person to return what he has stolen? The answer is "yes." The elders are not in the position to say "You do not have to pay it back." We can only say that when the money belongs to us. But to whom does the offering belong? It does not belong to the elders. It really does not belong to the church. It belongs to God. For there to be genuine repentance in this case, I believe the following must take place.

- a. The one seeking forgiveness must confess to everything he has stolen. If he is only confessing to

what has been found out, then clearly he is not truly repentant of his sin. So he needs to confess to all of the things he has stolen.

b. The one seeking forgiveness must be committed to repay everything he has stolen, even if it brings financial difficulty to himself and his family. Rather than let God or the church bear the hurt of being wronged, he should be committed to personally bearing the pain of his sin. He should have a plan in mind by which to repay the money, but also come humbly willing to accept whatever judgment the elders put on him. "I stole 1000 Ethiopian Birr from the church and put on a new roof on my house. What do you want me to do? I don't have 1000 Ethiopian Birr now. Here is what I would suggest, but the decision is yours. You can take my cow. In the market, that is worth about 400 Ethiopian Birr. And over the next two years, when my crop comes in, I will give you three quintiles of corn each year- that is worth 600 Ethiopian Birr" he could say.

c. In mercy, the elders should look for a way for the money to be returned to the church in a way which does not destroy the man and his family. If the money stolen has brought extra convenience to the person (e.g. he has bought a second house or a truck), then they are right to demand that the person sell these things and repay the money as quickly as possible. If the money stolen is needed for the person to live, then they need to show more lenience and work with the person to repay what was stolen over time. But since the money did not belong to the elders, they are not in the position to say "Keep the money." Such an attitude will destroy the trust of the rest of the church members and many of them will be tempted to steal and ask false "forgiveness" later on.

d. The man should be asked to confess to the church as a whole. His sin has affected everyone and the money has been given by everyone. The elders should then express that they have forgiven the person. If he is a leader, they must share that they have removed him from leadership position. And they should explain their decisions on how the person is going to repay the money. This maintains the holiness of God's community while still granting forgiveness to the one who stole.

Q. 10. a) Why do you think so few believers seek to return money which they have stolen? b) What does this attitude show about the lack of true repentance on the part of the person who steals? c) Why do you think people do not admit that they have stolen things until they are found out? What does this teach us about how most people do not seek to keep themselves absolutely pure before God? d) How do most elders handle the situation when an elder steals from the church offering? What does this cause between the elders and the members of the church? e) What would happen differently if the elder who stole something was handled as described above?

SECOND DAY

SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 6)

SINS IN HOW LEADERS LEAD IN THE CHURCH (PART 1)

There are certain sins in which Satan seeks to defeat church leaders by the way they lead in the church. If leaders are to be "servant leaders" like Jesus described, we must recognize these sins in our lives and overcome them. Following are sins many leaders struggle with in their leadership of the church.

1. The sin of seeking the power and status of leadership rather than serving others as a servant:

There is an English proverb which says "Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely." We see this in governments. When government leaders come into power, they often begin with a desire to help people. But soon the feeling of power changes their personalities. These leaders become dictators, ordering people around, and destroying anyone who might threaten their power over the nation.

This often happens in the church as well. Humble church members initially willingly and lovingly serve people, but slowly change after they are elected into leadership. Although he used to be fun loving, helpful, and sought to help people, suddenly the person becomes a dictator who orders people around.

Q. 11. Read 2 Sam. 24:1-10. a) What sin did David commit here? b) Why do you think David would not listen to the advice of others? c) What does this show about the danger of leaders not being willing to listen to others and using their power of leadership to force a decision? d) Describe how church leaders can fall into a similar type of sin today.

Often closely connected to pride is the sin of loving the power of leadership. In the last story in 2 Samuel about the life of David, we see David becoming proud. He wanted to number the men in Israel to boast how large his army was. But there was also another sin. That was the sin of not being willing to listen to others. David's pride led him to think that he was always right. Therefore he did not think that he needed to listen to others. He then used his "power" as a king to order what he wanted to be done.

In the New Testament, when James and John asked Jesus for the privilege to sit on his right and left, they wanted not only the glory of sitting next to Jesus, but the power of ruling with him. The right and the left of the king are the positions of the most powerful ministers in the government. Jesus told them that power is not important in his kingdom, but humility and service of others are what is important. (Mt. 20:20-28) Rather than serving in humility, one of the sins leaders commit is the sin of leading by using power and authority. Following are some examples of how this sin is seen in church leaders:

a. The love of the power of leadership is seen when leaders only want to work with those who agree with us or when we force our views on others without listening to them. Often when insecure leaders are influenced by the power of leadership influences them, they begin to think that they no longer have to work as a team with people. Rather, they begin to think that they alone are right and everyone has to listen to them. Often this type of leader gathers people around them who agree with everything they say and think. And they drive away people who disagree with anything they say. The leader begins to manipulate the elder selection process so that only the elders who support him and agree with him are elected into eldership. He gets rid of any church worker who might question his decisions or who threatens his power. Soon he gives orders to people as if he was a dictator. And he is not willing to listen to the advice of anyone who might disagree with his ideas. When it is time for him to step down from leadership, he resists and fights to stay in power by saying that there is no one qualified to lead, etc. Power has corrupted him.

b. The love of power is seen when leaders use threats to get people to obey them. Leadership which depends on power always uses threats to accomplish the desires of the leader. "Obey me or you will be thrown into prison" says the government official. "Obey me or you will lose your job" says the employer. "Obey me or you will not be allowed in the choir" says the church elder. So even in the church we show our power by punishment. We threaten to withhold some blessing, like ministry in the choir. Or we threaten church discipline or to expel people from the church, etc. Whenever we use threats to get our way, we have been overcome with the sin of loving power. The only type of "threats" that we can use are the

warnings found in God's Word. When a believer is rebelling against God (not us), we must warn the believer that God will one day hold him accountable for what he is doing. These threats come from God; they do not originate in our perceived authority as leaders.

c. The love of power is seen when leaders refuse to joyfully step down from leadership. Why do church leaders often not want to step aside when their term of office is over? It is because they have learned to like the power and honor that comes with leadership. How we react when we have to leave office is a good time for us to see what our motives of ministry were. If we fight to stay in office, it shows we have started to enjoy the power and honor of leadership. It shows that we are not servant leaders who want to serve God and others. We are serving ourselves instead.

d. The love of power is revealed in the words we use to lead people. Often it is our words which show the attitude of our hearts. It is easy to see the love of power in the words that come out of the mouth of the leader. Following are three ways we can try to accomplish something as leaders. As you read 1), 2), and 3), which do you think shows a position of power and which reveals an attitude of humble service?

You young people, pick up those benches and take them into the church.

Will you young people please pick up those benches and take them into the church?

Young people, come and let us carry these benches into the church together.

The first statement is a command. Although correct in Amharic, it indicates power. We are ordering people to do something much like a dictator would. Whenever we hear a leader order us to do something, we get angry in our hearts. No one likes to be treated like a slave. Church leaders often view leadership as the right to tell people what to do. So rather than having to obey orders, people want to be leaders so that now they can show their own power and give others orders rather than do the work.

The second statement is better, for it is a request. It acknowledges that we do not have any power over people. Rather, we lead by asking for assistance. However, this position still expects people to do the work for the leader. The third statement shows a biblical attitude. The leader himself is a servant, working together with others rather than expecting the members to work for him. This type of statement and the fact that we work together encourages people to get involved and help. And it takes away from the attraction of being a leader with power over people.

In the Bible, the only power and authority given to elders is the authority of a godly life which people want to resemble and the authority of proclaiming the Word of God. We lead others by how we live and by telling people what God wants. We are not given power over people to give them orders.

e. The love of power is seen when leaders think we are always right and that we must make all of the decisions. Another danger, especially when a person becomes the chairman of the elder's board or leader of the choir, is that a leader thinks that he is better and wiser than others. Some leaders think that they are always right and others are wrong. This type of pride can be seen several ways:

1) The leader makes all of the decisions at a meeting. He might allow people to express their opinions, but at the end, he tells the board what he thinks and forces his decision to be accepted. Just like David forced the generals to count the military men, some leaders force everyone to do what they want. They refuse to listen to the advice of others. Often this type of proud leader becomes convinced that to be

a leader means that they have to pretend to know everything, hiding their ignorance behind good sounding words and forced decisions. They think that any sign of not knowing something is a sign of weakness as a leader. So these leaders show their pride (and often their insecurity) by always wanting to have their way in meetings. They do not allow people to have a different point of view. You can usually tell if a leader has this type of pride when board members are not comfortable to freely express their opinions and views which differ from the leader.

Solomon said "*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*" (Prov. 27:17) It is only when people have the right to challenge us, our ideas, our attitudes, and our actions that we are willing to be sharpened. If we are only working with people who agree with us, it is like trying to sharpen iron with butter-our decisions will never be sharp and good. It is only when different ideas are voiced and then the best decision chosen that a good decision will result. If there are no differing perspectives for important decisions, it probably means that people are not thinking deeply about the issue or they are afraid of the leader.

2) The leader refuses to delegate any responsibility to others. He demands that others get his approval for all of their ministries. "If they make the decision, they will not do it as well as I would. So I must tell them what to do so that it will be done right" is the attitude of the leader's heart.

3) These proud leaders blame others for decisions which fail rather than accept the blame themselves. "I am right. The problem was not in my decision. It is because these people did not fulfill my decisions properly" they say.

4) Power hungry leaders do not want to be accountable to anyone for their lives and ministry. They want to be like government dictators who make the decisions. They are afraid to have people ask questions for fear that they might not appear to be good leaders. "God will tell me what to do. I do not need the advice of others. If they question my leadership, they are not spiritual. They are fighting against God" is their thinking.

How can we guard ourselves against the love of power? One of the best ways is to make ourselves accountable to a close friend or a group of people. We ask them to carefully watch our lives. If they see any pride or abuse of power, they should confront us. Because we have given them permission before we have fallen into sin, we are not as likely to get angry at them, especially if they come soon after they see our sin rather than when our sin has already caused a lot of problems. Instead, before the love of power grows too large in our hearts, we should address it. Whom have you given permission to challenge a sin in your life? If you don't have anyone, there is a good chance that you will soon be overcome by sin, perhaps the sin of the love of power. Every believer, especially leaders, should have at least one other person who will pray with him and will honestly confront him if he sins in his life.

Q. 12. a) Describe how this desire for power is seen in your church. How did it affect unity in the church?
b) Listen to the commands of your church leaders as they lead the church. Which of these three types of requests do they most often make? What does this show about their attitude towards leadership?

2. The sin of not being transparent or the sin of hiding things from the common members of the church

Q. 13. a) Make a list of things which elders often do not want their church people to know. b) Which of these things do you think they should not tell church members? Which of these things do you think they

should tell church members? c) Describe how you have seen the lack of transparency cause distrust of those in leadership by ordinary members. d) What changes are needed for the leaders to be transparent in the way that they lead?

Foundational to church leadership is trust that must exist between church leaders and church members. One of the main ways to develop this trust between church leaders and church members is for leaders to be transparent with church members. We share our joys and successes, but we must also share our sorrows and defeats. Satan knows this, so one of his major ways to hinder the work of church leaders is to get them to no longer be transparent so that people do not trust leaders. One truth which church leaders need to remember is that **what the church members do not know, they will assume the worst.** They will begin to question the integrity of the church leaders. This can happen in several ways:

Lack of transparency about what has been decided by the elders. Often church elders keep what they have discussed and decided secret, hidden from church members. But doing so often causes mistrust among the church members. "What are they discussing when they meet every month?" church members wonder. Once when I was leading our organization, I invited an employee to be part of our decision board. When he gave a report to the rest of the employees of what we had been discussing, they commented "We thought they were discussing us and how to keep us from getting a good salary, not how to spread the Gospel." For years the lack of transparency had hindered the ability for our employees to trust us. Except for decisions which will ruin the testimony of an individual if not handled sensitively, decisions by elders should be open to church members. This means that the minutes of meetings should be open to those who are interested.

Lack of transparency about the reasons for decisions. Often it is not enough to tell church members just what has been decided, but why we made the decision as well. Until they understand why the elders decided a certain thing, they may question the decision. They will question the motive of the elders in making the decision, often assuming that it is done because someone is from a certain tribe or is related to an elder. And they will question the decision itself, thinking that it was handled wrongly. So if elders want to limit Satan's ability to divide our churches, we must explain why things (especially controversial matters) were decided in a certain way.

Lack of transparency in handling church money. As we saw earlier, money is an area where Satan often creates the most distrust. Therefore church leaders must be very transparent with how we are handling money. We should not spend any church money in a way that if the congregation knew, they would question. Jesus once said that what was done in secret will be shouted from the roof tops. (Lk. 12:3) Although we might think no one will know how we are spending church money, there will come a time when church members will find out. And once the trust of church members is lost, it is very difficult for church leaders to rebuild trust. So church elders must be careful that we do not spend church money on anything that would be questionable if the church members found out. And we need to give periodic reports describing how church money was used.

But often Satan gets church leaders to think "They have chosen us to be leaders. They need to trust us." Or "They are just ordinary members; they won't understand why we did it this way." These statements reveal the sin of pride in the heart of leaders. Don't they have the same Holy Spirit in that that we do? Won't he give them wisdom in the matter as well? If we show integrity and transparency, church members will learn to trust our decisions even if they don't understand them.

Q. 14. Read Prov. 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 20:4; Eccl. 10:18; Mt. 25:24-30; 1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:6-13. a) What do these verses teach about working hard and the sin of laziness? b) What ways can church leaders, especially evangelists and pastors, fall into the sin of laziness?

3. The sin of laziness or mismanagement of time

a. What the Bible teaches about laziness or mismanagement of our time. The Bible teaches that God honors those who work hard. But those who are lazy and do not work with all of their ability will be judged by God. Rather than hard work being a curse, it is an honor. Notice what the Bible teaches about a lazy person:

1) A lazy person causes people to become irritated with him, just like smoke from a fire irritates our eyes. (Prov. 10:26) Often when a person has a responsibility but does not fulfill it, the reason is because of laziness. And his laziness causes great difficulty to those who are trying to get the work of God done in the church. When others entrust a person with a responsibility but because he does not work hard or control his time and the responsibility is not completed, those who depended upon him are hurt. They can no longer trust that person's work. For example when a church hires a pastor to teach new believers, but the pastor does not work hard to disciple these new believers. As a result, the church is filled with many immature believers who cause the church many difficulties. The leaders cannot trust such a pastor to fulfill his responsibilities and so they must look for another person to disciple the believers if they want their church to mature.

2) A lazy person dreams big dreams, but accomplishes little. (Prov. 13:4) He does not discipline himself to properly use his time. Rather he spends time talking with friends and never accomplishes his work. But the person who faithfully works is able to complete great things. It is better to have less natural ability and spiritual gifting and be hard working than it is to have many gifts and not work hard. The leader who works hard will always produce more than a very gifted, lazy leader. For instance, an evangelist may have great plans to witness to everyone in his kebele and bring great growth to church. But laziness keeps him from spending long hours going door to door visiting people, sharing his faith in homes, in the market, etc. So his plans become useless. What matters is not the good sounding plans, but being disciplined to do the hard work of an evangelist.

3) Because he does not persist in his work, a lazy person is never able to overcome the "weeds" or the difficulties which are part of ministry. (Prov. 15:19) Instead he is discouraged by difficulties and the work does not get done. But a person who lives in obedience to the guidance of God and works carefully and persistently overcomes the difficulties. He accomplishes what God has given him to do. It is easy to take over a ministry that someone else has started. It is much more difficult to start a new ministry. Every new ministry which a church starts will have more difficulties in the beginning. Unless church leaders can overcome our tendency toward laziness, we will not consistently address the problems to get a ministry going well. Laziness is a major hindrance to successful ministry.

4) Because a lazy person does not work when he should but waits for a better time, he will never accomplish what God has given him or enjoy the fruits of hard work. (Prov. 20:4) There is never a "good" time to do the work of the Lord. Laziness causes us to keep waiting and waiting, and little is accomplished. There are many church leaders who look back at their lives and realize that they have accomplished very little. They began with good visions of what God wanted from them and the church. But laziness kept them from working to accomplish the vision. It is only with hard consistent work that we can slowly bring lasting change in peoples' lives.

5) A lazy person does not plan ahead or prepare things in advance. (Eccl. 10:18) Therefore, when problems arise he is not prepared. He becomes like a roof which leaks when it rains because the owner did not think ahead to fix it. Similarly, a lazy person will disappoint people in times of difficulty because he does not think ahead. A lazy person only thinks about what is immediately in front of him. He has no plans about what he will do for God, either during the day or in the future. Therefore, at the end of the day, he has done nothing as he wastes his time going from one thing to another. Lazy church leaders only work to keep ministries going rather than make the effort to plan how to bring new growth to the church. As a result, they will face an emergency. The youth leave to attend another church that is more exciting or where God's Word is better taught. Without planning for future leadership needs of the church, properly trained leaders are not prepared to lead the church in the next generation. Because of no preplanning, the lazy leader does not make the necessary preparations to head off problems before they arrive. So lazy leaders go from a problem to a problem, but can never move the church along to spiritual maturity.

6) Each believer receives abilities and spiritual gifts to minister for Christ. But when a person is lazy and does not use those abilities and gifts to the maximum, then he is like the servant who hid his money in the ground. (Mt. 25:24-30) Jesus will take away those benefits and judge that person severely. Every gift from God, including secular education, theological education, spiritual gifts, natural talents, wealth- are all given to be used for God's glory. If we do not use these gifts or only use our abilities for our personal benefit (e.g. a better job with more pay, a better house), God's judgment will be upon us when we stand before Jesus to be tested. If laziness or selfishness keeps us from using those gifts for God's glory, we will face severe judgment from God.

7) Paul is an example to church leaders of how to work hard. (1 Thes. 2:9) He not only worked very hard day and night in spreading the Gospel, but he determined that he would not be a burden to others. He refused to live off of the hard work of others by eating their food, asking them for clothes, staying without paying, etc. So he worked hard to earn money for food, clothes, etc. Church workers often learn to live off of others rather than their own hard work. Some evangelists plan to arrive at a person's home during meal time so that they will be fed. Church elders expect the church offering to pay for their meals or tea. Pastors expect a good wage so that they can send their children to the best schools, etc. But they do not want to accept a smaller wage and then supplement their wages by working other jobs (e.g. growing their own vegetables, etc.) Interestingly, Paul said that the sin of laziness is so severe that we are to treat those who do not work hard as if they are non-believers. (2 Thes. 3:6-13)

b. Ways in which the sin of laziness can be seen in church leaders and church ministers. One of the sins which Satan often uses to overcome evangelists and pastors is the sin of laziness. Laziness can creep into the life of the church leader in the following ways:

1) Unless church workers are careful, we will not work a full day's job. Unlike working for the government, church ministers do not have people who stand over us and make sure that we are working. There is no one who is checking to see if we start work at 8:00 in the morning and work until 5:00 in the evening. So it becomes easy to start work later in the day. For instance, we eat our breakfast at 9:00. Then a friend stops by to see us, so we sit and talk and have tea with them. We eventually get to work at the church around 10:30. But soon it is time for lunch, so we walk home. Lunch takes us until 2:00 in the afternoon. We work until 5:00 and then go home to spend time with our friends and family. So how many hours did we work? We only worked around 5 ½ hours. The government's standard is that we work eight hours per day. Shouldn't church workers at least expect to work this amount of time for God? Because there is no one to oversee how we use our time, Satan gets us to waste our time.

When we were hired by the church to do a ministry, church leaders assume that we are spending at least 8 hours per day actively working (not visiting with friends). If we don't, then we are "stealing" from the church. One way of looking at work is that the church has bought eight of our hours, paying for all of our abilities (wisdom, strength, time) during those eight hours. Anything less than the best of our ability and a full eight hours of work is cheating them. When writing to slaves, Paul reminded them that they were not really serving people, but Christ. So they brought honor to Christ by working for their earthly masters to the best of their ability. Anything less than the best of our ability means that we are not only cheating our earthly masters (the church), but our Lord Jesus Christ as well. (Col. 3:22-25)

Church leaders often complain "We are so busy we do not have time to do the work." Is this the problem, or is it wasting our time that is our problem? Let us consider two examples how much time we have to use to serve God:

a) There are 24 hours in a day. Suppose we had a government job where we worked for eight hours, how much time do we really have to work for God? There are 24 hours in every day. If we sleep for 8 hours, spend 3 hours per day eating, and work in the government for 8 hours, that leaves us **five** hours to work for God. From this time we could use ½ hour for prayer time, ½ hour to study God's Word, and still have four hours per day to work in the church or spend time with our family. So where do these four hours usually go? We spend an hour or two talking with friends, drinking tea and coffee, going to the market to shop, etc. The major reason we do not have enough time is usually that we do not wisely use the time that is available to us.

b) Let us take a day for a farmer and see how much time he could set aside for serving God. If the farmer spent time with God from 6:00-7:00, had breakfast from 7:00-8:00, worked in the fields from 8:00-2:00, had lunch from 2:00-3:00, he would have at least **four** hours from 3:00-7:00 to do church work. Then he could have supper and spend time with his family from 7:00-9:00, spend an hour studying God's Word from 9:00-10:00 and sleep from 10:00-6:00. If a farmer spent those four hours per day working for God, he could work 24 hours per week (6 days times four hours) and 96 hours per month working for God. "But six hours isn't enough for my farming" the farmer might say. However, if we examine how we spend our time, we would find out that we rarely work more than six full hours in the fields. Usually we take a lot of time visiting with friends on the way to the fields, etc.

If each of us were to carefully track our time during the day, we would see that there are many hours where we waste our time rather than use it wisely. We gain time for the work of God by using the time God has given us wisely. Perhaps we should pray as Moses wrote "*Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*" (Ps. 90:12)

2) We become lazy when we are not doing the best we can at the ministry we are given. We are told that we are to love the Lord with all of our mind, soul, heart, and **strength**. (Mk. 12:29-31) So anything we do that is less than our best, or any time we allow an overemphasis on personal business to take away from our ministry to Christ, then we are not loving Jesus with all of our ability. Loving Jesus with all of our minds means that we use our minds by thinking, planning to the best of our ability. We love God with our strength by working hard and doing our best. To lead with less than our best or to sing without adequate preparation is the same as offering God a blind animal, or giving a torn piece of cloth in the offering. (Mal. 1:6-14) For instance, suppose we are asked to preach a sermon in the church, but we do not spend much time preparing (e.g. praying, studying, organizing our sermon). An hour before church starts we write down a few verses on a piece of paper and stand up and preach with little preparation. This is an insult to God who expects us to prepare to preach with all of our abilities. Any time we do not prepare well to

preach, sing in the choir, or teach in a class, or work on the church buildings- we are saying by our actions that our great God is not worthy of the best that we can.

3) Any time we work less hard at church work than we do for our personal work, we have fallen into the sin of laziness. If we are willing to spend hours working in our fields or at trading because we get money, but are not willing to do an equally good job in the church cleaning the floor, teaching the children, etc., then we have insulted God. Laziness in doing God's work because we are not being paid shows our lack of love for God. Like the Jews in Malachi 1:6-14, we are offering God something that is less than our best. We are like those who give to God the blind and lame sheep, rather than the best of the flock.

4) We become mentally lazy as church leaders when we do not keep seeking to learn. We are told to love God with all of our minds. We do this by seeking to develop our minds by reading new books which expand our understanding. Or we read newspapers so that we better understand what is happening in the world.

Q. 15. a) List other ways the sin of laziness can defeat church leaders, especially evangelists and pastors. b) 1) This week keep a inventory of how you spend each hour of your day. On a large piece of paper, divide the 24 hours into ½ hour segments. Write what you did during each ½ hour. What did you do, with whom did you talk, what ministry did you accomplish, etc.? 2) At the end of the week, total up how much time you spent a) praying, b) studying God's Word, c) with friends talking, d) eating, e) traveling, f) at personal work, g) in church work. 3) What surprised you about how you spend time? Why did this surprise you? c) If you needed more time in church work, where could you shorten time spent in other things so that you can spend more time in ministry? Take time to pray right now, asking God to help you change the way you spend your time and energy so He will receive greater glory from your life.

Q. 16. a) Read Deut. 10:17; Lev. 19:15; Mal. 2:9; 1 Tim. 5:21; Jms. 2:1-7. What warnings do these verses give about showing any sort of favoritism in the church? b) In what ways do church leaders often show favoritism in the church? c) Describe how the sin of favoritism causes problems in the church.

4. The sin of favoritism

The Bible warns us that we are to be very careful against showing favoritism because God hates it. We should not favor the poor or the rich, but to treat everyone equally. However, it is easy for most of us to favor one group of people over another. Following are some examples of areas where church leaders are often guilty of the sin of favoritism:

a. Showing favoritism because of education: Our culture greatly honors those who are educated and looks down on those who are not educated. It is easy, therefore, to follow our culture and show favoritism to those who are educated. Examples of this are telling people that only the educated can become church leaders or we bring the educated people to the front of the church and have them sit on benches and let the uneducated people sit on the ground or at the back of the church.

b. Showing favoritism towards the rich: The book of James tells us that the church leaders were showing favoritism towards the rich by giving them the best seats in the church and the poor people sat on the worst seats. (James 2:1-7) We often do the same thing today. We honor the rich who give a lot of money to the church by asking them to pray, honoring them with leadership positions, greeting them warmly every Sunday, etc. At the same time we overlook those who are poor, never ask them to pray, rarely greet them warmly, etc.

c. Showing favoritism towards our family: It is expected in our culture to use our positions of power to bring advantages to our family. When people elect their relative into church leadership, they assume that leader will give them favors because they are family. And often one elder works to also get his relatives elected as elders, or get his children or the children of relatives into the choir, send them to Bible school, or get them a job if there is an opening, etc. Or when a member of our family sins and should be put under church discipline, we often speak for our relative against the elders, claiming that church discipline is not needed. This means that we are more concerned about the honor of our family than the purity of the church. Do you think this pleases God?

d. Showing favoritism towards our tribe: Just like our family expects favors, those of our tribe often expect favors of us as well. If we are Amhara, we seek to help other Amharas get into leadership. If we are Oromo, we work hard to make sure Oromos have the advantage, etc. This is especially seen in churches where there are several tribes represented in the church. Or we follow our cultural traditions by despising people like potters, leatherworkers, or other despised castes of people. In some areas, brothers and sisters in Christa are not even allowed into the church because their father does metal work. Do you our heavenly Father is pleased when his family is divided this way?

All of these types of favoritism are a sin in God's eyes. After we are elected as church leaders, all of the members of the church become our "family." There should be only one "tribe" in the church and that is the "tribe" of followers of Jesus. We are now part of a new family (1 Pet. 2:9), which is God's tribe. Since we have joined God's family, our spiritual ties should be stronger than physical relations. As elders we must be careful to do everything fairly. Paul tells us in Eph. 2:13-18 that the cross of Christ has destroyed any tribal wall of division. Now all people and all tribes stand before the cross and in the church as equals. If we allow the family and tribal divisions on earth to bring division in our churches or influence how we lead, then we have fallen into the sin of favoritism which God hates. We must be careful not to become a tool of Satan to bring division rather than enhancing unity.

It is interesting that the first potential division in the early church was over a tribal issue. [Note: There were two types of Jews, those born in Palestine who spoke Hebrew and those born outside of Palestine who spoke Greek] (See Acts 6:1-7) Knowing how dangerous this issue was, the apostles and the early church took quick action to make sure there was no hint of favoritism. In fact, because those who were suspicious of tribal favoritism were of the minority group, the church elected all seven of the deacons from the smaller group of believers who were born outside of Palestine. Tribal division is so dangerous to the unity of the church that sometimes it is important to take drastic measures to make sure that those who are in the minority group feel welcomed in the church and believe they are treated fairly. Otherwise Satan will promote the belief that there is favoritism and will continue to destroy the unity of the church. This means that church leaders of the majority tribe must be sure that there is a fair representation of the minority tribe among the elders, deacons, choir, hiring people, etc. so that everyone knows that decisions are not being made on tribal basis, but are fairly based upon a person's abilities.

Q. 17. a) Describe ways that the sin of favoritism causes division in the church. b) If you are a church leader, what can you do to make sure that everyone knows that there is no favoritism involved in your decisions? c) Illustrate an example of favoritism of relatives or tribe in your church which actually happened or was perceived to have happened. As a church elder, how could you have handled the situation so that everyone would know that the sin of favoritism did not take place?

Like other sins, Satan uses favoritism and also when something appeared to have been done unfairly,

to create problems in the church. Even if the elders make a decision that is fair, it is often misunderstood to be something that is unfair. Therefore as church leaders we must work extra hard to make sure all people see that there is no favoritism involved. If the elders are dealing with someone who is related to one of the elders, it is usually best for that elder who is related to the person to leave the room so that the other elders make the decision without him. Or if there is a tribal issue involved, it is best for those from that tribe to defer the decision to people from other tribes. And all decisions made by the elders that can be misunderstood as favoritism should be clearly explained to the church family. Until we have clearly established that all decisions are fair, church leaders must be very careful how we make decisions relating to relatives and to our tribal group.

Q. 18. Read Eph. 4:15. a) What does Paul say about truth and love in this verse? b) Illustrate a way that we can speak the truth without love. c) Illustrate a way that we can focus on love and not speak the truth. d) Why do you think it is important for both truth and love to be present in our relationships with each other in the church?

5. The sin of compromising truth for the sake of peaceful relations or maintaining a person's reputation

Leaders often are afraid to stand up and speak the truth. They let people do whatever they want. They allow false teachings and sin to come into the church and don't resist them. They are like the church of Pergamum (Rev. 2:12-29) where the leaders refused to take a stand against the false teachings in the church. Jesus spoke out strongly against that church as he does against any church that lets false teaching spread. When leaders refuse to stand for the truth, soon more and more weak believers fall into sin. Without firm leadership in the church, less godly leaders take over control of the church and guide people away from God. Godly leaders must be willing to stand firmly for the truth. But they also must be sure that they deal with people out of love. People are willing to take the advice of leaders as long as they know they love them.

a. Biblical relationships are based both upon being truthful to each other and speaking in love.

There are two characteristics that God wants all believers, but especially church leaders, to develop. First, we all need the characteristic of love. Second, there is the trait of truth. Both of these characteristics must be present for us to respond in a godly way. Culturally, we often want to focus on what we think is "love." Our human definition of love often means doing nothing that will hurt or embarrass another person. Therefore when someone sins, we hide the sin rather than confront them. When we see another leader steal from the offering or from development money or commit adultery, we are reluctant to confront him. We do not want to embarrass him or ruin his reputation. Often we are afraid to confront the leader because he may become angry with us and that would cause further problems in the church. So we keep quiet. As a result sin spreads in the church.

At other times we focus upon speaking the truth but not with a spirit of love. We want to punish or discipline a person who is not our relative. At times we seek revenge against a person or a tribe which has hurt us, so we speak the truth in a way to hurt another person. We see a church leader commit a sin. He is from a different group than us and is not our relative. And we want him to be removed and one of our relatives to be replaced. Therefore, we demand that everyone know what he has done. In that case speaking the truth is from a selfish perspective and is sin.

The Bible shows that both of these characteristics of love and truth are important. Both need to be

kept in balance so that speaking the truth will bring growth rather than destruction. In Eph. 4:15, Paul said that we help people grow in spiritual maturity primarily by speaking the truth to each other from the perspective of love.

But what is love? Does love mean doing nothing that will hurt the other person? Clearly this is not right. In Heb. 12:4-11 we are told that because God disciplines his children because loves he us. So **love means doing something for the ultimate benefit of the person**. It might cause pain today but will be helpful and cause us to grow. God desires our spiritual maturity and our holiness. Therefore he disciplines us to help us grow.

The perspective of Paul in Ephesians is that we are all part of one body and we should all help each other grow in spiritual maturity. This means that we cannot be silent when someone sins even though we are concerned that we might hurt their feelings. Rather, it means that we lovingly confront each other with Biblical truth so that we will each recognize our sinful tendencies and grow into spiritual maturity. In 1 Cor. 13:4-7, in the context of disagreements, Paul tells us how Christian love acts. Love means that we overcome all selfish attitudes and perspectives and our goal is what will benefit the other person. It means that we will confront people, but in a way that is not rude or vindictive, and not out of hurt feelings and anger. And it means that we do not let our lack of patience at the growth of a person cause us to keep reminding them of their past failings. Rather, we should demonstrate our hatred of evil and sinfulness, but also our love and concern for the individual. We must be committed to making the truth of God's Word known and followed. But we do this from the desire to help each other grow, rather than punishing each other.

b. Ways that church leaders sin by focusing more on "love" than on "truth."

1) When another leader falls into known sin from which he does not repent, but we tell no one about the sin because we do not want to embarrass him. We are afraid to confront him and therefore he is not put under church discipline. Often we quickly put ordinary church members under discipline, but are afraid to put key church leaders under church discipline when they live in unrepentant sin. Even when we do take a stand and bring church discipline upon the leader, we do it in a secretive way that no one knows about. We are afraid to embarrass the church leader. There have been cases where church leaders have stolen development money, but rather than let people know of their sin, the church leader has been assigned in another location and allowed to continue his ministry. This shows a total lack of concern for "truth." (Note: We think that we show love by being tolerant of church leaders. But we are actually being cruel. By not helping that church leader see his sinful ways, we do not give him the opportunity to repent. And unless he repents God will punish him severely. How can he grow in spiritual maturity unless he knows that he is doing something wrong and repents? We must lovingly help someone to escape judgment and grow in spiritual maturity. Otherwise, if we are quiet or do not discipline the person, he remains the way he is. I wonder how many church leaders who have fallen into sin would have escaped judgment if another caring elder would have lovingly corrected them in the beginning before their sin became so deeply ingrained.)

2) People are teaching unbalanced truths in our churches. We know that their teaching is popular with many people. Even though we know that the teaching is not Biblical and will not bring healthy growth in spiritual depth, we allow it to go unchallenged. "If we take a stand, they will leave and go to another church" we say. So we remain quiet out of fear of what others will say about us, out of concern that people will leave the church, or out of false love for those who are part of our church and have fallen into the unbalanced teaching. (Again, this is really not love, for it allows people to fall into false or imbalanced

teaching. Some will fall away from the faith and face God's judgment. Others will be stunted in their spiritual growth by becoming unbalanced under this teaching.)

3) There are men in the church not walking in agreement to the Word of God. They abuse their wives and children. They do not teach their families how to walk in holiness. These men disturb the church with gossip and focus upon tribal and family loyalties. But we keep quiet and as a result, the abuse of the women and children continues and the church is divided along family and tribal lines.

It is easy for us to keep quiet and pretend nothing is wrong. It is much more difficult to consider what is being said or done, determine if it is a major truth that we need to stand for or an action which will greatly harm the church, and then speak up. And it takes courage to say what we believe is right in God's eyes and accept the consequences. Usually these attacks come from people who prefer compromise to obeying the truth of God's Word. We should never think "I know that the Bible teaches that is not right. But in our culture, we do things differently." As believers, we must acknowledge that the Bible has a greater authority than our culture. Therefore we need to change to follow the Bible and not try to make the Bible's teachings change to agree with our culture.

c. Biblical principles on speaking the truth in love:

1) We must make sure that our heart attitudes are correct. All of our actions should come from the motive of "love." But we need to remember that different people are involved, and "love" must be in a way that honors all. Our "love" for **God** means that we are concerned for the purity of his name and his reputation among the nations. To hide a sin of a church leader often brings disrepute to the name of God when it becomes known among non-Christians. Only when there is open church discipline does the watching world know that we are concerned about honoring the holiness of God. So love for God means that we take action against the sin. Another aspect is our "love" for the **church**. We bring church discipline upon people in order to maintain the purity of the church. But we must do it in a way that is impartial, fair, and loving so that people do not take sides and bring division over the issue. Our "love" for the **person** means that we are concerned for his spiritual life and his spiritual growth more than we are concerned for his comfort and reputation. But often we are concerned about embarrassing the person so we do not say anything. This decision means that we do not love the person enough to be concerned with their spiritual life and their spiritual growth. Would we rather see a person be punished by God for their rebellion rather than embarrassed by people? This is not godly love. So when speaking the truth in love, we must consider all that we do so to maintain our love for God, for the church, and for the person.

2) We are concerned about the "truth" as defined in God's Word and not our personal opinions. There are things in the Word of God about which Christians disagree in how to understand and interpret. In these areas where God's Word is not clear, love means that we are able to accept different view points and seek to work together in harmony without allowing these unclear truths to cause divisions. In other words, we must learn to distinguish the difference between a false or imbalanced teaching and different interpretations of God's Word. Paul warned us that false teaching would be common in the church, so we must always be watching for false truths. (Acts 20:28-31; 2 Tim. 4:1-5) False teachings like the Apostolic church or the prosperity Gospel must be resisted, just like Paul publicly confronted Peter when he did not follow the teachings of the Bible. (Gal. 2:11-16) Unfortunately, it seems that most times we let the ones teaching unbiblical truths to go unchallenged in the church and we fight bitterly against those brothers and sisters in Christ who hold different interpretations than we do on minor issues. (e.g. drink wine, infant baptism, speaking in tongues, girls wearing makeup)

3) In order to speak the truth, we must know the truth. Church leaders must know the teachings of God's Word and the principles upon which our relationship with God is based. We must know both the direct commands and teachings and the underlying principles God's Word teaches. Otherwise, we will not be speaking the truth but only our opinions. The Bible does not tell us to confront based upon our opinions, only on the truth of God.

4) God's Word gives us clear guidelines in how to address fellow believers when they fall into sin. In Mt. 5:23-24 & 18:15-17 we are told that each believer is responsible to address sin in others' lives. If we know that someone has sinned against us, we are not to wait for them to come to us and ask forgiveness. Rather, we are to go to them. Jesus said that healing broken relationships is more important than worship. We cannot properly worship God if there are broken relationships between us and others.

When we know that a brother is committing sin and is not repentant of it, love and concern for his spiritual growth means that we must confront him. When we have clear proof that a fellow believer is living in sin, first we should go alone to talk with him. Our desire is to bring the person back into relationship with God in a walk of holiness, not to get revenge or to punish the person. If he is not willing to listen and repent, then we bring two or three other believers (preferably church leaders) who have examined the situation and know the truth. They also should plead with the person encouraging him to obey Christ. If the person still refuses, then the matter is taken to the whole body of believers. The church is told about the sin and the steps that were taken. And in public discipline the person is ostracized from fellowship with other believers. (Note: This is not the physical expulsion of someone from a church building so that they cannot come on Sunday. Rather, it is refusal of brotherly fellowship by other believers. The Bible calls this process treating the person like a non-believer. We don't keep non-believers out of our church services. However, we don't treat them as part of our spiritual family. Paul called this process of discipline "handing over to Satan." (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20) By this he meant that being outside of the fellowship of God's people where God was protecting his children allowed Satan the ability to afflict them. There is no biblical reason why we must keep wayward believers out of the church building.) Before any public church discipline, we must make sure we fulfill these steps in trying to bring repentance for sin.

5) The focus of church discipline is not to catch people in sin and punish them. All people sin, so all of us would be under church discipline if this were true. And it is not to differentiate between what we see as the bad sins (e.g. drinking, adultery) which need punishment and the less bad sins (e.g. anger, lying, pride) which do not need punishment. God punished David's pride more harshly than his adultery. All sins are equally evil in God's eyes. We are told that if we sin in one way, we are guilty as if we have committed many sins or have done a "big" sin. (James 2:8-13)

Rather, the goal of church discipline is seeking to discipline those who have an unrepentant spirit. So if a person falls into sin and quickly repents and returns to God's way, church discipline may not be needed. But if the person sins and continues in his sin without repenting, then we must address the sin of rebellion. It is a very serious matter for the person and also for the church.

6) God has two purposes in church discipline.

First, it is the tool to encourage people to return to a walk of holiness and encourages spiritual growth. The goal of church discipline is not punishment. In 2 Cor. 2:5-11 Paul tells the Corinthians to restore the man under discipline so that he is not emotionally damaged and Satan gain further victory in his life. When church leaders administer church discipline, we must not do it out of the wrong motives. Our goal is not to punish someone. Rather, we are seeking to help each other grow in spiritual maturity.

Through the shame of being disciplined, church leaders want to encourage the believer to return into a holy walk which rebuilds their relationship with God and with other believers. (2 Thes. 3:14-15) The grace of Jesus brings forgiveness from sins. Jesus showed us God's desire to have people repent and return to him in the parable of the father who longingly watches for his sinful son to return. Upon returning, the father freely forgave. (Lk. 15:11-24) In the same way, church discipline seeks to bring people to repentance and rejoices when they do repent. The goal of church discipline, then, is to bring true confession and repentance as soon as possible so that the person can be restored into fellowship with God and with the church. There is not one example in the New Testament where a believer was given a "prison" sentence or a certain period of time when he sinned. Upon repentance, he was quickly restored to fellowship with the church.

(Note: When a leader falls into sin in a way that impacts the whole church, we are told that the sin must be publicly addressed. (1 Tim. 5:19-20) So how long should we punish the leader by expelling them from leadership? The issue is not the length of time of punishment. Our goal in breaking fellowship with that leader is to cause him to repent and return to a life of purity. If he repents, how long should he be kept out of leadership? Again, the Bible does not emphasize time. Rather, the issue is one of being "above reproach." Since a Biblical leader leads by having a life of integrity which people want to follow, this leader is expelled from leadership primarily because he no longer has a model life which others want to imitate. He therefore no longer qualifies for leadership. He should be out of leadership until after he regains the respect and trust of the church members. This can be in a short period or it could take a long time. Other church leaders should work with church members so that they are forgiving, and so the sinning church leader has ways to prove that he has learned from his experience and is now a person of integrity.)

Second, church discipline is a tool to keep church members from treating sin lightly. Unchallenged sin in the church works like yeast. Soon more and more people fall into sin if we treat sin lightly. (1 Cor. 5:6-13) Church discipline shows the members of the church that as a community who follow Jesus, we will take sin seriously. We will judge those who sin with an unrepentant, rebellious spirit. We do not make a difference between big and small sins. Rather, we look for sins committed with indifference or with a spirit of rebellion. In this way we maintain ourselves as a holy community.

7) The primary "instrument" of church discipline is not withholding the Lord's Supper, but withholding fellowship. (Mt. 18:17; 2 Jn. 9-11; 1 Cor. 5:11-13) It is important to withhold taking the Lord's Supper when people are living in unconfessed, rebellious sin out of concern that God will judge the person for taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. (1 Cor. 11:27-32) But the focus of the New Testament in church discipline is withholding fellowship. We do not treat them as a part of the "family" of believers, but as outsiders, as we would treat "unbelievers." This does not mean that we are to be mean towards them. It does not mean that we force them to sit outside of the church. We let unbelievers into our churches, don't we? Rather, it means that we do not treat them with the close love and fellowship of fellow believers.

8) The higher the level of leadership, church discipline for sin needs to be more public. There are two reasons for this. First, if the church members think that church leaders are not being disciplined as severely as ordinary members are disciplined, this will cause division between the elders and the people. As long as church discipline is fairly applied, no matter if a person is a church leader or an ordinary member of the church, people will not gather around their family member trying to protect him from church discipline as often happens. When people see the elders being disciplined for their rebellious sin, they will learn to walk in holiness as well. (1 Tim. 5:19-20) Second, because the sin of church leaders has a much greater effect upon others than the sin of the ordinary church member, church leader's need to be

disciplined more severely than ordinary church members. (1 Tim. 5:19-20; Lk. 12:47-48) The principle of the Bible is "to whom much is given, much is expected." And so, because God has given church leaders much authority, they are held to a greater standard than ordinary members. Their judgment from God is more severe. That is why we are warned not to be too eager to be teachers. (Jms. 3:1)

9) It is difficult to know how "public" church discipline needs to be. Basically, the more people know about the situation, the more public should be the repentance or discipline. If a person confesses to a sin soon after the sin has been committed and few people know about it, then the church elders need to determine if it demonstrates "love" for the person and the church to keep the matter quiet or not. In most cases, confession can remain a secret with the elders. But if the sin has become public knowledge, then usually it is best for church discipline and the repentance to also be public knowledge.

10) Remember what the Bible teaches about confession and repentance. If we have sinned against God, then we can confess our sins only to God. But usually our sins are against other people. In these cases, it is not enough to confess our sins only to God. God's Word tells us that we are to confess our sins to the one we have wronged as well. Sometimes it is not enough to only confess to people that we have sinned. There must be restitution. If we have taken something we must return it. If we have ruined a person's reputation by spreading gossip about someone, we must publicly seek to undo the damage to their reputation that we have caused. If someone is not willing to ask the person they have wronged forgiveness or seek to undo the harm they have caused, it is doubtful that they have truly repented of their sin. True repentance seeks to undo as much of the damage and take away as much of the hurt that we have causes as possible.

Q. 19. a) Illustrate how church leaders focus more on "love" than "truth." b) Illustrate how you have seen the leaders sometimes focus on "truth" more than "love." c) Give examples of how you have seen the balance of "truth" and "love" bring spiritual growth and healing. d) Describe situations when it is difficult to emphasize "truth" and therefore church leaders tend to compromise. How do you think the church leaders should handle these situations in a Biblical way? e) Think about church discipline in your local church. How are the above principles on church discipline being applied? f) Which of the principles are often not applied? Why do you think that is the case?

THIRD DAY

SINS TO WHICH CHURCH LEADERS ARE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE (PART 7)

SINS IN HOW LEADERS LEAD IN THE CHURCH (PART 2)

We are told that Satan is like a mighty lion who is always seeking those he can attack and overcome. (1 Pet. 5:8) His eyes are focused upon church leaders because Satan knows that when he is able to cause leaders to fall into sin, there will be more devastation in the church than if an ordinary church member falls into sin. As church leaders we must understand where Satan often attacks us and prepare ourselves for those attacks. For several weeks we have studied areas that Satan often attacks church leaders. Let us continue to think about these areas where leaders are prone to fall into sin, especially in how they lead in a church.

6. Sins from the misuse of our mouths

We have seen that church leadership is based upon "integrity." Integrity means that we act the same way in public as we act in private. Our action is the same whether it brings us a benefit or if it is to our disadvantage. (e.g. We lose our job because we refuse to take a bribe.) Integrity is the character of always acting in a way which agrees with our beliefs and with what God's Word teaches.

One of the major ways that we demonstrate that we are people of integrity is through our speech. The tongue is like a thermometer of our whole lives and reveals our spirituality. If we are careful in how we use our tongues, and if we keep our promises both to ourselves (e.g. "I will pray for ½ hour every day") and our promises to others, then most likely we will be trustworthy in everything. We will be trustworthy in our use of money, faithful to our spouse in our sexual relationships, etc. Being honest in speech is a good indication if we are honest in our relationship to God and in our leadership. But if we are not completely truthful, we usually cheat against God in other things as well.

Q. 20. Read James 1:26, 3:3-12. a) What does James say is the relationship between religion and the tongue? b) Why do you think James says that a person who can control his tongue is a perfect person? c) Where does the evil power of the tongue come from? d) List different ways leaders can sin by misusing our tongues.

The book of James emphasizes the need for people to learn to control their speech. As James says, unless we learn to control what we say to each other, our attempts to worship God are useless. Our ability to control what we say also indicates our level of spiritual maturity. In fact Jesus said that the major thing which causes us to be unclean are things which flow out of our heart through our mouth. (Mt. 15:10-11) Satan encourages the misuse of the tongues of leaders to cause great damage in the church. There are several ways that leaders can misuse our tongues and be used by Satan to harm God's people.

Q. 21. Read Ps. 51:6; Prov. 12:22; Mt. 5:33-37, 12:33-37. a) What do these verses teach us about the need to be absolutely true and accurate in our words and promises? b) Describe ways that we are often lax in speaking the truth and change what we say for our benefit. c) What are ways that we use our tongues to destroy rather than build up?

The Bible has much to say about sin by the misuse of our tongues. Notice the following things the Bible emphasizes:

a. We should control what we say so that we do not commit ourselves to things which we do not intend to do. In the Old Testament times, God held a person responsible to do what he promised he would do. Once he made a promise or a vow, even though later he found out it was not convenient for him to keep it, he had to fulfill it. He could not make excuses to undo what he said he would do. (Num. 30:1-2; Deut. 23:21-23; Eccl. 5:4-6) In fact, one of the Judges named Jephthah had to sacrifice his daughter because he made a foolish promise that he would sacrifice to God the first thing that came out of his house. (Judges 11:30-40)

b. Lying in any form is hated by God. Of the seven sins Solomon says God hates, at least three of them involve the wrong use of our tongues. (Prov. 6:16-19)

c. King Solomon says that when we talk a lot, there is likely sin in our speech, for we often focus our discussion on ourselves, showing pride, or we add to the truth or hide some of the truth, which is lying. (Prov. 10:19)

d. Solomon wrote that the tongue has the power of life or death. (Prov. 18:21) The tongue not only leads to the physical death of a person (e.g. the command of the ruler to kill a person), but it kills hopes, dreams, reputations, a sense of self-worth, etc.

e. Jesus warns us that we will one day have to answer for every word that comes out of our mouths. (Mt. 12:33-37)

f. Jesus said that we must keep our words simple, with our positive answers being "yes" and our negative answers being "no." By this Jesus meant that what we say we will do, we do it. And what we say we will not do, we don't do it. This means that we should not try to trick people with our words. It also means that what we say, we will do, even though it may not be convenient for us.

g. James wrote that someone who is a true follower of Jesus will learn to control his tongue. (Jms. 1:26) Spiritual maturity, or what James calls being perfect, is revealed in our speech. In fact, he says that a person who controls his tongue is able to control all of his life.

h. James explains how powerful the tongue is in causing damage. (Jms. 3:1-12) It has the power of Satan behind it.

Q. 22. a) Explain how you have seen the wrong use of the tongue cause great destruction in the church. b) Describe how you have seen the proper use of the tongue bring great healing in a person's life. c) Explain how the ability to control our tongues, and to speak truthfully at all times, indicate the depth of spiritual maturity which a person has.

Following are ways church leaders can often sin in the misuse of their tongues:

a. The sin of not telling the complete truth

God says that he hates a lying tongue. Unfortunately, telling lies has become so common that often we do not realize that we are telling lies. A lie is any time that we say something that is not accurate to reality. It can be when we add to a fact (e.g. When we say we witnessed to seven people when in fact we only witnessed to five.) Or it can be when we subtract from the truth. (e.g. When we say we do not have enough money to buy a Bible when trying to get a discount but in fact we have the money in our pocket.) Or it can be when we knowingly do not say something so that people believe what is untrue. (e.g. Leaders tell people to give a special gift for the Lord's work. The people assume that it is to send out evangelists. But in fact, the leaders are raising money to open a tea shop which leaders know that the people would not give money towards if they knew this is what the money would be spent on. Although the leaders know that the people believe what is wrong, they keep quiet. They allow the people to misunderstand what is happening because it is to the leader's advantage.)

Following are some areas of life that church leaders often tell partial truths:

1) Making promises that we do not keep. Any time that we say we will do something, we must view it as a promise or a vow. The Bible is clear that the promises we make are binding, even if they hurt us. (Num. 30:2) Without an emergency beyond our ability to influence, we are obligated before God to fulfill what we say we will do, when we say we will do it. Our "yes" means "yes" when we do exactly **what** we say, **when** we say we will do it. Anything less means that we do not keep our word. Any time we refuse to give a "no" answer because we do not want to disappoint someone, but say instead "I will ask so and so" when

we don't intend to ask or when we know the answer is "no" is also a way to not be people of our word. Although it is a common practice throughout Ethiopia, God's Word does not approve. Here are some illustrations of times when we often break a promise:

a) We do not keep our appointments. Suppose a member comes to a church leader and asks to see them for an important reason. That church leaders tells them to come the next day at 3:00. But the next day when the church member comes at 3:00, they wait patiently for an hour and the church leader does not come. That church leader has "lied" to them. He is not a man of his word. Or often church leaders will make an appointment with a church member for a specific time. But they get busy and think "I am busier than they are. So I won't come until an hour later." So rather than arriving on time, the leader comes an hour or two late. By this time the church member has given up and gone home, angry because the church leader did not keep his promise.

b) We promise that a decision will be made by a certain date but it is not finalized.

c) Someone comes with a request that we know we cannot fulfill. But rather than gently saying we can't do it we say "We will think about it." For instance, they ask to borrow money from the church offering to buy a cow. We know that the elders have already established a policy that no one is allowed to borrow money from the church. But we do not want to disappoint our friend. Therefore, we say "I will have to talk about that at the next elder's meeting." However we have no intention of saying anything at the elder's meeting. Next month they come again. "What did the elders say?" they ask. Again, we do not want to say "no" or tell them we did not talk about it. So we tell them "We did not have time to discuss this, but we will talk about it the next month." Every month we make the same excuse until finally the person gives up.

d) Agreeing to do something when we do not intend to do it. For instance, we are in an kifle mahabir hibiret meeting. As church leaders we agree to raise money to support national evangelists by asking each church to contribute 100 Ethiopian Birr. We personally are against this idea, but we keep quiet and do not say anything. We are raising money for a new tin roof for the church and we are afraid that if people give to evangelism, they will not give money for the tin roof. With all of the other elders, we raise our hand agreeing to the policy, promising to go home to our churches and raise the money for evangelism. Rather than risk the disapproval of the other elders, we decide to "lie" by saying we support the policy and will abide by it. However, when we go home to our church, we say nothing about the need to raise money for evangelism.

Each of these illustrations shows ways that we do not fulfill our promises to people. It is easy to do because Satan tempts us to think that as church leaders we are busy and our schedule is more important than the schedule of the church members. Or we think that the people will understand that it was inconvenient and come back another day. Or we don't want to disappoint people so we tell them what they want to hear, even if it is not true. And so our ministry is filled with small lies.

2) Doing or saying something that is not completely honest. For instance, we are traveling to Addis to visit a relative. They ask us to bring up some coffee even though it is illegal. So we put coffee deep inside our bag. At the check point, when asked if we have coffee or any other substance that we are not supposed to take to Addis, we say "No. We only have our personal clothes." "What is your work?" the guard asks. "I am the pastor of so and so church" we reply thinking he will believe us and not look in the bag. But the man looks in the bag and finds the coffee. "You Pentecostals say that you obey the Bible. But you are worse than us. You lie and cheat just like us" the man says as he takes the coffee away from us. Our reputation, the reputation of our church, and worse still, the reputation of Jesus Christ is tarnished because we were not absolutely honest. We have sinned twice. First by doing something that the government has declared

unlawful which goes against what God tells us to do. (See Rom. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-15) Second, we sin by telling a lie. Just because other people do not think that it is wrong to lie to the government or at a check point does not make it right. We show our integrity by obeying the government even when many other believers think that it is acceptable to lie and cheat the government. Some Christian merchants do not fill out proper receipts so that they do not have to pay the tax to the government. Other Christian government workers say they are sick so that they can go to a church meeting. All of these are common examples of how we lie as leaders.

We need to be careful of our cultural tendency to hide bad news through lies. When we break a glass, we don't admit our fault. Rather, we say "It dropped to my disadvantage." And when someone is dead, we don't tell their relative "He is dead" but only that he is sick. Surely there is a better way to let someone gently know the truth without having to lie. If we are to be people of integrity, we must learn to speak the truth, being sensitive, but honest. Until we break the habit of not telling the truth when it disappoints someone, or being openly honest in all things even when we are disadvantaged by our statement, we will never develop a culture where people trust each other. Distrust will continue and we will always wonder if others are trying to take advantage of us.

3) Exaggerating or understating a fact: All of us are tempted to exaggerate to make ourselves appear good or understate a truth so that we gain some advantage over someone. When it is to our advantage, leaders often misstate the facts, which is lying in God's eyes. For instance, suppose an evangelist is required to turn in a monthly report. He is asked how many people he witnessed to and who came to the Lord his ministry him during the past month. For various reasons he was not able to witness to as many people as he anticipated (e.g. only 10 people) and only one person believed. But that would not look good on a report. So he writes that he witnessed to 25 and 10 believed. It seems like an innocent "lie" so that he will not look bad. After all, if he is not successful, his sending church might ask him to return home, putting an end to his ministry as an evangelist. Or he might not get a raise in pay because the church does not believe him to be a good evangelist. This is a temptation especially to evangelists working among Muslims where there is often little spiritual fruit. But this "exaggeration" is a lie in God's eyes. It causes us to develop a character of dishonesty in other things as well.

At other times it is to our advantage to understate a fact. When traveling to a remote country church, I asked the church leaders "How far away is the church? How long will I have to walk?" The church leader knows that if he tells the truth and says "two hours" that I might not go to the church. So he says "It is very close, perhaps ½ hour." But after walking up and down mountains for many hours I become upset at him and will not trust him in the future or believe him when he does tell me the truth about something. We see this type of lying often when a leader is asked to name the number of church members in his church. If the question is asked for statistical reasons, the church elder adds to the number so that people will be impressed with how large of a church he has. But if the question comes from the Central Office and the church will have to pay according to the number of church members who attend, then the elders will understate the number of members so that the church will be required to pay less money.

4) Knowingly keeping quiet so that people will do what we want them to do: It seems strange to us to believe that it is "lying" when we knowingly misstate something, or when we do not give adequate information to people so that they believe something that is false. We do not tell an outright lie. But we say things that cause people to think one thing even though we have not said that. For instance, your church wants to start an income generating project to help cover salary for evangelists in your church. You know that a donor is not interested in giving money for the church to make money. So you say "We want this project to help our community." The donor assumes that you are going to use the proceeds of the project

to help the farmers in the community find an alternate source of income. You know this is what he understands the project to be, even though you have not said it. The donor gives you the money, and you then use the money to raise money for the church. Although we could say that we did not "lie," we have knowingly deceived the donor. So in God's eyes, it is a lie. We have sinned.

What is the result of all of these small lies, the small broken promises, the lies covering unwelcome news, the lies of exaggeration, or giving only some of the facts so that people misunderstand us and do what we want? Not only is it a sin against God, but it undermines our ability to lead. As church leaders, we can only lead if people trust us. But whenever we break our word, even in a small matter, it causes people not to trust us. If the church leader who did not come on time says "Come tomorrow at 3:00" will the church member believe the leader the next time? No. One reason so few church members trust church leaders today is because they cannot be trusted to tell the truth. The sad thing is, when people do not trust our words, then they begin to question other areas of our lives. They will question how we are using the tithe money, the reasons why we made a decision to hire someone, etc. Once trust is gone, it is very hard to gain it back. It takes years to develop a reputation of honesty, integrity, and being a person who always keeps our word. But it only takes a few unfulfilled promises to cause people to distrust us and have our reputations destroyed.

Q. 23. a) List illustrations from all four types of lying found above of how a church leader can tell something that is not totally truthful. b) What damage does this cause in the church? c) What are other ways our culture allows lying? What do you think God would say about these practices? d) What must we change in our culture so that people can trust our words? e) Which of these types of "lying" do you struggle with? Make a commitment today to always be a person of integrity and be honest in your words.

Q. 24. a) Do many people in your church gossip? Explain your answer. b) List some of the destructive things that gossip can cause in a church. c) Why do you think the sin of gossip is a temptation to church leaders?

b. The sin of gossiping or the sin of telling a secret

There is probably no sin that causes greater destruction in the church than the sin of gossip. It is much more damaging to the unity of the church than the sin of stealing, drunkenness, or adultery. And yet we rarely discipline this destructive sin. Each of us enjoy participating in the sin of gossip. We hear a rumor about another person and the first thing we do is tell our friends what we have learned. As Solomon said, listening to and then passing on gossip is like a sweet morsel in our mouths. (Prov. 18:8) But it is gossip which destroys the reputation of a church leader or of another believer. Usually we show our sin of jealousy by gossiping and passing on wrong information seeking to destroy the reputation of another Christian. Gossip brings great divisions in the church.

There is a story about a young couple who dearly loved each other. In their church were some ladies who did not have good marriages and were jealous of the love and joy this young couple enjoyed. So these ladies spread a false rumor saying that they had seen the husband come out of the house of another woman. Like a forest fire, this rumor went through the church until one day it fell upon the ears of the wife. She was devastated by this rumor. So one day after her husband left the house without knowing that something was wrong, the wife killed their children and then herself. Other peoples' jealous gossip caused the death of a young woman and her innocent children.

Usually gossip does not create such obvious damage. But often it kills a person's reputation, their work, their love for God, their joy in serving, their love for others, etc. Gossip does great damage, most of it unseen. That is why there is a pastor in the US who told his congregation that if they committed adultery

and confessed it, they would be forgiven with no church discipline. However, if they were caught in gossip, they would face severe church discipline. He knew how destructive the sin of gossip is to the unity of the church.

Christians often unknowingly participate in gossip. After they hear a story about someone who is struggling with a certain sin, they pass on the rumor in a prayer meeting by asking people to pray for the person. "I heard that so-and-so took a drink last night. Let us pray for him." "I heard so-and-so beat his wife. Let us pray that he will learn to be kind." "Someone told me that so-and-so fell into sexual sin with so-and-so. Let us pray for them" we share with other believers. We feel important when sharing about the sins of another person. But in fact we are hiding our sin of gossip under the cover of a prayer request.

Church leaders are tempted to gossip in three ways.

First, leaders often show their jealousy of other leaders or their disagreement of a decision by gossiping about another leader. Many leaders like to talk negatively about other leaders. "So and so doesn't know what he is talking about. He thinks he knows everything" we say to another leader. "He has a hidden purpose in what he is saying. He just wants everything for his tribe" another says. This type of talk makes leaders think that they are somehow better leaders. But in reality, it is the sin of gossip.

Second, we are tempted to participate in the gossip that originates from someone else. Church members enjoy coming to the church leaders and telling a rumor which they have heard. "I heard that so-and-so has stolen money" they report to us. Often church leaders form their opinions about another believer based upon this type of gossip. And then they spread the gossip to other elders. Whenever we listen to gossip like this, we have participated in the spread of the rumor.

What should we do as church leaders when someone comes to us with gossip?

1) We must be careful that we do not participate in the rumor. To take what we hear and tell someone else is to participate in the sin of gossip.

2) We must stop the rumor. We do this by asking the person who has come with us with the rumor "Did you see them do it?" If they say no, then we are to tell them that they are participating in the sin of gossip and they should not tell anyone. They need to confess their sin of gossip. If they say "Yes," we should ask "Have you gone to the person and confronted them personally about their sin without sharing it with anyone else?" As we saw earlier, it is the responsibility of each Christian to help another person return from the path of sin. We are each to confirm the truth of the matter and then confront that person ourselves without telling anyone. Believers do not have the right to tell anyone else of the sin until we have taken this step. And then they can only tell the elders so that they also become involved in getting the person to repent of his sin. Unfortunately, many times church leaders listen to the gossip of others and we form opinions about another church leader or church member that is false. Sometimes church leaders will even put a person under church discipline simply because of a rumor which they have heard. Then Satan's desire to cause division has succeeded.

Satan uses gossip to destroy a person's reputation. Once a wrong belief is in our minds, it is very hard to forget it. Satan knows that gossip ruins the reputation of leaders and limits their effectiveness. Satan also knows that the more people know about the sin, the harder it is for the sinner to repent. When other people know about the sin, the person's pride makes it difficult for him to confess his sin. Perhaps that is why God sent Nathan directly to confront David rather than Nathan telling the nation of Israel first about

David's sin. It was much easier for David to repent when confronted with his sin directly before anyone else knew about it.

3) The third way church leaders are tempted to gossip is by passing on confidential information. As church leaders we often know information which others do not know. Or people come to us and share something about themselves which they want us to pray about or counsel them in. But we are expected to keep that information confidential. It is very difficult to keep that special information secret. It is like a fire inside of us and we want to share it with someone. In sharing this secret information, we show others how powerful we are. "We are the people in the know" is our prideful thought as we share private information. But sharing confidential information without the permission of the person or telling something from our decisions as elders that is supposed to be kept confidential is committing the sin of gossip. Even if we only tell our wives or our best friends and ask them not to tell anyone, we have sinned.

People need to know that they can trust their leaders to keep secrets. Otherwise they will not come to us for counseling or to confess their sins. If people do not trust a leader to keep the information a secret, the leader loses his ability to influence people towards godliness.

Q. 25. a) Describe "gossip" that you have recently heard. b) How did you respond? Did you participate in the gossip, or did you stop it? If you did not respond in the right way, what do you think God would like you to do next time when someone comes to you with gossip? c) Why is it hard to keep a secret? d) Describe how you have seen a church leader break a confidence. e) What happened to his relationship with the person? Did they continue to trust and respect him as a leader?

c. Making fun of people or calling people names

One way that leaders can demonstrate their pride is by talking in such a way that insults others. They can do this by speaking with people as if they are of no consequence. Notice the tone of voice some leaders use when talking to an uneducated person. They talk down to them as if they are below them. They know, and others know that the leader despises them or treats them with scorn. Leaders misuse their mouths by telling jokes which seek to make fun of other people who are different from them, or of another tribe. Or in town when some people are bothering us we say words like "fool or idiot." But what we say matters to God. Jesus said that anyone who showed his despise of someone by calling them "a fool" was guilty of murder. (See Mt. 5:21-22) How many of us are guilty of "murder" because we insult others- either openly, or when talking with our friends, or especially in our hearts?

7. The sin of worry

One of the sins which some leaders often commit is the sin of worry. We have a problem in the church, and all night our minds work on the problem, and inside we worry that it will not turn out well. Or we are involved in a court case over land and things seem hopeless, and we worry.

In Mt. 6:25-34, Jesus commanded us not to worry. As individuals we should not worry about jobs, food, homes, etc. And as leaders we are not to worry about the problems we face as leaders. Worry shows a lack of faith in God. We are not willing to trust God to work everything out for good as he has promised. (Rom. 8:28) So what is the answer when we face problems which we cannot control and which cause us to worry? It is prayer. As Paul said in Phil. 4:6-7 "*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*"

8. The sin of not doing the most important things, but the less important

Another sin in leadership which often affects leaders is focusing on things which are not the most important, but on secondary issues. One of Satan's ways to make leaders ineffective is to get them to focus on things which really do not help in the spread of the Gospel or build up believers in their faith. He does this so that people are busy, but not effective. They do not help Christ's kingdom to grow. For instance, Jesus told us to seek **first** the kingdom of God. But Satan gets us to focus upon things that do not build up the kingdom of God as much. And so many leaders work hard in church trying to accomplish things that do not really matter. They want larger churches, or large properties, or development ministries which earn them a good reputation with the government. None of these are wrong in themselves, but they are not the most important things. Rather, we are to focus upon things which expand the kingdom of God and build up the spiritual life of God's people. Paul prayed in Phil. 1:9-11 *"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that **you may be able to discern what is best** and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God."*

Q. 26. a) List some things which leaders tend to worry over. b) In what way are these things a demonstration of lack of faith in God? c) List good things which your church is involved in which are not the most important for the growth of the church. d) List some of the "best" things which are often undone in the church because leaders are focusing upon other less important things.

9. The sin of not trusting others

Often leaders start their ministry and trust other leaders and the church members. But it is not long until other leaders and people disappoint the leader. It is easy at this time to fall into the sin of not trusting people. "If that is how they act, I will do the work myself. I won't delegate to them ever again" we think. Because some person has tricked us, we begin to think that all people are tricking us. So we do not trust that anyone is serving God out of pure motives. When in meetings we are always wondering "What is their hidden motive? What do they really want from this decision?" Or when a common member does something kind to us we begin to think "What do they want from me now?" rather than just accept the kindness and be thankful for it.

10. The sin of leaving the ministry without preparing someone to take it over

Mekuriya was the director of a busy Bible school. There were 40 students studying, and he was the major teacher. In the middle of the semester, however, he got the opportunity for more education at a prestigious school in Addis with a full scholarship. So he told the church leaders that he was going. He left the school and students without any replacement teacher or director.

Malkamu was an evangelist working in a remote area. God blessed his ministry and a church was planted. With great care he witnessed and then taught the new believers. After 10 years, his home church leaders suddenly told him to return home. Because there was no pastor to shepherd the church, soon many of the members returned to the world and others fell into false teaching.

Q. 27. a) How have you seen a church minister leave his ministry without adequately preparing someone to continue the ministry? b) What happened to the ministry? c) What does this show about the minister's call from God? d) How have you seen people not prepare replacement leaders before they leave a ministry? e) What happened to the ministry when they left?

When God has given a church minister responsibility for a ministry, that ministry takes precedence to his personal ambitions. The church minister is a steward of the ministry. Even if opportunities for

advancement come or a better job which the person would like to get, if the work which God has given the person fails, he is sinning against God. He has not been faithful to the work which God and others have given him to do. For Mekuria to leave the Bible school without giving the school time to find another director and teacher demonstrates that he did not serve with a "call" from God, but only out of personal ambition. He cares little for God's work. And it shows that he is not faithful to what God has asked him to do.

It is also a "sin" when a church minister does not prepare others to take over his ministry. If a church leader is not concerned about the future, if he is not preparing a replacement like Paul prepared Timothy, then he shows little concern for the church. He is more concerned with building his kingdom and not God's kingdom. And God holds him responsible for the difficulty the church faces when he leaves without preparing a replacement. Ten years of faithful ministry were wasted because Malkamu did not prepare someone to take over.

Moses spent 40 years preparing Joshua to lead the people of God. So when Moses died, the work of God continued with few problems. But there is no evidence that Joshua prepared anyone to lead the people of God once he died. And so all of his hard work of leading people to be spiritual people of God was quickly undone. The time after Joshua is called the period of the Judges. And we are told that during this sad time in Israel's history "*In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.*" (Judges 17:6)

Contrast Joshua's attitude to the attitude of Peter when he was about to die. "*I plan to keep on reminding you of these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth. Yes, I believe I should keep on reminding you of these things as long as I live. But the Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that my days here on earth are numbered and I am soon to die. So I will work hard to make these things clear to you. I want you to remember them long after I am gone.*" (2 Pet. 1:12-15) Peter was looking forward to the time that he would die. And Peter wanted to prepare God's people for living for God without him.

So what must leaders do so that we do not commit the sin of abandoning God's work by leaving it without adequate leadership?

First, we must realize that if God has given us an important ministry in his church, that we cannot quit that ministry at our convenience. Rather, to be faithful to God and to the work means that we will give the church adequate time to prepare a replacement. This might mean that we have to delay going to school or not take that opportunity for work that we wanted. Being faithful stewards means we make sure that the work is prepared for when we go. How much better to adequately prepare someone to take over the as we trust God to give us another opportunity for education or work. God will often reward our faithfulness with something better.

Second, we must plan ahead. If we know that a possible opportunity for education or another job is coming, then we must go as early as possible to the church leaders and warn them what is coming. We tell them several months in advance. If they say it is impossible to prepare someone to take over our ministry, we need to pray deeply about whether or not God wants us to leave the ministry at that time. If we are looking to God for his will, waiting for a year or two as someone else is educated, or waiting for another job opportunity does not matter. What God wants of us alone matters. But if the elders know about your plans and if there are people qualified to take over your work, but if the elders neglect to make the necessary preparations for your leaving, it is their sin and not yours if you leave and the work is disrupted.

Third, if we are ministers (e.g., pastors, evangelists) we must always be looking ahead to the day when we are not there to do the ministry. Therefore we must always be preparing people who can minister in the church should we go. If we are evangelists, we know in advance that our work in an area is only temporary.

Therefore as soon as God gives us a group of believers, we should be asking God and the people who should be trained to lead. We must disciple young people to love God and desire to serve him. We should get them involved in witnessing and discipling new believers with us. When we and the others confirm God's call on their lives, we should make plans to send them to Bible school to be prepared for leadership. When they graduate, we should slowly decrease our direct involvement in the church and increase the involvement of the other person. In this way, when we leave, God's work continues without problem. And all of the years of investment of our time and energy continues when we go to another location. Unfortunately most evangelists never prepare the church for the day they leave. And as a result, the church struggles and many years of their hard work is undone. If we want our ministry for God to bear lasting fruit, then we must be preparing people for ministry when we are no longer there.

Q. 28. a) What ministry has God given you to serve him? b) Why is it important for you to be preparing someone to take that ministry in case you leave? c) Why do you think it is a "sin" to not adequately prepare a ministry for the day you leave?

My fellows leaders, let us also determine to overcome our sin nature; our pride, our self confidence, our tribalism, our love for power and the glory of people, and the other sins which so easily defeat us as leaders. With the help of the Holy Spirit, let us control ourselves so that we will not become disqualified from ministry for God. Following Paul's example, let us learn to "*beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*" Let us determine to keep our eyes on Jesus, following his example of leadership. The race is long, lasting until we die and go to heaven. Let us run with perseverance, making sure we end well. Don't take pride in who you are now or how God is using you. Rather, be afraid that you might fall into sin and become disqualified. We should pray daily that God help us see the sins that easily overcome us as leaders. May we allow the Holy Spirit to examine our innermost thoughts and motives where these sins start. And then, may we ask the Holy Spirit to pull those weeds of sin so that they do not overcome us. May we be found running well, like Paul, when the time to leave earth arrives. Amen!

Q. 29. a) On a piece of paper, list all of the sins we have studied which easily overcome church leaders. b) Which of these sins most often affect church leaders? c) To which of these sins are you most vulnerable? d) Take ½ hour in prayer, asking God to reveal to you the innermost hidden sins in your life. As he reveals your sins, confess them. e) For the next month, every day, pray about the sins the Holy Spirit has revealed to you which are troubling you and your leadership. As you begin to fall into those sins, pray immediately for the power of the Holy Spirit to help you overcome the temptation. Work on developing habits and character which bring glory to God. This will mean unlearning old patterns of behavior which come from your old nature and choosing to act in a holy way.

Conclusion: What makes an effective church leader? We have seen in these seven lessons that God starts by looking at the heart and character of the leader. Only once an individual has developed the characteristics that God desires from leaders will they lead in a way that brings glory to God. So the foundation to godly leadership is always our character. But God also wants us to lead with skill. Just like a skillful carpenter can make a table that is beautiful, so also a skillful leader can lead the church in a beautiful way that brings great results. In our next book on church leadership we will study what those skills of leadership are which turn ordinary church leadership into successful, church changing leadership.

WEEKLY MEETING

DISCUSSION

1. a) Make a list of the sins we have studied in this lesson which church leaders and ministers often commit in how they relate to others. b) List the results these sins have brought to the church leader and to the church. c) Which of these sins do you think are not very common in church leaders? d) Which of these sins do you think many church leaders struggle with? e) Why are they especially vulnerable to those sins? f) What can leaders do to help themselves and each other be victors over these sins which leaders often commit?

2. a) Make a list of the sins we have studied in this lesson which church leaders and ministers often commit in how they lead in the church. b) List the results these sins have brought to the church leader and to the church. c) Which of these sins do you think are not very common in church leaders? d) Which of these sins do you think many church leaders struggle with? e) Why are they especially vulnerable to those sins? f) What can leaders do to help themselves and each other be victors over these sins which leaders often commit?

3. a) Make a list of situations where church leaders have difficulty forgiving others. b) Explain why it was hard to forgive the person. d) List some of the negative things which happened in our lives when we refuse to forgive. e) Why do you think Jesus stressed that he would not forgive us if we do not forgive others? f) What are the key truths about forgiveness which need to be taught in the church if we are to be people who forgive each other?

4. a) Why do you think so few believers or church leaders seek to return money which they have stolen? b) What does this attitude show about the lack of true repentance on the part of the person who steals? c) Why do you think people do not admit that they have stolen things until they are caught? What does this teach us about how most people do not seek to keep themselves absolutely pure before God? d) How do most elders handle the situation when an elder steals from the church offering? What problems does this cause between the elders and the members of the church? e) What would happen differently if the elder who stole something was treated as suggested in this lesson?

5. a) Illustrate how church leaders focus more on "love" than "truth." b) Illustrate how you have seen the leaders sometimes focus on "truth" more than "love." c) Give examples of how you have seen the balance of "truth" and "love" bring spiritual growth and healing. d) Describe situations when it is difficult to emphasize "truth" and therefore church leaders tend to compromise. How do you think the church leaders should handle these situations in a Biblical way? e) Think about church discipline in your local church. How are the above principles on church discipline being applied? f) Which of the principles are often not applied?

6. a) List illustrations from all four types of lying found in this lesson of how a church leader can tell something that is not totally truthful. b) What damage does this cause in the church? c) What are other ways our culture allows lying? What do you think God would say about these practices? d) What must we change in our culture so that people can trust our words? e) List the different types of gossip which leaders can participate in. f) Why is gossip so destructive to the church? g) What do you think church elders need to do to control gossip in the church?

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