

“Are you the one we are expecting?” –

by Amoko Fodomula Laku

These words were asked of the Lord Jesus Christ by John the Baptist from his prison cell: “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”. There is no doubt that our Lord Jesus *was the right kind of leader*, but we may legitimately ask, ‘What about all the other leaders we know about today, including even ourselves?’.

Susan Mwangi, in writing *A Biography of Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi* said, “Nothing builds strong character like studying the lives of great Christians”.¹ She continues to say, “Great men and women of God are some of our most important mentors and worthy objects of study. Their race and their fight of faith is worth emulating and so at any age we can learn from their walk with God both its principled strengths and regretful failings, showing that they are men of flesh just as we are”.

We will be reading and drawing lessons from John 10: 1-21. The chapter title comes from Matthew 11:1-3 and Luke 7:19-20, which give title to the topic as well. We will consider what people expect in the character of their leader. We will be asking and answering questions such as ‘Who is the leader?’ We will talk

¹ Mwangi, Susan, Called to Serve – A Biography of Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi (Blossom Books: Nairobi, Kenya) 2009.

about the characteristics of the leader whom the nation and its people are expecting – the Good Shepherd, John 10:11,14. We will also talk about the characteristics of the hired leader(s), who in most cases were failing his or her people badly, John 10:12-13. These examples were given by Jesus Christ. We will dip into the Bible elsewhere too.

Who is the leader?

The future of every family, all nations, people groups, organisations including churches, depends upon the quality of their leadership. That is why Don Page said, “It is so important to develop the right kind of leadership for today’s complex and changing world”.² Because no one person can lead an organisation, it requires a team of diverse but like-minded people.

Some years ago I asked an elder from one of the tribes, “Who do your people think the leader is?” Without any hesitation he gave me three points:

The leader is:

1. The person who is always in the front of the battle and in all situations, who has inspiring, encouraging words and who is courageous not fearful.
2. The person whose house is open to people, a welcoming person. We have a saying, ‘The fire does not go off in his house’.

² Don Page Effective Team Leadership – Leading Through Relationships (Evangel Publishing House, PAC University: Nairobi, Kenya) p.208.

3. The person who is patient in every hard-given situation.

I will add four more points:

4. The person who can teach the letters to Timothy and Titus from the Bible. Paul was strongly urging these young men to be sure that the leaders they were about to appoint could bear the responsibility in the local churches of teaching others. The right doctrine of the word of God is essential for right living.
5. The person with a spirit of servanthood. Servanthood is the essential concept of Christian leadership, which is centred in Christ's work as a servant King and which is characterised by faith and obedience to the word of God as a follower of Jesus. A servant leader's mark is humility. He/she is in front of the followers to show example through his life, not seeking special recognition or privileges for what he/she has done. It is serving others as Jesus did during His earthly ministry.
6. A person who is an example to all. Mwangi's writing about Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi, quoted above, highlighted this. The New Testament records, "Elijah was a human being like we are. He prayed earnestly that it might not rain and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months", James 5:17.
7. A person who can pastor others, a counsellor, an intercessor, a responsible person, with

identity, with value of life, who is accountable, who can convince people through his word, who is a strategist, with authority and integrity. A leader who has inspirational power, speaking from first-hand knowledge in his/her personal walk with God.

God looks for the right people

Reading the Bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament, it becomes clear that leaders are all or mostly called and ordained by God. That is why the Bible tells us, “Work hard and become a leader. Be lazy and never succeed”, Proverbs 12:24 in the Living Bible. Psalm 75:6-7 says that *God* ordains men to serve as leaders, “No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt themselves. It is God who judges: He brings down one, He exalts another”. God is always searching for men whom He can count on as leaders. For example, in 1 Samuel 13:14, “But now your kingdom (Saul) will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him (David) ruler of His people, because you have not kept the Lord’s command”. In Jeremiah 4:1, 25, “If you, Israel, will return, then return to me”. “I looked and there were no people; every bird in the sky had flown away”. In Jeremiah 5:1-2, “Go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, look around and consider, search through her squares. If you can find but one person who deals honestly and seeks the truth, I will forgive this city. I will pardon it. Although they say, ‘As surely as the Lord lives’, still they are swearing falsely”. In

Ezekiel 22:30 God says, “I looked for someone among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so that I would not have to destroy it, but I found no one”.

The above verses all show God’s strong plea for stable and effective servant leadership. The prophets were saying it. Jesus emphasised it in His teaching concept of leadership by saying, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many”, Mark 10:45. “For who is the greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one (leader) who serves”, Luke 22: 27. “A leader is a person who leads a group of people, especially the head of a country, an organisation and so on”.³

Dangerous pitfalls for every leader from Timothy and Titus

1. Is he/she a spiritual person? Is their life different and strong because they are mature in the Christian faith? The answers to the questions will confirm what is said in 1 Timothy 3:6, “He (or she) must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgement as the devil”. Conflicts can come from leadership

³ A.S. Hornby Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, Ninth Edition, (Oxford University Press UK) 2015.

insensitivity, if the leader does not have a pastoral gift and fails to keep the team members on board with him. Maturity enables intervention to resolve issues.

2. Mutual role expectancy which may bring disappointment in among the team, perhaps out of inadequate communication. If the general statements of the purposes or the tasks are not clear, lists of specific duties are not well defined, lines of accountability are not clear, periods of operation are deemed wrong, and any mechanisms for review are not clear, then expect crisis and conflict which will need to be resolved by careful and prayerful leaders.
3. Ministry possessiveness, as the workers are so much attached to their jobs and become defensive about any changes.
4. Doctrinal mistrust. Spiritually or secularly this could be suspecting a hidden agenda by others (or even ourselves). Sometimes we do want to *impose* so that everybody in the team will eventually become like us.
5. Generational gaps. Since changes are occurring and teams are mixtures of older and younger generations of leaders with workers, everyone needs to be considered according to their own needs, perhaps through offering special studies or training.
6. Ethics and morality. 1 Timothy 3: 9 reads, "Keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience". If the leader is not careful this will lead to a lack of confidence in him/her.

One who lacks organisational skills, or deliberately assigns inequality of workload, or breaks personal confidences, or fails to grasp the reasons for a worker's viewpoint, or shows insensitivity to a worker's problem, or fails to express appreciation, or fails to give encouragement in times of stress, or adopts an autocratic attitude, becoming more 'his work' oriented than 'his people' oriented, and fails to implement decisions made within the fellowship, reveals a dangerous lack of ability to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of everybody. Such a leader's insensitive conscience ends up causing low morale. Keep true to being true, always.

7. Clarity of thought and life with Christlikeness in thinking and living. Lead with wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Titus 1: 6-7, "An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless – not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain". Any lack of understanding of the leader by his people affects relationships. The unspoken contract which exists between the leader and the led must be harmonious and well maintained. Dinnen said, "Each party has to pay for the benefit gained from the other party; this is often not realised and difficulties arise when

one side makes demands on the other without seeing the need to make payment for what it hopes to receive”.⁴

Who makes a good leader? from John 10:1-21

- a. A person who enters leadership through the door, John 10:1-2. He/she takes responsibility from God by calling and from the people by proper selection and election. Not a person who comes into the post through crooked ways like bribing people to vote him in or seizing power by military or other manipulative forces.
- b. A born-again person, verses 3-4. A person known to the people in and out of the local community, 1 Timothy 3:7, with a good upright testimony *to all*, not only to his people group or tribe or church group.
- c. Someone who has experienced total freedom because others have nothing against him, 1 Timothy 3:10. People may have confidence in him/her because he/she is transparently trustworthy.
- d. A person whom people may confidently watch and listen to because they are able to teach what they also live, 1 Timothy 3:2. A welcoming person, loving people, open to ideas and suggestions from others in the organisation or the church. One who does not always force his

⁴ Stewart Dinnen [You can Learn to Lead, a Manual for People in Leadership](#) (Christian Focus: Fearn, Scotland), 1997.

ways upon people. He does not have to always be right.

- e. The one whose voice people can know and differentiate from others, John 10:3-5. This has to do with communication. Good communication plays a major role in effective leadership. It helps in preventing conflicts and misunderstanding as the leader's feelings and thoughts are put into understandable words.
- f. A person who is a good listener. He/she is available to people who are under his/ her leadership so that they can communicate well. Best communication is always two-way.
- g. Someone who is considerate to all other people. Nagib taught that, "In an organisation all members should know what the others are doing in order to see how they complement one another". He continues "Reports, written or verbal, are forms of communication. They play a vital role in keeping the big picture clear in the minds of the people concerned".⁵ It is known that a leader's awareness of what keeps the workers loyal and happy is very important because, "consciously or unconsciously, every worker comes to the work place with certain expectations of a sense of fulfillment, achievement, belonging, responsibility, acceptance, participation, direction awareness, opportunity for growth and development,

⁵ Colin Salter, editor My Life Alongside God's Word. Biblical thinking for Sudanese and South Sudanese Christians Volume Three, (WeeFour Publications: Redruth, England) 2015, chapter 4.

understanding, being cared for and freedom”.⁶ So, it is the leader’s task to check and ensure that these expectations are being fulfilled and to take steps to remedy situations that militate against their fulfillment.

- h. The person who is feeding other people. This is going back to what my tribal friend told me concerning their culture, that a leader ‘is the person whose house is open to all’, as well as 1Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8.

This can also mean giving appreciation, recognition, counsel, encouragement, guidance, security, pastoral care, help and fellowship to the people with him or her.

Elmore gave **seven ways for a leader to be relevant.**

1. He started by saying, “Become a student of culture; without understanding the culture of our people we will not be able to influence their lives”.
2. “Learn to distinguish what is cultural and what is timeless. Children and adults may struggle with cultural issues from their own generation”.⁷
3. Like a missionary in a foreign land, decide what you can do to bridge the gap between cultures through honesty, positive attitudes, service to others, responsibility, gratitude and obedience.

⁶ Stewart Dinnen [You Can Learn to Lead, a Manual for People in Leadership](#) (Christian Focus: Fearn, Scotland), 1997.

⁷ Dr Tim Elmore, [Nurturing the Leader Within Your Child: What Every Parent Needs to Know](#) (Magna Publisher Co. Book Division: Mumbai, India) 2003.

Look for redemptive analogies which are useful to people, whether negative or positive examples.

4. Create a 'leadership gymnasium' for exercising leadership as you mentor your followers. Find ways to translate good thoughts into practice, to accelerate their learning by asking hard questions.
5. Communicate from their world, teach them using what you have heard from them. Let them apply what they know by helping them practise what they learn. Transformation comes from application.
6. Never assume that what worked yesterday should work today, because changes happen so quickly in our modern world. People are growing and changing, and their world is growing and changing. Leaders must show creativity and communicate new ideas to mentor followers.
7. Measure success by connecting, not controlling. Be sure to measure the right stuff. A good leader's goal is not to control the followers' lives, but to connect with them so that he/she can give them all the tools they will need to reach their own potential. Pay attention to:
 - how well you are relating to them
 - how safe they feel to talk transparently with you

- how secure they are with themselves and with your love
- how much they feel you understand them
- how much they seem to understand you when you share.

What people expect from their leaders (including children from their parents)

1. **One whose life is an example** to his/her followers. Being an example nurtures the leader in the followers' lives, although the opportunities and challenges we face are awesome and intimidating. Dr Tim Elmore wrote, "You are well aware of the treasure you have in each of your children. And, for a few years, you get to influence your children. But it will cost you. To make them to be the best leaders they can be is the wisest investment anyone can make".⁸
2. **The one who is in the lead, at the head, at the front, and ready for longsuffering**, as Jesus put it in His teaching: "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to become first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many", Matthew 20:26-28.
3. **The person other people can rightly imitate.** He/she is a clean vessel who can be trusted for

⁸ Dr Tim Elmore, Ibid.

stewardship when people watch, and who can guard what has and will be entrusted to them by their employers or by the owners, knowing that they will be asked to give accounts in the end, Matthew 25:14-30, especially verse 19.

4. **The one who offers himself/herself to the people.** Their lives are not their own. A good leader lives for others (as a parent for their children). Jesus was a servant to His mission and His food was to accomplish the will of the One who sent Him. The disciples did not know about this, but they learned it from Him, John 4:32-34.
5. **The person who offers his/her wealth for the sake of other people.** Their wealth is not for themselves. Like Barnabas and the early disciples of Jesus who were selling their properties and sharing with the new believers, Acts 2:32-37. They were concerned to meet the needs of others in their communities. This is not like today when some of our leaders are for themselves and their family members only.
6. **The one who gives his/her time for the sake of other people.** Their time is not for themselves but for others. The dominant concept today seems to be that the leader is the boss so must be taken care of, respected, served and honoured by others being around him/her for long hours. This good leader is the one visiting, serving and honouring other people. One day I volunteered to help new students in my University by taking them around to show

them what it looked like and where everything was, since they were joining for the first time. After the tour I asked them, “What can you say after all that you have seen in and around the University?”. One of the new students said, “Wow! If someone comes out graduating from here, he really needs to be respected”. It was clear to me that this kind of person was looking for promotion and respect from other people. Then I told them, “While you are here you need to be broken, melted, moulded into a new person, also humbled yourself into respecting and honouring all other people wherever you are going to be ministering in the future. This will be a positive change, enabling you to meet the spiritual, physical, mental, economic and social needs of your people”. This is a costly but invaluable process between God and His servants.

7. **The person who leaves everything for the sake of others.** Everything they have and are they do not hold for themselves, but for everybody else. He/she must be hospitable, meaning having love-in-action for strangers, showing hospitality to strangers not entertaining only friends. Because of the environment and responsibilities God has given to the leaders in our times of persecution, poverty, growing numbers of street children, beggars, homelessness, widowers, widows and many travellers who are tired on their ways for various reasons, obedient followers of Jesus,

both church leaders and the church members, must fulfil these biblical acts of mercy by putting aside some of their own money for booking places in guesthouses or hotels for the strangers visiting their cities, or by providing rooms in their own homes for strangers. Tragically, most Christians in our churches are not ready to do so. They appear neither willing nor prepared to assist a stranger. They hope strangers will not come their way for fear of robbery, killing, rape or assault.

The hired leader John 10:12-13

Beware of the person who leads by force, by pay, or by power; one who leads by the autocratic authority of his/her word. They are probably not the ones who came to leadership 'through the door', John 10:1. Or maybe they did, but their roles have subsequently corrupted them. They have hidden agenda. At any time they will disappear from the situation, leaving their people leaderless and very vulnerable.

Some of their poor qualities are:

Working for himself/herself. Jesus put it clearly. This person is a thief who only comes "to steal and kill and destroy", John 10:10. He who is a hired person, who does not own the sheep (people) or the business, when he sees the enemy coming will leave his responsibility and flee away. He cares nothing for the

sheep. He does not know them by their names, which is why there is no response between them.

Using others only for his/her own benefit. The hired person is only working for his pay packet. His is a job, not a calling. He does not listen to the people's needs, issues, concerns, pains, ups and downs.

The lifestyle and teaching of John the Baptist touched my life as an evangelist while I was reading it. His preaching clearly shows that evangelism has social implications on sinners after responding to the message of the gospel for repentance and forgiveness. The change was, and is, to be manifested through transformation in life as the specific wrongs and the old ways are put right. Many people from all walks of life followed John to question him concerning their cases. "What should we do then?" the crowd asked". "Even tax collectors asked, 'What should we do?'" "Some soldiers asked him, 'And what should we do?'" , Luke 3:7-15.

Likewise, some of us today could be accused of some evils in our lives, careers and in our working places. We use corruption and bribery by giving or receiving. We accuse other people falsely for our own advantage. We abuse our position in small or large ways that dishonour God – and we think that nobody sees! Of course, God does. Ultimately, we cannot get away with anything. We must, "produce fruit in keeping with repentance", verse 8.

Failing in what he/she is supposed to do for their people. This all because of a lack of vision for the people, who then perish due to wasted time, poor energy, loss of resources and properties because of

bad management, and corruption in and allowed elsewhere by weak and lazy leadership. People are scattered in their minds and directions since leaders are failing in what they are supposed to do to, and with, and for, their people. No (or poor) production is happening because of a lack of accountability, missing everyone's dreams and with no team direction from the leadership.

Being a person who may be easily bribed. The leader is putting his personal agenda first. Because of his/her example the followers are doing the same in the company, organisation or even in church and family circles. The 'hired leader' is not able to speak on behalf of the people, Proverbs 31:1-9. Such a person can be misled by any ideas or opportunities for gaining money that come his way. Sooner or later the followers will rebel against him.

Can you pick the pitfalls and the plateaus for a good leader in this Proverb?

"The sayings of King Lemuel—an inspired utterance his mother taught him.

Listen, my son! Listen, son of my womb!

Listen, my son, the answer to my prayers!

*Do not spend your strength on women,
your vigour on those who ruin kings.*

It is not for kings, Lemuel—

it is not for kings to drink wine,

not for rulers to crave beer,

*lest they drink and forget what has been decreed,
and deprive all the oppressed of their rights.*

Let beer be for those who are perishing,

*wine for those who are in anguish!
Let them drink and forget their poverty
and remember their misery no more.
Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.
Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy”, Proverbs 31:1-9.*

Examples abound about leaders who abused their power when they were given, or took for themselves, responsibilities in their regimes. Read a few in Luke 3:1-2, 19-20. Luke gave this list during the time of John the Baptist. Someone described them as a, “melancholy list of rulers who are remembered for the evils rather than the good they did”. The question for us here and now is, ‘How will *our* history be written?’, or ‘How can those who are coming after us, the leaders of tomorrow, remember *us* when we are gone?’ I wonder what kind of legacy we are leaving to our followers? Have we been the kind of leader people have every right to expect? Or will most people be very glad that we have gone?

Discussion guide

Using this chapter and Scriptures quoted

1. Does it matter “what people expect in the character of their leader”? Why? Why not? Name some of the issues that may arise from

unmet expectations.

2. From Psalm 75:1-10 discover and share all you can about the final authority for leadership. Does this encourage you or not? Why?
3. Amoko draws seven “pitfalls for every leader” from Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus. Which are the most dangerous for leaders today? Why? Which are the most prevalent among leaders today? Using Timothy and Titus, how can they best be avoided?
4. Thinking about the seven things “people expect from their leaders (including children from their parents)”, can you find them all in the life and leadership of our Lord Jesus? Give New Testament references if you can.
5. Describe the difference between the “hired hand” and the “shepherd” in John 10:1-16. What is the ultimate difference between one and the other? Is there a lesson for us today? What?