

## **Biblical Leadership in This Generation and the Next – James Dema Marchello**

Leadership is one of the most critical issues faced by generation after generation. Everything rises and falls with the kind of leadership that is in place. Many of the woes on the continent of Africa are attributed to poor leadership. The Christian Church is called upon to demonstrate the godly leadership that transforms present society and gives hope to the next generation.

### **A brief definition and explanation of godly leadership:**

Among the many definitions of leadership, I submit a few to address the subject under consideration:

- "A leader is one who influences a specific group of people to move in a God-given direction".<sup>1</sup>
- "Leadership is influence: nothing more, nothing less".<sup>2</sup>
- Leadership is "the capacity and the will to rally men and women to a common purpose" and "the character which inspires confidence".<sup>3</sup>

No-one can lead unless he can influence! But influence can be both positive or negative. The Old Testament mentions ten unfaithful tribal leaders who used their influence to lead people astray. This negative influence ended up in disaster both for themselves and many thousands of people.<sup>4</sup> Godly leaders should use their influence to add value to others. A leader who uses his influence for personal gain is unfaithful! The ten spies used their influence to frighten the people by telling half-truths. In the same event, Joshua and Caleb used their influence positively. They motivated their people *in the direction God desired*. This should always be the attitude and agenda for a godly leader. A godly leader desires to be used by God to influence and lead others towards God's purposes!

From a biblical perspective leadership emphasises character more than anything else. Leadership and leadership ability are not primarily questions about skill. They are questions of heart. God wants to equip

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<sup>1</sup> J. Robert Clinton [www.winston-churchill-leadership.com/leadership-quote-part2.html](http://www.winston-churchill-leadership.com/leadership-quote-part2.html) .

<sup>2</sup> <http://churchleadershiptraining.blogspot.com/2006/05/article-by-john-maxwell.html> 25<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

John Maxwell *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson) 1998.

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Bernard\\_Montgomery,\\_1st\\_Viscount\\_Montgomery\\_of\\_Alamein](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Bernard_Montgomery,_1st_Viscount_Montgomery_of_Alamein) 1887-1976.

<sup>4</sup> Numbers 13 & 14.

leaders with skills and give talents for effective leadership. A leader without a character that reflects the values of Christ will certainly fail in the long run.

### **How can we cultivate today's godly leadership who will inspire and positively influence the next generation?**

1. **Set an example – be a role model.** Leaders set the pace and set the example for the church and, to some extent, the wider community. "Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing".<sup>5</sup>

It has been said over and over again that there can be no strong church without strong leaders. There can never be a prayerful church without prayerful leaders. There can never be a visionary church without visionary leadership. It is also true there can never be a growing church without growing leaders. If the leaders are weak, the church will be weak. But if the leaders are strong, the church will be strong.

What is true for the church is equally true in secular society. There cannot be good governance nor the management of resources to the benefit of all citizens without good leaders.

Leaders in church and in society must set examples for the rest. Let people know that they can trust you, believe in you, and follow you, just as you follow the Lord. To be an example or a role model calls for transparency of lifestyle. Someone said that to be a leader is to be put in a box made of glass – people can see you from all sides. Leaders are to model the lifestyle to which all members should aspire. We have many leaders today but not enough role models. If today's leaders are going to make a difference and positively influence the next generation for Christ, they must become role models that people can emulate. They must be able to say like Paul: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Albert Schweitzer [www.schweitzerfellowship.org/features/about/quotes.aspx](http://www.schweitzerfellowship.org/features/about/quotes.aspx) .

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:1.

Christian leaders should seek to leave a lasting legacy of godliness for those who come behind them.<sup>7</sup> That is only possible by constantly maintaining a godly character and conduct. Your character will impact generations to come.

According to research conducted by Richard L. Dugdale, this generational impact is illustrated by the stories of two people:

A man by the name Max Juke did not believe in God and cared even less. He got married to a girl of the same conviction. From this union came 1,026 descendants. Studies showed that 300 died prematurely, 100 were sent to the penitentiary, 190 sold themselves to vice, 100 were drunkards, and the family cost the state of New York over a million dollars in medical expenses.

A second man, Jonathan Edwards, believed in God and in his Christian training he married a girl of like character. From that union 729 descendants were studied and they discovered that 300 were preachers, 65 were college professors, 13 were university presidents, 6 were authors, 3 U.S. Congressmen and 1 was vice president of the United States.<sup>8</sup>

The way we live our lives has a profound impact on people around us *and on generations to come*. This is not only true in families, but is also true in leadership circles. The writer of Hebrews underscores the matter of generational impact by saying, "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith".<sup>9</sup>

**2. Grow and mentor godly leaders.** Another important factor in cultivating godly leadership is the crucial need for growing and mentoring other leaders. Mentoring is one of the key tools in developing new and old leaders. The crucial question any leader should ask is, "Am I raising up potential leaders?" The most important leadership principle, according to John Maxwell, is that those closest to the leader will determine the success level of that leader. Usually leaders fail to develop other leaders. This could be because they lack training to do so, or because they have wrong attitudes about allowing others to come

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Timothy 2:1-3; 4:8; 6:6; 6:11-12.

<sup>8</sup> Richard L. Dugdale Study of the Juke family, Annual Report of the Prison Association of New York, 1875, [www.disabilitymuseum.org/lib/docs/759.htm](http://www.disabilitymuseum.org/lib/docs/759.htm) .

A. E. Winship, Jukes-Edwards A Study in Education and Heredity [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/15623](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/15623).

<sup>9</sup> Hebrews 13:7.

alongside them. Often leaders *wrongly* believe that they must compete with the people close to them rather than working with them. One disturbing issue facing the African nations is government leaders who refuse to leave office at the right time. They do all that is in their power to eliminate potential successors. Unfortunately this attitude is true to some extent in church circles. It is a challenge to us all.

Effective leaders view leadership selection and the development of others into leaders as priorities in their ministry.<sup>10</sup> They see this as partnering with God to raise up future leaders. A work of God cannot last long unless it produces new leaders. Leaders often forget that they are replaceable not indispensable!

Growing up other leaders (that is developing them) is not a recent discovery. At the time of Moses, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, realised that a leader could not operate without help. So he took Moses aside and gave him timeless and valuable advice.<sup>11</sup> Later Moses needed to have his arms held up and supported by others.<sup>12</sup> Moses knew what he wanted to accomplish. He also knew he was unable to do it all by himself.

Good leadership should bring out the best in other people. Lead to enable them to develop their full potential. The goal of leadership development is to improve productivity, efficiency and effectiveness. As a good leader begins to retire, people want to see his good principles perpetuated. Developing leaders leaves behind a significant leadership legacy. It provides for a wider ministry coverage. This leads to team work. Teamwork brings more ministry productivity.

"If you study the history of governments, corporations, and "religious" organisations, the effect of the concentration of power in one individual can range from ineffectiveness to corruption and ruin".<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Paul & Timothy: Acts 16:1-5; Acts chapters 16-20; Acts 20:4; 1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 16:10; 1 Timothy 1:3; 4:1-8.

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 18:13-26. (1) Teach all the people to understand God's Law for themselves. (2) Chose others to lead and be responsible for smaller groups of people. (3) Develop those leaders by being available to help them when they need it, but otherwise leaving them to do their jobs.

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 17:8-16.

<sup>13</sup> Steve Bartz, elder [Providing Biblical Leadership](http://www.willowcreek.org/news/5_18_04/elders.asp) Willow Creek Church [http://www.willowcreek.org/news/5\\_18\\_04/elders.asp](http://www.willowcreek.org/news/5_18_04/elders.asp) .

## Why do incumbent leaders find it difficult to groom other potential leaders to succeed them?

Among many common reasons one finds the following:

- **Fear of losing control** is the number one factor that hinders grooming potential successors. Most leaders have the view that to be a leader is to be in charge or in control. We forget that leadership is influence. You can be a leader without necessarily being in charge or holding any position. Leaders who want to be in charge should listen to this wise counsel:

"To lead people, walk beside them. . . . As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honour and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate ... When the best leader's work is done the people say, "We did it ourselves!"<sup>14</sup>

- **A false sense of oneself – Indispensability.** Some leaders have a tendency to believe that they are irreplaceable. We forget that we are human beings. We forget that we are what we are *only* by the grace of God. We also forget that we are mortal. We are passing away with time. This issue about the indispensability of leaders raises the age old question: Are leaders born or made? One of the popular assumptions has been that leaders are born and not made. According to this view, leaders are those who are born with the innate tendency to lead others. Included in this persuasion are some Christians who believe that leadership exclusively belongs to special individuals who are naturally endowed to lead others.

With reference to the development of others, leadership does not exclusively belong to the so-called "natural" leaders. The best leadership is that which is "acquired" not that which is inherited. Great leaders, from royal families, have given birth to heirs who did not achieve the same level of performance as their parents. From the many examples it is apparent that "more than genes determine the extent of one's leadership capabilities."<sup>15</sup>

- **Mistrusting potential successors.** Trust is crucial in developing the potential in others. People tend to bring out their best when they are trusted. No one started as a champion no matter how good they are today doing the things they are doing. Everyone learns through experience. We need to let go and trust others with responsibility. Even when they fail, it is part of their learning

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<sup>14</sup> Lao-Tsu. <http://www.winston-churchill-leadership.com/leadership-quote-part11.html> .

<sup>15</sup> Michael J. Larry Spurgeon on Leadership: Key Insights for Christian Leaders from the Prince of Preachers (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications) 2003, page 24.

process. The element of trust in grooming potential leaders is evident in the New Testament. Our Lord Jesus demonstrated a tremendous amount of trust in developing the apostles who appeared, at the time He called them, just a bunch of hooligans. At the end of three years, they were mighty men of God who turned their world upside down and had done exploits for God.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Inspire Vision

“Where there is no vision the people perish”,<sup>17</sup>. What is a vision? A vision is a dream based on today’s reality – the preferred future. As a leader you have got to have vision – a God given vision. Helen Keller was asked once “What would be worse than being born blind?” to which she replied “Having sight without a vision.”<sup>18</sup> What a profound statement by a girl who was born into this world deaf, dumb and blind. She could not help how she came into this world, but she certainly could help how she left this world. She had an insightful vision.

The Bible is full of examples of leaders who had God-given visions and lived to pursue those visions. In the Old Testament one sees Moses with a vision of leading the people of Israel to the freedom of the Promised Land – from slavery in Egypt.<sup>19</sup> Young David killed Goliath and freed Israel from disgrace by the uncircumcised Philistine.<sup>20</sup> King Solomon built the Temple; and Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup> In the New Testament: Peter ministered to large crowds.<sup>22</sup> Paul saw possibilities in pagan cities and planted churches wherever he could.<sup>23</sup>

A vision is bigger than the leader. A vision outlives the leader. A vision that is within the reach of a leader *by himself* is not challenging enough and is not worth pursuing. Since a vision outlives the leader, the

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<sup>16</sup> Matthew 4:18-22; Matthew 9:9-13; Matthew 16:13-28; Mark 3:13-19; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Ephesians 2:19-22.

<sup>17</sup> Proverbs 29:18 Authorised Version, King James Bible.

“Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint”, English Standard Version.

“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint”, New International Version.

<sup>18</sup> Helen Keller [www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/h/helen\\_keller.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/h/helen_keller.html) .

<sup>19</sup> Exodus 3:7-12.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Samuel 17:20-50.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Kings 6 and Nehemiah chapters 1-6.

<sup>22</sup> Acts 1:15; 2:14; 3:11-12; 4:8; 4:29; 4:33; 5:12-16; 5:21; 5:42; 10:34; etc.

<sup>23</sup> Acts 13:1-4; 13:16; 13:43; 14:1; 14:3; 14:14-15; 14:21-3; 16:10; 16:13-15; 17:1-4; 17:11-12; 17:17; 17:32-34; 18:4-5; 18:7-11; 19:26; 20:1-2; 20:17-21; 20:25-32.

challenge is to pass on the vision to other leaders. Effective leaders pass on their vision to the next in line. "The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind others with the conviction and will to carry on."<sup>24</sup> Leaders are challenged to pass God's vision to the next generation. That is only possible through communicating the vision and by personally living the vision. Without the ability to communicate, a leader travels alone. No one will catch your vision unless you have the passion to live your vision, giving a picture of it to others.

- **Remain true and faithful to the God-given vision.** It is one thing to have a vision, and it is another thing to relentlessly pursue it to fulfilment. This is the most challenging and frightening leadership issue. Biblical leaders who were not obedient to God in the vision He gave them, led their followers to suffer the consequences. Pastor Eugene Harder sums it all up when he says that God expects us to pass *a torch of righteousness* that inspires future generations to walk in His ways.<sup>25</sup> It does not really matter whether we are remembered by succeeding generations. What does matter is that each of us passes on a godly vision with a passion that inspires and impacts leaders of the next generation.
- **Maintain an ardent (passionate) desire to please God.** Henri Nouwen challenges us to seek this central and defining characteristic of Christian leadership. "The central question at the heart of Christian leadership is, are the leaders of the future truly men and women of God, people with an ardent desire to dwell in God's presence, to listen to God's voice, to look at God's beauty, to touch God's incarnate Word, and to taste fully God's infinite goodness?"<sup>26</sup> Nouwen then suggests that the greatest tool for effective Christian leadership may be a mirror, and a group of friends to make sure you are looking into it with clarity and focus. Men and women of God should never forget that before God can do a great work in an organisation, that work must first be done in the heart of the leader. This is especially true in Christian leadership. Unless God has taken our hearts captive, all of our good 'doing' will lack spiritual integrity and Christian authority. Our work will expose the

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<sup>24</sup> Walter J. Lippmann [www.quoteworld.org/quotes/8381](http://www.quoteworld.org/quotes/8381) .

<sup>25</sup> Pastor Eugene Harder of New Hope Community Church <http://www.newhope.bc.ca/94-06-05.htm> .

<sup>26</sup> Henri Nouwen 1932-1996, quoted in Brian D. McLaren *The Church on the Other Side* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) 2003, p.117.

absence of God's anointing. It is at the exact moment that we think we "have it all together" that we cease to be useable in the work of God's kingdom.

- **Keep a clear conscience before God.** The goal of the Christian leader must be to go to bed every night with a clear conscience and a heart right with God. God only asks one thing of leaders: that we seek Him with all our heart, to know and to do His will. The quality of our life is in direct proportion to our commitment and relationship with God.

As a leader always strive to be a man or a woman that God can trust. A leader's word is the measure of his character. People extend trust to the limit of truth. To trust someone who does not tell the truth is to trust a lie.

The spiritual quality of the shepherds affects the spiritual health of the local church. The church is a barometer of the spiritual life of its shepherds. It is very difficult for church members to grow beyond immature spiritual shepherds. God's passion is for each of us to love Him and seek Him. The spiritual shepherds of any flock should be examples of men who know that God greatly loves them and who, in turn, deeply love and desire to know God as one would love a very close friend. When the spiritual shepherds love God, the church will be dynamic and vital.

After the resurrection, Jesus asked Peter three times, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these", John 21:15-17. God is seeking men who really love Him and who desire to shepherd God's flock God's way.

"Effective leaders become convinced of a sense of destiny. They recognise that God has His hand on them in a special way for special purposes. This sense of destiny deepens as God begins to unfold more clearly the life purpose and role for the leader. They gradually recognise, and then partner with, the destiny-shaping activities God is orchestrating to move them toward their God-ordained purpose in life."<sup>27</sup>

### **Characteristics of Godly Leadership**

The following summary based on the Leadership Model of Joshua, by unnamed author, is insightful.

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<sup>27</sup> Bobby Clinton of Fuller Seminary, <http://lifeandleadership.org/?p=19> .

- Godly leadership is influencing other people toward God's purposes for them, primarily by setting the pace and showing the way.
- A godly leader is one who demonstrates Christ-like character and empowered competence.
- A godly leader is a person of genuine vision, who sees with the eye of faith what God wills to do.
- Godly leadership is serving those we are called to lead.
- The formation of a godly leader involves the lifelong development of godly character, leadership skills and strategic Christian values.
- Godly leaders have a proper estimate of their own strengths and limitations. They are confident but not arrogant in their calling and equipping for spiritual leadership.
- Godly leadership involves developing team relationships, working to achieve tasks, while inspiring and motivating the people who are being led.

May we be the Christian leaders who are credible and not just clever. May we be the kind of leaders that God can trust; the kind of leaders Sudan is waiting for. May we be the kind of leaders that will impact the next generation and propel them in pursuit of God's purposes for their lives and communities. May we earn the right and respect to be heard by those that follow us. And may the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing to God forever. Amen.

## **Discussion guide**

*Using this chapter and Scriptures quoted:*

1. Suggest your own definition for godly leadership from examples you personally know.  
Briefly evaluate all definitions offered by your group. (If on your own use the three from the opening of this chapter).
2. "Leadership ability ... is a question of the heart". From Numbers 13 & 14 explain how the hearts of Caleb and Joshua differed from the hearts of the other spies.
3. What are the practical implications *for today's leaders* of Paul's statement, "I urge you to imitate me ...

Timothy will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach ...”,

1 Corinthians 4:16-17?

4. Why is it important to “leave office at the right time”?

In what ways can “your” ministry continue, even when “you” are not there?

Consider 2 Timothy 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:1-8; Philippians 1:12-18.

5. Which of the three difficulties in grooming successors (mentioned above) do you think is the most common?

Why do you think this is?

What can be done to change this?

6. Why is it necessary for the leader to have a vision, and to share it so other people catch it?

Give examples from Scripture, and from Sudan today.

7. Why should a leader keep a clear conscience *before God*?

What happens if they don't?

Consider 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1.