

# Lesson 2: The Tasks of a Leader

## Introduction

A leader's tasks may be well defined or very fluid. A leader has to do what is necessary in order to fulfil their mandate. This is why it is important for a leader to know what it is they are called to do. Additionally the leader must have a good understanding of the nature and scope of their authority.

A leader who understands the servant-king leadership model sees their position of leadership not firstly as an office to occupy or a state to maintain, but as a tool to achieve a purpose. They have been given authority in order to carry out a mandate. They have a calling to fulfil.

A biblical leader understands that they are in authority because they are under authority and as one under authority they have been given a commission to perform a task. They know they will also need to give an account for their work, and thus carry direct responsibility for their decisions and actions as a leader.

In this lesson we aim to consider some general tasks that almost any leadership position involves. We are considering a leader who aims to serve their office and the duties that it entails. We are not considering the leader who believes their office exists to serve them or give them honour.

## Leadership comes to you

Sometimes leadership falls upon you, even though you hoped to avoid it. In life, leadership is unavoidable.

Consider a young man who fails to lead and rule over his passions. Led by his passions, he gets his girlfriend pregnant. Not ruling over his sexuality (poor leadership) has brought this about. The baby is born. Now the young man is a father. Being a father is a position that demands real leadership. The young man thinks he did not choose this position, but now he has it. He is responsible and must face the consequences of his choice to indulge his flesh. Despite his planning or lack thereof, he now occupies a position of leadership. How will he lead?

Consider David who was tending the sheep and Samuel arrived and revealed God had chosen David to lead Israel.

Every one of us, sooner or later, is given some responsibility, some area where we are in authority. That is the field of our leadership. Your body, your mind, your possessions, your relationships, your work, those in your care. This is your sphere of leadership.

## A. General tasks of a leader

### 1. Lead yourself

Self-leadership is an important component of a leader. By self-leadership I don't mean that the leader is not under authority, but the leader is able to self-manage.

*Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Timothy 4:16).*

*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood (Acts 20:28).*

Your leadership role may not be to shepherd God's flock, but the same truth applies. As a leader you need to keep watch over yourself.

Six things to do as you lead yourself:

#### i. Know yourself

A good leader has learned to monitor their energy levels and know their limitations, weaknesses, strengths and quirks. This kind of leader knows himself or herself, and knows how to stay healthy mentally and emotionally. This includes knowing when to call a crisis, take time out, or say no.

A person who has not come to terms with themselves is not well prepared to lead.

#### ii. Deal with your insecurities

As a leader it is very dangerous when you act out of your insecurities. Pride and insecurity are flip sides of the same coin. Everyone has insecurities. What is required of you is to recognise your insecurities and make sure you never make decisions or take action based on your insecurities.

#### iii. Dig your own well

As a leader you need to know how to "dig your own well". How can you feed others if you cannot find food, even for yourself? How can you lead others if you are blind and can't see where you are going? For this reason you have to monitor the inputs in your life. You need to find refreshing in order to refresh others. You need to make sure you are investing into your gifting, and developing yourself.

#### iv. Learn to set boundaries

Identify the things that drain you. Monitor your outputs. Learn to say no to the things that will render your leadership ineffective. Tiredness and discouragement are two of the things you must guard against. Beware of VDPs (Very Draining People) and beware of being a people-pleaser who tries to do everything and meet every demand.

"If your output exceeds your input your upkeep will be your downfall."

v. Keep yourself free and focused

Recognise when people are projecting their issues onto you. An expression that comes to mind is: "Don't put your stuff on me!"

A leader serves God, and in serving God, you serve people. But you are God's servant not man's servant. You don't take your directions from people, neither should you be at the beck and call of every bleat from those you lead.

Learn to recognise when people are "pouring water on your battery" and don't listen to the haters / detractors / mockers and scoffers.

*When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates— Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono." But they were scheming to harm me; so I sent messengers to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?" (Nehemiah 6:1-3).*

*While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you." He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:46-50).*

vi. Don't be an island

This is the counter-point to the previous point. While a leader needs to stay free from toxic relationships, a leader must also build healthy relationships that keep a form of meaningful accountability in their lives.

These relationships should be formed with a few key people who are trustworthy, and mature in the faith. There should be at least one person who knows you, loves you and is able to encourage you as well as confront you and call you out when you are wrong. This person cannot be under your leadership, and they should preferably be a same-sex friend.

A related issue is learning to receive criticism. Criticism is like prophecy – you have to test it. Not all criticism is valid. Not all criticism is invalid.

A leader is not a one-man lone ranger, but rather someone who walks in relationship with others and knows how to apologise when that is the right thing to do. As leaders we must not project an image of invulnerability, nor build a leadership cult that exempts us from correction.

## 2. Lead in your domain

A leader must learn to lead in the day to day areas of their lives before leading in some big calling. We must have a “make your bed every day” philosophy. Keeping our private life in order is where we first learn to exercise rule. When we lead well in the little, we are becoming qualified for greater things.

*"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?" (Luke 16:10-12).*

*(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) (1 Timothy 3:5).*

We must also remember that we never graduate from the “little things”. We don’t ever leave behind or move beyond these first areas of our lives. As we grow in leadership, we do not become more important. It is just the task that becomes weightier. We must not neglect the basics. Make your bed, early, every day.

You may become the CEO of a multinational corporation, but you are still to lead in your family and marriage and serve in your home. You should still pick up your own dirty washing and put it in the wash-basket. A true leader is always serving humbly and takes care of his immediate domain with the same diligence as anything else.

When you serve in a local church, you should delight in any act of service and not see any task as something beneath you. No matter what office you may occupy, the heart of serving should compel you to do what is needed in the moment – sometimes that may mean putting the chairs straight or cleaning the floor. When you are not available to do a seemingly menial job, it is not because you are above that task, but because you are prioritising something else, that perhaps only you can do.

### 3. Go forward and take others with you

#### A leader leads

Leading is active not passive. It is functional not positional.

If you were a research scientist and wanted to be a leader in your field, you would need to take knowledge forward. It is unlikely that you would increase the body of knowledge in your field without diligent, focused effort.

*“Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.”*

– Thomas Edison

A leader understands that nothing will be achieved without effort, or work, or investment of some form. You are not a leader if you are not leading. What is achieved is not up to chance, or lucky breaks, or circumstances. It is up to you as a leader to exert the necessary influences to bring something about.

*“The more I practice, the luckier I get.”*

- Gary Player quoting Jerry Barber

As a leader your task is to lead. This is not as self-evident as it seems. Too many who are called to lead or find themselves in a position of leadership **fail to lead**. Abdication is common and good leadership is uncommon.

Additionally, you are not a leader if no one is following.

The first task of leading people is to know who you are leading, why it is you are leading them, where it is you are taking them, and how you intend to take them there.

#### **This task can be broken down into a list of sub-tasks:**

- Honour the future
  - Develop vision
  - Plan
  - Communicate
  - Demonstrate
  - Delegate
- Honour the past
  - Acknowledge those who came before
  - Run your own race
- Honour the present
  - Prioritise
  - Hold the course
  - Pay the price

i. Honour the future

a. **Develop vision**

Prophetic leaders see the future, prepare for the future and become the future.

We should be a forward looking people of hope. This kind of leadership requires vision.

Sometimes God asks what we see, what we want. Sometimes he prescribes to us what is required and other times he opens the door for us to ask for something spectacular. Someone said if your vision doesn't scare you, it probably isn't from God. Well, it is true that a big vision should exceed your ability to bring it about and take you as a leader to the realm of faith where you are drawn to depend upon God.

To obtain vision, you must pray, meditate, contemplate, daydream and imagine what it is that you are aiming to achieve. As human beings we are able to receive vision from the word of God, and from the work of the Holy Spirit in us, and from our own creative thoughts. All of these play a part, if we are willing to put time aside and silence the distractions for a moment.

What kind of a marriage do you want? Envision it. What kind of a home do you want? Envision it. What kind of a business do you want to build? Envision it. It starts with vision.

b. **Plan**

Someone has said when we fail to plan we plan to fail. Planning is essential in leadership. You cannot lead without a strategy. Along with vision one needs a plan of action for how to bring the vision into being.

c. **Communicate**

Having vision is not enough. Planning without implementation is not enough. We need to rally the troops. This is where the leader's task turns to involving others. It requires envisioning those we are leading.

*Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it" (Habakkuk 2:2).*

Vision needs to be communicated. We must use skill and energy in formulating the words that communicate vision. It is a bit like making a sales pitch, but cannot be faked. If we are not passionate, we will not generate passion in others.

Good communication is burdensome. We must put in the effort to communicate, to explain the rationale behind the dream and goals. We must not just issue commands but win hearts. Inspiring leaders have willing volunteers following them, not resentful conscripts.

#### **d. Demonstrate**

Credibility is built by a leader who carries the load. A leader must lead from the front, not from above. We go ahead, showing the way. We step out first, taking the risk and paying the price.

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach (Acts 1:1).*

Leaders must not be of the “those who can, do; those who can’t, teach” variety. Rather the leader must set the example.

*Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).*

*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).*

*In everything set them an example by doing what is good (Titus 2:7).*

*Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith (Hebrews 13:7).*

Are you living in such a way that you hope people would imitate your faith?

#### **e. Delegate**

A leader must build away from himself. At the right time we must open doors for others. Handing over responsibility WITH authority. Raising others into what we know. Planning for growth beyond ourselves. Expecting a generation to go beyond us and being willing to pass the baton.

These are all tasks the leader must understand and when the time comes, he must do. What we lead is a stewardship. Usually we will not be the first or the last, but just one person in the bigger plan of God.

##### **ii. Honour the past**

###### **a. Acknowledge those who came before**

We stand on the shoulders of giants. This is a humbling expression that shows that a leader understands their past and the privilege of leading. God was at work before you, and he has used others to prepare things for you. And you will pass on a legacy to those who come after you. Honour the past. Recognise the work of those who came before you.

## **b. Run your own race**

We are not guarding a monument. Leaders are on a mission. As we honour the past by acknowledging those who contributed before us, we also honour the past by discarding unhelpful traditions and bringing change. A leader doesn't simply maintain, but moves forward. We are not caretakers and janitors, but pioneers and pilgrims.

### iii. Honour the present

#### **a. Prioritise**

A leader has to make tough decisions. There is never enough time. There are never enough helpers. There is never enough money. Needs often crowd in on the progress we hoped to achieve. Things that are urgent can easily overshadow things that are important.

The task here is to work out what priorities that keep the main thing the main thing. It takes skill not to be distracted or lose focus, while still aiming to address many needs that seem to compete with one another.

Figure out what is:

- Important and urgent
- Important but not urgent
- Urgent but not important
- Not urgent, nor important

The greatest risk is to lose sight of the important but not urgent.

An example is learning to save money. The discipline required is great. It takes vision, wisdom and tough choices. Another example is prayer. How do we prioritise? Often it is what bleats loudest right now that gets our attention. A leader will give attention to the important things that don't demand attention.

There are even people we lead who never ask for anything or put any demands on us as leaders, but that does not mean they don't need anything.

#### **b. Stay the course**

A leader must keep things moving in the right direction. By faith and perseverance we inherit. A leader must be consistent and keep going back to the vision. Achieving the vision usually requires a long time of moving in the same direction, irrespective of the apparent rate of progress.

It takes years to teach a child to say please and thank you. Leaders must keep the course and when something causes a deviation, the leader must steer things back to the right heading again.

This also entails providing stability. A skilful leader does not inflame a situation, nor stir up or create instability. A leader brings calm, peace, order and inspires confidence in the midst of a crisis. The leader doesn't scream "we're all going to die!"

### **c. Pay the price**

Leadership is not a popularity contest. The tasks that leadership requires are not glamorous and usually not rewarded directly.

*If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.*

*Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar?*

*In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.*

*But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast.*

*Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!*

*If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me.*

*What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.*

*Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible (1 Corinthians 9:12-19).*

## B. Theology of leadership

The mandate to lead was bestowed by God on mankind when God commissioned Adam and Eve.

*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

*God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:27-28).*

The idea here is that God has created us in his image and given us authority to rule over creation as his representatives. We are commissioned to fill the earth and subdue it. The term subdue is used in the pre-fall context, with no sin or conflict in the picture.

The implication is we are not ruling to conquer so much as to develop. Mankind is called to take the undeveloped world with all its potential and develop it. This leadership involves using gifts and skills and creative energy to bring forth the potential for **beauty** and **usefulness** in every context we encounter.

If I apply this reasoning to my life, it will cause me to use my energy to improve my world.

Examples:

- streamlining a process to make it more efficient
- not littering, but actually promoting a neat and beautiful environment
- not gossiping but speaking words that affirm what is good
- taking responsibility for what is under your care
- promoting law and order
- making my room / home a place of beauty and peace
- etcetera, etcetera

In the light of God's mandate to mankind, I am at odds with decay, corruption, poor workmanship, entropy, broken relationships, abuses and injustices. Not only do I want to pay attention to the details, I want to be part of the solution not the problem.

## Questions on Module One, Lesson Two

1. Why should we lead?
2. Name two areas of your life in which you exercise leadership.
3. Describe an area of your life where you could lead better. Explain.
4. How can a person find vision?
5. What is the most important task of a leader?
6. How should a leader get people to follow them?

These questions can be answered online at:

<http://www.tanacitychurch.mg/foundations-of-leadership.html>

Alternatively, write your name and answer the questions on this page.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: