



#71250

Leadership 101

This resource has been adapted from *The Servant Leader*.

ROAD OF LIFE

The road of life is a road of service.

Most would agree with that statement; loving service to spouse, children, the enlarged family, the church, the school, and the neighborhood. Most accept this servanthood role of life with joy. Being human, however, we may experience times of resentment.

For the example of the perfect servant, we look to our Lord Jesus, “*Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!*” (Phil. 2:6-8)

The road of life is a road of leadership.

Fewer people would accept that statement. For many people the word “leadership” has the frightening implication of responsibility. “It’s great for others, but don’t involve me,” we often hear.

As we progress through this resource, we will analyze what it is about leadership that frightens people and give some suggestions about how to deal with this.

SERVANTS AND LEADERS

For the Christian, the progression from servanthood to leadership can be a natural, joyous one. It is often difficult to discover where one ends and the other begins. As we examine this concept, we will note similar characteristics of each and then progress to an in-depth study of leadership.

Both servants and leaders:

- have varying personalities and abilities
God offers us the same amount of grace, but has given different talents and gifts.
- are followers of the Savior
- show love and concern for people
Jesus said, “*Feed my lambs*” and “*Take care of my sheep*” (John 21:15-16).
- are dedicated
Jesus said, “*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God*” (Luke 9:62).
- receive personal rewards for their service
“*Let us not weary in doing good, for at the proper time we shall reap a harvest if we do not give up*” (Gal. 6:9).

Can you think of other things these two roles have in common?

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Servanthood is all-inclusive — it involves the sum total of our living.
“*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord*”
(Rom. 12:11).

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is but one aspect of this total commitment.

What is it?

According to *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, to lead is to guide on a way, or a position at the front. Leadership is a noun describing one who leads. A Christian leader is first and foremost a follower of the Savior, which should be apparent in all concepts and actions.

Are leaders born or made?

Both. While their Maker may endow some with good leadership skills, Christian leaders can be developed.

Why are people afraid of it?

Some people hesitate because they do not want the responsibility of decision-making. Others may not fully understand what a leadership position entails. There also may be personal reasons that are not stated.

Finding the answers to these questions may encourage us to undertake a formal leadership role. If not, at least we will have a great appreciation for those who do, and we will be better informal leaders.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEADERS

Most groups in our culture have a central figure or formal leader. Whether that person is elected or appointed, and whether or not that person is the best qualified, that person is perceived by the rest of the group to be their leader and consequently is given special status and authority.

At certain times, various group members perform leadership functions. In this role, they are called “informal” leaders.

UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP

There are three approaches to understanding leadership:

1. as an individual trait
2. as a function of the situation
3. as a function of the group

Let's take a look at leadership as an **individual trait**.

Leadership is not solely a matter of personal traits.

Research only shows that:

- in some circumstances, leaders excel in certain personality traits; and
- if a person possesses certain traits, there is a stronger possibility that this individual will be elected or assigned to a leadership position.

Next we will look at leadership as a **function of the situation**.

This approach states that the person who is (or becomes) a leader depends mainly on the demands of the specific situation. If a burning building must be evacuated, obviously the best leader of the exodus would be the individual who knows the quickest way out.

This leads to the conclusion that leadership:

- is not something that can be applied from outside the group;
- does not mean that acceptance in one group insures acceptance in other groups;
- can include certain qualities of personality and performance; and
- is something that develops or is achieved.

A good Christian leader is determined as much by the situation as by personal attributes or group requirements. This person loves the Lord, loves His work, loves people, and is willing to learn.

We learn by doing. To develop your leadership skills, practice the following:

- Think (for yourself).....1 Kings 3:9
- Analyze.....Luke 14:28
- Make DecisionsRomans 15:25, 28
- Express YourselfNehemiah 2:17-18, 20
- Organize.....1 Corinthians 14:40
- PrayLuke 18:1
- Study God’s WordProverbs 4:4
- ListenProverbs 1:5
- TrustProverbs 3:5-6
- PlanProverbs 21:5
- Prepare.....2 Timothy 2:15
- DelegateExodus 18:19-23
- Supervise.....Nehemiah 4:13-23

Finally we look at leadership as a **function of the group**.

This approach emphasizes what the leader actually does, rather than what she is or what she knows.

Margaret E. Kuhn in *You Can’t Be Human Alone: Handbook on Group Procedures for the Local Church* states: “All persons are potential leaders in some situation in that they have something to contribute in the process of:

- facing problems and arriving at group decisions
- making human relationships more satisfying.”

There are three styles of group function leadership: authoritarian, laissez-faire (le-,sā-,’fer), and democratic.

Style	Authoritarian	Laissez-Faire	Democratic
Policy Decided	By leader	By individuals with minimum leader input	By group with leader assistance
Process Determined	By leader — one step at a time	By leader only upon request	By group with leader prepared to offer alternatives
Work/Tasks	Dictated by leader	No leader input	Group divides task
Leader’s Role in Evaluation	“Personal” in evaluating work	Little attempt to appraise or regulate member actions	Objective evaluation of members
Possible Results	Hostility Dependency Quick decisions	Disorganization Inferior work Allows creativity	Good morale High productivity Slower process

There is no wrong style of leadership in given circumstances. The best style for the particular group and situation may be:

- Authoritarian
 - In emergencies
 - With a group unaccustomed to making decisions or assuming responsibility
- Laissez-faire
 - With a group whose members are highly individualistic and not used to authority
- Democratic
 - With a group whose leader and members are willing to share the responsibilities for group relationships and actions

FORCES THAT INFLUENCE LEADERSHIP

However, there are other forces that influence leadership. Consider these:

1. The Leader
 - Personal values
 - Confidence in the group's knowledge and ability
 - Understanding of leadership
 - Feelings of security or insecurity
2. The Group
 - Size and organizational structure
 - Cohesiveness and communication patterns
 - Personality, value systems, and role concepts
3. The Organization
 - Basic view of Christian community and individual worth
4. The Situation
 - The task and conditions under which it is to be completed
 - Social climate and interpersonal relationships
 - Degree of success previously achieved
 - Influence of previous leader

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

While there are no absolute, never-fail rules, here are some dependable suggestions that will help every group leader.

1. PRAY, PRAY, PRAY.
2. Seek to understand the varying styles of leadership.
3. Assume responsibility and encourage other members to share your responsibility for leadership functions.
4. Attempt to evaluate the forces within yourself, the group, and its endeavors which influence your leadership behavior.
5. Try to understand why an individual or the entire group responds in varying ways in varying situations.
6. Cultivate flexibility rather than rigidity in leadership.
7. Seek to understand the needs of individuals and the collective group.
8. Learn the “tools of the trade” so you can assist in carrying out the tasks of the group.
9. Meet necessary deadlines.
10. Keep in mind both immediate priority and long range objectives.
11. Be thoroughly acquainted with the purpose of the organization.
12. Above all, depend upon God and trust that, with His help, all things are possible.

“I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13).

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Most nominating committees could give numerous reasons why people refuse to accept leadership roles. The following are probably not the words they hear, but the more basic reasons behind those refusals.

- Fear of the unknown, not being sure what the position entails
- The inherent risk of being “out front” or “on top”
- Modesty, whether true or false
- Previous unpleasant leadership experience
- The feeling that the group is bound by tradition and cannot change

If an organization consistently has difficulty securing nominees for office it might be wise for the group to study the principles of leadership and examine its practices in the light of new knowledge.

- Are all members aware of and in agreement about group goals?
- Are the functions of each leadership position clearly defined?
- Are individual members willing to fulfill “informal” leadership roles to support the “formal” leader?
- Is the group flexible and able to adjust to new ideas?
- Does the group reflect the loving forgiveness of Christ in its personal relationships?

“To be the formal leader of any group is no simple assignment. No one can possibly succeed in it alone without the presence and interaction of information leaders, the response and support of group members and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

You Can't Be Human Alone

There probably has never been a time in all history when the church needed strong leadership more than now. Let's acquire the skills available to us and then trust the Lord to use us, and those skills, to His glory.