



biblical leadership

transformation through truth

leadership

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Leadership

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to help us to understand, celebrate and embrace biblical leadership in our lives. Whether you are an elder, a deacon, a Sunday school teacher, a team leader, a parent, a manager or simply a believer who wants to lead others to Jesus, we need to be aware of how biblical leadership works.

We live in a culture that has eroded respect for leadership, that has taught that leaders should be subject to the people; and that undermines leaders whether they be in government, in workplaces, in schools and in homes. We need to redress the balance. Godly leadership is an integral part of His Kingdom; we need a restoration of Godly attitudes to leadership not only in our churches, but in our families and our workplaces. We need to realize that leadership is the key to the health of any church, any organization, or any family. If we really do want to change the way the world sees church and if we want to reach our world for Jesus, then we need to institute, exercise and develop Godly leadership.

In this world where authority has been wielded so badly so often, and where people who have been hurt and abused by authority are reluctant to submit themselves, we face a huge challenge. Yet, we need to be a people, who like the Roman centurion, know that in order to carry authority we must be submitted to authority. Somebody once told me that my view of leadership was dangerous. I agreed. However, I said, the only thing more dangerous is not doing it God's way. As we look at leadership from God's perspective there may be things that challenge or scare us, but we must become determined to follow God's plans and principles if we want blessing in our lives.

This manual will help us to see what Godly authority looks like, who exercises it and how, which people carry authority in the church and how to respond to it. We will first look broadly at principles of leadership and later look at specific leadership roles within the church. There is more content in this manual than could possibly be covered in a three week course. In addition, there is a degree of repetition as certain principles are covered from different angles. The purpose behind this is so that this manual can be used in a multi faceted way. It can accompany our T3 course, it can be used for self study and it may be used as a tool for further leadership training in JoshGen and beyond as the reader follows the instructions of Paul in 2 Timothy 2:1-2:

"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also".

First principles

Leadership is from God

Even before the creation of the world, leadership existed. Before man was created there was leadership and submission, for these are inherent characteristics of the Godhead.

Mark Driscoll, in his book 'On Church Leadership (A Book You'll Actually Read)' states:

"Jesus is our example of how we should both act when we are in authority and react when we are under authority. First Corinthians 11:3 is one of the key texts for what theologians call functional subordinationism. It is the biblical teaching that our Trinitarian God exists as a community of equals with different roles and deference for authority within the Trinity. For example, throughout his life we see Jesus constantly speaking of his submission to the authority of God the Father; Jesus continually states that the Father sent him to earth on his mission and that he was doing what the Father told him to do and saying what the Father told him to say". (pg. 67)

We see this concept further expounded in Philippians 2:5-11:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

We see here that though Jesus has equality with the father, He chooses to submit, recognizing that He carries a different function within the Trinity. The Holy Spirit, likewise, submits Himself, recognizing His function.

Many of the problems people have with biblical leadership stems from a lack of understanding of this principle: in the Kingdom of God a leader is not more important than a follower. An elder is not more important than a deacon, a deacon is not more important than a new believer. We are all loved by God, we all are vital to the healthy working of the body of Christ, we simply perform different functions! (Rom. 12:3-8, 1Cor. 12:1-31)

Leadership is inherent in God and therefore in His creation. When God created man, He named him Adam. Adam in turn named the animals and later named his wife, Eve. Adam and Eve together named their sons. This naming was an exercise of authority, an illustration of headship. Thus we see that God had authority over the man and man carried this delegated authority over creation and his wife. In turn the parents had authority over their children (this raises questions regarding the role of women and also of the nature of delegated authority, both of which will be covered later).

We see leadership in nature (a pride of lions, a pack of dogs etc. have leaders) and we see it any time there a group of people engaged in some endeavour together. There has been a trend in certain church movements to try and remove leadership. If you attend their meetings they will tell you that they have no leader. This is wrong of course. They will still have a leader even if they do not describe him as such. For proof of this, simply ask when and where the next meeting will be: somebody will make the final call.

Of course many people will argue that democracy is the best system for decision making, but democracy has great weaknesses. First, democracy usually involves choosing a leader as it is simply too cumbersome to subject every decision to a vote, even in a small group. Second, democracy eventually erodes leadership as, in order to be elected, the leader must please the people and bow to their wishes. The leaders that arise out of democratic systems, certainly in modern times, tend to be those who offend the fewest special interest groups; they become people who are afraid to make unpopular but necessary decisions as this will cost them their position. The following two quotes from Winston Churchill show the weaknesses of the democratic system.

*"The best argument against democracy is a five minute conversation with the average voter."
"It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried."*

The bible does not instruct us to set up democratic systems in the church. True the deacons were chosen by the people (Acts 6) but this was less a case of democracy and more a case of the people, as a whole recognizing who God had already chosen: those who were of good reputation, full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3). Elsewhere it is clear that God chooses His leaders and then expects His people to submit to them. For example:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Heb 13:17).

Such principles exist not just within the church but in society as a whole. We must also obey the following God-ordained authorities:

- Government: Rom. 13, 1 Pet. 2:17
- Employer: Eph. 6, 1 Pet. 2:18
- Husband: 1 Pet. 3:1, Col. 3:18, Eph. 5:22
- Parent: Eph. 6

Obedience and submission are themes that run throughout Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. Unless we are willing to acknowledge God's ways we will never attain the purposes for which we have been called. We must embrace the concept of loving, servant leadership in our churches and in our homes.

Delegated authority

When the ambassador of a nation communicates with a foreign government, he does so with the authority of the government that he represents. He dare not represent a position contrary to the government he represents or he will soon be recalled. Yet when he does represent his government he knows that all the resources of that government are behind him.

Biblical leadership is the same. When a person exercises authority, he must do so knowing that such authority has been delegated to him by God: he carries no authority in, and of himself, but is an ambassador of God:

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 5:20)

As ambassadors we must ensure that we represent God well in our words and our actions:

Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. (1 Tim 4:12)

Our authority has been delegated to us. Ronald Reagan once said:

*"Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere."
Mark Driscoll*

We have seen that God delegates His authority, and in many cases He then leaves room for such men to make decisions for themselves, within the parameters that He has set. As Mark Driscoll states:

"For this kind of biblical faithfulness and practical flexibility to occur in a church there must be a distinction between principles and methods. The Bible is clear that God is to be worshiped, preaching is to occur, and the elders are to lead the church. However, the methods by which these can be done faithfully are many and must be culturally appropriated based upon where a church is ministering. As a result, things such as music styles, number of preachers, and how the elders are organized are freedoms that God allows the elders to decide, because God works through leaders empowered by his Spirit and governed by his Word under the rule of his living Son... This also means that the elders and other appointed leaders have the right to not only enforce God's rules of the Bible, but also have the freedom to make a few house rules as needed so that people know, for example, that they need to turn their phones off during a worship service or that members need to provide a giving pledge each year so that the church can make a reasonable budget projection." (On Church Leadership (A Book You'll Actually Read), pg. 29)

The elders of the church are responsible for leading the church and making decisions regarding doctrine, discipline and direction (more on this later). Some of these decisions are made based on clear prescription of Scripture and others by the leading of the Holy Spirit, wisdom, application of cultural relevance where necessary and possible etc. This is why different churches can have different outworkings of certain issues yet still be biblically based, still have the same heart and still work together in the Kingdom.

Of course just as God delegates authority to men (e.g. to elders, to fathers, to governments), so those men can, in turn, delegate authority to others. Within the church every position of responsibility carries a different degree of delegated authority, whether that be a deacon, home group leader, Sunday school teacher, worship leader etc. This principle of delegated authority needs then to be replicated. Whilst elders should allow certain freedoms for such individuals to fulfill their responsibilities, such individuals need to recognize that such authority is delegated and do their best to represent the eldership team to the best of their ability. Personal preference needs, at times, to be set aside in order to ensure that all of the leaders in the church speak with one voice, one heart and one purpose. Without this there can be no unity, and without unity there can be no blessing (Ps. 133).

This sounds fine whilst those in authority represent God well, but what happens when they fail to do so? What happens when leaders fall into sin or heresy? What happens if they become manipulative and controlling? That is when we need to understand submission and obedience and the difference between them.

Submission vs. obedience

Submission and obedience are not the same thing. It is possible to submit without obeying and to obey without submitting. To illustrate we can look at some examples.

When leadership (elders, husbands, parents, government) would lead a person into sin, then it is no longer acting as a good ambassador of our King. In such circumstances we are called to obey the higher power, to obey God and not man. We see this in both the Old Testament (e.g. Daniel's three friends in Dan. 3) and the New Testament (e.g. the apostles in Acts 4). In each of these cases, Godly men refused to obey the authorities placed over them as it would have led to sin. Yet we see in their response that they remained respectful and willing to obey such authority where they could. They were also willing to be subject to the consequences of disobeying such commands. Here there is still an attitude of submission without obedience.

In contrast, it is possible to obey without submitting. The story is told of the boy who was repeatedly told by his school teacher to sit down. Eventually, after being threatened he sits but says, "I'm standing on the inside!" It is possible to obey commands externally whilst having a rebellious heart, this is obedience without submission.

We are called to be people who willingly submit to and obey Godly authority. God considers the heart attitude at least as important as external actions. On the other side of the coin, leaders are called to exercise their authority well:

*"Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you."
(Tit. 2:15)*

Such authority, though, needs to be exercised with love, with humility, with a fear of God and with 'skilled hands and integrity of heart' (Ps. 78:72). We should also understand that the people we are leading often find the concept of submission difficult to comprehend. A major reason for a lack of submission in people is that they have been exposed to ungodly, selfish, manipulative, hypocritical, sinful or abusive authority figures in the past. Whilst it is natural for people who have been hurt to want to protect themselves, the answer is not to eradicate authority. As Mark Driscoll again states in his book:

The answer to abusive authority is not an absence of authority but rather righteous authority that rules under the authority of Scripture and Jesus." (pg. 8)

We need to lovingly guide people into a place where they can submit to authority, where they can feel safe and where they can understand that authority is not used to oppress or keep down, but to keep safe. A parent, for example, warns a child not to play with matches not to control or spoil the child's fun, but to prevent the child being burned.

There is a form of rebellion that is common today but which is not new. It manifests in statements like this:

- "I hear what you're saying but I've been a Christian for 30 years and know what's what."
- "That's your perspective but I can hear God too"
- "I need no man to lead me I have the Holy Spirit"
- "I don't want to be controlled by men"

This is actually the same attitude as displayed by Aaron and Miriam with Moses (Num. 12), who said that whilst they recognized Moses as a prophet they were prophets too! They had a grievance against Moses, which may have had some merit (his marriage to a foreign wife) and developed an independent and unsubmissive attitude. There was truth in what they were saying, even about being prophets, but their motivation was an unwillingness to submit to what they saw as flawed leadership. God's response is instructive. Of course He knew Moses faults, but He had chosen him to lead. He vindicates Moses and punishes Miriam. Whilst it is undoubtedly true that all believers can hear God for themselves and are led by the Holy Spirit (or should be) this is not an excuse not to submit but is rather an opportunity to serve their leaders as they pray for them, encourage them and submit prophetic words to them.

Leadership is plural

As we have already seen, when looking at delegation, is that leadership works best when it is exercised in team. A team works best when every player knows his part, when the plans of the coach are implemented and when the interests of the team are put above the individual.

In a fairly small team, an analogy of a soccer or rugby team works well. The coach puts the players in place based on their strengths and giftings (not value or importance) and the players then play the role they have been given. There is, usually, a captain who again is not more important than the team (and may not even be the most gifted player) but who is responsible for leadership of the team on the pitch.

As a team grows, this picture becomes muddled and a better analogy becomes that of an American Football team. Here there are multiple teams within a team (offense, defense, special teams) each unit with its own coaching staff and captains, all under the control of a head coach. There is more interdependence, more delegation and perhaps even more specialization (for example one player who only ever comes on to kick a field goal and does nothing else!).

Leaders need to understand the dynamic of the team they are working on and that such dynamics are fluid. They need to change and grow as the team changes and grows. A failure to embrace change or to accept that one's own role within that team may change significantly, can minimize the performance of the entire team.

Unity is not brought about by uniformity. An important aspect of a successful team is that the members of that team should have differing personalities and giftings. In this way the weaknesses of one are covered by the strength of another. The key is that despite the differences between individuals on the team, there is one heart, one mind and one purpose with a mutual submission.

Within JoshGen the following characteristics are looked at when considering bringing a person onto the leadership team:

1. Do they love God-with everything?
2. Is their call confirmed?
3. Do they have an the anointing, a Holy Spirit ability?
4. Are they self-starters? If they can't lead themselves they can't lead others.
5. What is their gifting? Are they able teach, to communicate or to flow in some gift?
6. Do they understand Gods blueprint? Do they have the same 'DNA'?
7. Can they get revelation from God? Do they hear God for themselves and not second hand?

8. Is there a hidden agenda? Are they serving to get something/somewhere?
9. Are they shepherd hearted? Are they empowering or controlling? Do they lead or drive people?
10. Are they passionate for the things of God? This shows in self discipline and withstanding temptation.
11. Are they secure? If so they will be open, accountable and vulnerable?
12. Are they experienced? Whilst we can take risks with experience we need to know they are capable.
13. Are they obedient? It is a sign of love for God (1 John2:5).
14. Do they have people skills?
15. Do they walk by faith? Have they been tested?
16. Are they sacrificial? Do they give even when it hurts?
17. Are they sensitive-to God, to people?
18. Do they love the Word? Can they handle it correctly?
19. Do they possess humility? Self praise is a curse in the kingdom and arrogance discredits.
20. Do they handle praise and/ or criticism well?
21. Do they love to be first? Like Diotrephes (3 John 1:9).
22. Do they have personal integrity? Can the team trust them?
23. Are they teachable? (Prov. 9:7-9)
24. Do the people recognise the gift and call?
25. Do they gather people? Where Jesus lifted up men are drawn.
26. Do they love people? Do they show favouritism to some?
27. Are they generous? With finances, time and emotions.
28. Are they contented? Free from striving, free from the pursuit of material gain (Matt 6:31-33).
29. Is there theology sound? Do they have extreme theology, make grey issues black and white, or major on minors?
30. Do they have a heart for the nations?
31. Do they take short cuts or submit to God's timing and processes?
32. Are they team players, able to submit, lay down their own opinions etc.?
33. Are they faithful? To friends, to their word, to the spiritual disciplines?
34. Do they have their own convictions? Do they simply comply outwardly?
35. Are they flexible, open to change?

Hierarchy In Leadership

Hierarchy is a dirty word in much of the church as many people struggle to differentiate between function and value. We live in a world where egalitarianism is preached and where many take as Scriptural, the words of the American Declaration of Independence, "all men are created equal". How can there be hierarchy, it is argued, if everyone is equal? This Driscoll clarifies beautifully, when talking about men and women in leadership.

"In hearing that males and females are different, modern ears tuned by a culture of egalitarianism (meaning "equal" or "level") are prone to hear that males and females are not equal, which is untrue. The Bible teaches that both men and women are made in the image and likeness of God, which means that men and women are equal by virtue of creation. They do not need to be identical to prove their equality—in the same way that a right hand and left hand are different but equally necessary... Subsequently, since we are made male and female, it is clear that God's image and likeness is best shown forth by men and women who function together in partnership like the Trinity, in which God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are equally God with distinctions, submission, and unity." (On Church Leadership (A Book You'll Actually Read) Pg. 29)

We see hierarchy then, in the trinity, among the angels and among God's leaders (from Adam, through the patriarchs, then the priesthood and into the New testament. Interestingly the very word hierarchy derives from a word used for the "ranked division of angels" which itself came from the Greek 'hierarkhia' meaning the rule of the high priest. Furthermore, we see implied in the descriptions of the church as a family and as an army the concept of hierarchy.

Churches, we see in Scripture, should be governed by elders (with apostolic input) who then delegate certain responsibilities to deacons and others within the church. Here we see hierarchy clearly. Yet we should also see that hierarchy can exist within an eldership team!

In Acts we see Peter initially leading the church in Jerusalem but he is soon replaced in this role by James, the brother of Jesus, who wasn't even an original apostle (indeed he only came to faith once he saw Jesus resurrected). James, along with Peter and John, seem to carry more authority than the rest, even though they are all elders (Acts 2, Acts 8:14, Acts 15, Gal. 2:2, etc.). Furthermore, some elders, based on gifting and function, are worthy of more honour:

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. (1 Tit. 5:17)

We even see in this verse that some elders are more involved in directing the affairs of the church than others!

Hierarchy then is not to be feared, but embraced; provided that the men who lead do so based on a love for God, a love for His church and a love for His people. They must be servant hearted, humble men who do not serve their own interests but the interests of others. Even within this hierarchy there needs to be mutual submission and accountability, and a high degree of teachability in each individual. There needs to be a constant 'dying to self' in order that each leader can say, as John the Baptist did, "I must decrease so that He may increase" (John 3:30).

At Joshua Generation, the eldership team tries to govern by consensus, as we try to hear the voice of God. Ultimately though there is a recognition of the grace placed on the lead elder's life, and on the fact that God has called him to lead the team. He has the right, if necessary, to overrule other elders in the decision making process. This right is invoked rarely, as a good leader listens to the counsel of others, especially when those others are elders of the Lord Jesus. Driscoll says about this role:

"Therefore, for an elder team to function effectively, it must have a called, qualified, gifted, devoted, humble, and competent senior human leader who leads the elder team and helps guard the gate for new elders joining the team to ensure unity and success. To do his job, that man must not have blind obedience or complete unaccountable authority. Rather, he must have the freedom, trust, authority, respect, honor, and support of the elders and other church leaders to actually lead the church. If not, there can be no leadership; leaders will no longer lead the entire church working on behalf of the best interests of the gospel, but will become representatives of various agendas, departments, factions, and programs in the church. Without a senior leader, dissention will come as people fight over resources; there will not be decisions, but compromises, which are the death of the church". On Church Leadership (A Book You'll Actually Read) Pg. 23.

In turn, not all elders have equal authority in each decision. There are those elders who have been recognised as being gifted in 'directing the affairs of the church' more than others. Sometimes these men will meet and bring a decision to the rest of the team. Likewise different 'portfolios' are made up of different elders (for example each congregation, a finance team, etc.) who have a greater responsibility than others in certain areas of church life. This is necessary as the eldership team is so large that otherwise, decision making would become so slow and cumbersome that the church would become immobile.

In turn, various responsibilities are then delegated to deacons, and others, who then lead their own teams, with varying degrees of delegated authority, to accomplish necessary tasks and administrate the life of the church.

Organic vs. organisational

It is popular in many church cultures today to speak of being organic rather than organizational. This is well meaning, and at times helpful, but care must be taken. As a church, JoshGen never wants systems to replace relationship, or to be programme driven, rather than Spirit led. In fact one of the major driving forces behind producing this leadership manual is an understanding that the key to life, health and growth in the church is people, not programmes.

If we look at nature, however, we see that though all living things are organic, they all possess a degree of structure. The more complex the creature, the more it can achieve. For example a jellyfish is complex compared to an amoeba but simple compared to a human. Whilst the jellyfish can therefore perform much more complex tasks than an amoeba it pales in significance before the abilities of a human. Likewise, as a church grows, and as it desires to achieve more, it needs to put systems in place. These systems should be 'invisible' (just as the human skeletal and nervous system are invisible) and should serve the body not vice versa. The problem with systems is when they become sacrosanct, rather than a tool for a task that is willingly discarded when it no longer serves a purpose. Failure to do so produces 'traditions that nullify the Word of God' (Mark 7:13).

When we look at the ministry of Jesus we see that he focused on people, not systems or institutions, and yet, he was not afraid of organization. When feeding the five thousand he put systems in place (putting people into small groups, delegating the distribution of food, etc.) in order that the miraculous could flow. Skilful leaders know how to flow with the Spirit, find the life of Jesus and allow Him to lead us; whilst being administratively sound. They know how to maximize resources and how to do things efficiently without becoming slaves to systems and programmes.

Leadership by example

Bob Mumford once said, "If I have measles, but I tell you that I have mumps, what will you catch?" He was speaking about the principle that who leaders are is more contagious than what they say. There are stories too numerous to mention of churches being adversely affected by the hidden sin of the leaders. Likewise congregations usually adopt many of the characteristics of its leaders. Whether the leader is a passionate worshipper, a man of prayer, a lover of people, etc. will reflect in the attitudes of those he leads. This is not only because people will imitate what they see but is also due to spiritual dynamics whereby a leader can 'break open' certain things into the life of the church, whether positive or negative.

As Albert Schweitzer said, "Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing." This is why the qualifications for leadership, as described in Scripture, are almost exclusively linked to character and not to gifting or ability. Leaders then, must not only lead by example, but must be careful in raising up other leaders. It can be tempting to raise others into leadership on the strength of their gifting, but they must first ensure that the man's character has been tested.

Old testament lessons on leadership

The Old Testament was written, at least in part, so that we could learn from the example of those who went before us (1 Cor. 10:11) and we know that ALL Scripture is useful to us (2 Tim. 3:16). It is safe to assume, therefore, that there is much we can learn about church leadership from the Old Testament.

First, we are going to look at the life of Israel's greatest King, a man who was a type, or shadow, of Christ. If we wish to be great leaders we could do worse than study the life of David.

David

David was arguably the best and most successful King that Israel ever had. There are three statements made about him that make him stand apart from every other king that Israel had.

- He led with skilled hands and integrity of heart (Ps. 78:72).
- He served the purposes of God in his generation (Acts 13:36).
- He was a man after God's heart (1 Sam. 13:13).

Given that these are fitting epithets for any leader, something we should all aspire to, it would be useful to study his life and character.

How God tests a leader

We are told that Jesus was tested in the desert (Matt. 4:1) and that men are to be tested before they are appointed as deacons (1 Tim. 3:10). The purpose of such testing is not to cause us to fail but to refine us, to strengthen us, and to demonstrate to God's people that such men are worthy to be followed. There are a number of ways in which we are tested, many of which we can see illustrated in the life of David.

1. **Being overlooked.** When Samuel was invited for supper by Jesse, all of his sons were present except one (1 Sam. 16) David was overlooked, by his own father when his family were being honoured by the presence of Israel's greatest prophet of the time. God will often allow us to be overlooked (when other are thanked, chosen, 'promoted', honoured or recognized). This is a test of our hearts, to check for pride, arrogance, selfish ambition or a willingness to trust God. Leaders are often accused by men of standing in the way of their ministry. We need to understand that no man can thwart the will of God and that if we truly have a calling then it will make way for itself.
2. **Servanthood.** Once David was anointed to be king, he continued to look after his father's sheep and was soon also serving Saul as a musician. As if he weren't busy enough with these, he was also sent by his father to take lunches to his brothers. It would have been easy to become proud and refuse to do such menial things, but David remained a humble servant. If we cannot learn this and develop this heart we will become terrible leaders.
3. **Being sidelined.** From the time he was anointed until he became king over a united Israel, David spent 20 years as a shepherd, a servant and as a fugitive. He must have wondered at times if Samuel had made a mistake. Yet these 20 years were an essential part of his learning to be a great leader, even though he must have felt sidelined or forgotten during these years. Yet during this time he learned about how the royal household and how the royal court worked (as a harpist and as a friend to Jonathan), he learned the geography of his land intimately (a necessary skill for a great general), he formed alliances with and gained knowledge of the surrounding nations, their armies and their tactics. Without those 20 years he would never have been the great king he became. Similarly Moses spent 40 years as a shepherd before he saw the burning bush, Paul prepared for 13 years before entering his apostolic ministry. God's timing is perfect and we must be willing to wait: an inheritance easily gained is easily lost!
4. **Being falsely accused or misunderstood.** When he took food to his brothers, one of them, Eliab, accused him of evil motives (1 Sam. 17:28). Our 'brothers' can bring accusations against us and we must handle them in a Godly manner. We must humbly seek whether there is truth in such accusations (and if we cannot see it, ask others' perspectives as we may be blind to our own faults, and our hearts are deceptive). If the accusation is false we need to respond graciously and even be willing not to defend ourselves, but let God be our vindicator. It could be that defending ourselves could come at the cost of unity. We should seek the glory of God and the well being of the church above our own reputation, as did Christ (Is. 53:3). It is certain that if this does not happen before one becomes a leader, he will surely experience it after!
5. **Being discouraged.** Upon volunteering for a job nobody else is willing to do, he is told by his own king that he is unable to do it (1 Sam. 17:33). As leaders we must be very careful not to destroy faith and not to disqualify people on the basis of appearance. When we are convinced that somebody has unrealistic expectations of their own abilities and calling, we need to encourage them toward that for which God has equipped them. Yet even here we can never make an absolute call, for in the end God can use anybody. We like to say, at JoshGen that we place a comma at the end of such a statement, not a full stop.

On the other side of the coin, the story is told of the actor Edward Norton who is often asked by aspiring actors for advice in 'making it' as an actor. He tells them, every time, to give up because they don't have what it takes. Asked why, he responded, "If they gave up just because one person said they wouldn't make it, then they never would!" We need to persevere in the face of discouragement, in faith, whilst at the same time ensuring that we are aiming for something that God has genuinely called us to. He who desires to be an elder desire a noble task (1 Tim. 3:1) yet if God has not equipped a person to be an elder then he should realize that it is an office in which he will find no life, no joy and no freedom. When we do that to which we are called, whether elder, deacon, businessman, teacher, mother or rocket scientist, that is when we find our fulfillment, our purpose and our joy. That is what we should aspire to, and press toward, in the face of the greatest discouragement.

6. **Being intimidated.** David was intimidated by Goliath from the moment he stepped out to meet him. Our enemy still does the same. David's response was one of faith, knowing that God would give him victory as He had done previously with the lion and the bear. Every leader will face intimidation as he steps into something new. Every leader needs to be a man of faith, willing to take on the giants, willing to attempt something so big that it is doomed to failure unless God intervenes. In many ways, the faith of the leader will determine the limitations of those he is leading. A leader needs to see beyond the vision of the average man, beyond the limitations of human sight and understanding.
7. **Being praised.** Once David killed Goliath he received the praises of the people (1 Sam. 18:7). It has been said that success tests us in ways that failure never can. If the enemy cannot crush us, He is likely to puff us up. If we cannot handle success with humility and with a desire to see God honoured in it then we will eventually fail as leaders. It is worth noting David's motivation in killing Goliath, and it wasn't his own glory (1 Sam. 17:46)! It is worth noting also the reaction of one of Saul's servants prior to David's victory over Goliath. He refers to David as a 'brave man and a warrior' (1 Sam. 16:180). This despite David never having been in battle. This young man was probably speaking prophetically. Whilst it is wonderful to receive prophetic words over our lives, that speak to our future in Christ, we need to weigh them and test them. We should be careful to give ourselves over to trying to force them to be fulfilled. They can be a wonderful encouragement to us, but we need to respond to such words in a mature manner, understanding that if such a word is from God it will come to pass at its allotted time.
8. **Being persecuted.** The more successful David became, the more his own leader, out of insecurity, tried to kill him. It is unlikely that any of us will experience our leaders trying to kill us literally but it is possible that God will allow us to suffer at the hands of leaders to test us. David's response to Saul was one of honouring and submission: even after Saul was killed, David sang a tribute to him 2 Samuel 1:19. He recognized that it is God who raises leaders and God who removes them. By submitting to Saul, even under extreme circumstances, he was demonstrating his submission to God and exercising his faith in God to raise him up to his rightful position as King in His time. Remarkably David even recognized that God was using Saul to shape him and that it was God who helped him endure these trials (Ps. 4: 1 "thou has enlarged me when I was in distress.")
9. **Self promotion.** David never fell into the trap of self promotion. He did not try to force God's hand, the king's hand or the hand of the people. On any number of occasions, especially as a fugitive, he could have taken matters into his own hands. He could have foreshortened the time it took to become king. He could have taken Saul's life and few, if any, would have held this against him. Yet he knew something that few others did. He knew that it must be God who raises up a leader, who puts Him in place, and who makes the way. Every time we try to take a short-cut through the purposes of God, we heap trouble on ourselves.
10. **Becoming King.** It is easier to desire something than it is to live it out. Upon becoming king, David realized that it was perhaps less glorious and certainly more difficult, than he ever could have imagined. It is easier to see the problems and shortcomings in a church than it is to provide the solutions. It is easier to criticize another man's leadership than it is to carry that burden of leadership oneself. The greater ones authority, the greater the burden that one carries. To borrow from Spiderman: with great power comes great responsibility.
11. **Fear of man (or woman).** A leader who fears man more than he fears God is a liability. One only has to look at Saul, David's predecessor to see this. There were a number of times when David had to obey God at the cost of his own reputation. This is most clearly shown, perhaps, with the response of his own wife to his exuberant worship (2 Sam. 6:20-22).

In our modern society, where democracy is held up as a virtually sacred institution, it can be surprisingly easy for leaders to become subject to the desires of the people. Leaders need to be courageous followers of Christ who bend to the will of the Great Shepherd and who have the ability to lead others there too. This takes wisdom, skill and courage, as often leaders are taking people where they do not want to go, to do what they do not want to do, at inconvenient times, with people they don't want to go with!

12. The things of the world. When David fell into sin with Bathsheba it was at a time when he should have been at war but instead chose the comforts of home (2 Sam. 11:1). A constant fight, for every believer, is to give ourselves completely to the Lordship of Christ and to give up the things of the world, as Paul urged us to do (Phil. 3:8). At the core of the Christian life is a dying to self, a surrender to a life of compromise, comfort and convenience. Often becoming a leader requires a greater degree of sacrifice in terms of time, resources, career, income, etc. The enemy will gladly offer things that seem good to us in order to prevent us from entering into God's best. At JoshGen we have seen numerous instances of men being offered promotions, well paid jobs, etc. that would take them out of the life of the church, just as they were about to be asked onto eldership or into 'full time' positions within the church.

It is not simply before entering into ministry this test comes, for it often manifests years down the line: either because the issue was not properly dealt with in the first place or because the leader due to busyness, pressure, etc. loses his joy in what he is doing and begins to fall in love with the things of the world like, for example, Demas, who in Philemon 24 was described as a fellow worker of Paul (2 Tim. 4:9).

13. Idolatry. When David saw Bathsheba he decided he wanted her, regardless of the cost; and she became an idol in his life. An idol is often described as anything that sets itself up against Christ in our lives, or which becomes more important to us than Christ. This is true, but it is worth noting that in Israel, the idolatry they fell into was often one of adding other gods to their worship of Yahweh. In such instances Yahweh was considered the supreme deity whilst others could still be worshipped. This is the kind of idolatry many people fall into today, claiming to still put Jesus first but having other things in their lives that assume an importance greater than they should have and to which we devote ourselves. This can include family, money, career, sport, even ministry.

Idolatry will inevitably lead us away from the truth, away from God and into greater sin. Just as adultery led to murder, sin gives birth to sin (James 1:15).

14. Failing. Every leader will fail at some time. There is an old expression, 'the only people that have done nothing wrong are those who have done nothing'. Failing in itself does not disqualify a leader. What determines success is whether that leader is prepared to try again. We need to learn from our failures, of course, we need to repent of moral failure and we need to have the courage to stand up again and continue. Many of the best leaders I have known are those who have failed, have responded in a Godly manner and continued to be faithful. Anyone who has been in leadership for any length of time will have stories of failure and redemption. Every great leader will acknowledge his weaknesses and failings, and every great leader will allow God to take his weakness and be glorified through them (2 Cor. 12:9).

David's response to having his failure pointed out to him by Nathan is instructive:

- He does not try to defend himself or justify his position
- He is quick to repent (Ps 51)
- He is willing, as a leader to let this be publically known
- He accepts the consequences
- He continues to carry out his calling in God

Of course if a leader falls into sin there may need to be a period of time in which he is removed from a position of authority, even if there is repentance, in order for restoration to take place, etc.

15. Loss. David suffered perhaps every parent's worst nightmare when his child died (2 Sam. 12:15-23). It would have been easy to blame God, to become bitter, resentful, angry or disillusioned. Instead he looks at the situation from the perspective of eternity (I will see him again v23), and recognizes that though this is a painful experience, God is still the same God as He was: the God of Psalm 23 etc.

We will all have to deal with loss, with disappointment, with 'winter seasons' and 'desert experiences'. There will be times when we experience more suffering than 'blessing'. Yet these are necessary times. These are times when we learn to press closer into Him, to dig our roots deeper, to trust Him more and to develop a greater faithfulness and fruitfulness 'in and out of season' (2 Tit. 4:2, Gal. 6:9). In addition we develop greater empathy in these times which makes us better and more caring leaders.

We cannot become 'fair weather' leaders. People who are excited and committed only when life goes the way we wish. We need to be those who push through in the difficult times, both for our own sakes and as an example to those who would follow us.

16. Family. Perhaps David's greatest failure was actually with his family. A number of his sons were rebellious as they were not held to account for their actions (1 Kings 1:6). A leader must get the balance right in his life in order that he can be seen to manage his household well (1 Tit. 3:4) whilst not making an idol of them. Jesus asked us to be willing to sacrifice family and yet we are called not to neglect them. The same Jesus who asked, "who are my mother and brothers?" (Matt. 12:48) is the same Jesus who, whilst in agony on the cross and close to death, ensured his mother would be well looked after (John 19:26-27).

When we face any of these tests, we need to allow God to work his processes in us. We cannot afford to avoid these processes, to short circuit what God is doing, or paper over the cracks that He exposes. If we do so then we will simply find ourselves 'walking round the mountain' to face the same test, in a different form, at some time in the future. For example, a person who moves job or church because he cannot submit will sooner or later find himself in another situation where it is difficult to submit. In 2 Timothy 1:15 Paul speaks of a man called Phygelus who 'turned away' from him. This name means fugitive! Here, it seems, is a man running from his past, who has not dealt with issues, whose past keeps rearing up into his present. God loves us enough to continue presenting us with such tests, in order to deal with those aspects of our character that would destroy us, hurt the church or prevent Him being fully glorified. Painful as it may be, we need to embrace any 'spiritual surgery' that God wishes to perform on us. Let Him cut away our flesh in order that we can become more like Him.

If we are obedient to Him and submit ourselves to His processes then we can say, like Paul:

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6)

The character of a David

These tests moulded and shaped David. They also served to reveal who he really was and what his character was really like. At JoshGen we sometimes speak of the 'toothpaste test'. That is, that despite a tube saying toothpaste on the outside, one can only really know what is on the inside once pressure is applied. It is only under pressure that we see a man's true character. So we see that character is both revealed and developed by our experiences. David's character, whilst not perfect, was one worthy of imitation.

1. Faithful: Whatever he was asked to do, he did it and did it well. In fact he often went 'above and beyond the call of duty'. For example when looking after the sheep he killed a lion and bear. I am sure that had he gone home and explained to his father that a sheep had been taken, this would be accepted. After all was his life not worth more than that of a single lamb? Yet he was prepared to give his all to faithfully accomplish the task he was given (in contrast to Saul's character, 1 Sam. 9:5). David reaped what he had sown as we

see in 2 Samuel 23:15-16 when his three mighty men simply hear his wish, and in a desire to meet his needs risk their lives for him.

We do not serve a God of 'just enough', we serve a God who gave His all for us, who lavishes His love on us. If we are to represent Him well we too need to be lavish, we need to be extravagant and we need to do way more than the just enough.

2. **Loving:** David's very name means Beloved; a trait that he shows often. Most significantly we see this in his relationship with Jonathan. He was a man who loved an inspired love in others. We can desire to be men of faith, men of power, men of influence, but the greatest thing we can ask for is love.
3. **Submissive:** Many of us know what it is like to be abused by authority but few, if any, have experienced it as badly as David did. Out of insecurity and jealousy Saul first tried to cause David's death at the hands of others before eventually trying to kill him himself. He threw spears at David and took to hunting him down in the desert. David would not attack his king verbally or physically, recognizing that it must be God who protects, vindicates and eventually elevates him to position of king. He knew that it was not right to try to take matters into his own hands. Such was the honour, respect and submission he showed for his king (even though Saul was a backslidden, demon tormented, unfaithful leader) that he repented for damaging Saul's cloak (1 Sam. 24:4) and rebuked others for their lack of care for him (1 Sam. 26:15-16).

If David could submit himself to such a man, under such circumstances, having been anointed future king over Israel, then we would do well to submit to, honour and respect the authorities God has put over our lives.

4. **Secure:** When we read of David's mighty men (2 Sam. 23, and elsewhere), we see that they achieved great exploits, greater perhaps than David himself. David was not insecure about this, he did not feel threatened by them. Rather, he knew that their victories were his, that the greater their success, the greater Israel would become. Likewise, Godly leaders are often required to lead those who may, in some areas, carry a greater anointing or gifting than themselves. Indeed every leader should be willing to one day be surpassed by those he is leading. A failure to accept this produces leaders of small capacity, who frustrate and kill the spirit of large capacity individuals (Saul acted in such a way with David). We should praise God if He adds hugely gifted people to us, and lead from a place of security where such people can be released to be a blessing to the church.
5. **Loyal:** David was intensely loyal. He was loyal to his friends, to his king, to his nation and to his God. Indeed he was so loyal that after becoming king he found Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan and brought him to his table to honour his covenant with Jonathan (2 Sam. 9:6-7) despite the potential danger this could have caused him (certain factions could well have used Mephibosheth's ancestry to claim him to be rightful king). Leaders expect loyalty from those they lead but they also need to be those who show loyalty. We will reap what we sow.
6. **Worshipper:** David wrote at least 75 of the 150 Psalms. Undoubtedly he also wrote others which were not recorded as Scripture. In addition we see him dancing passionately and extravagantly when the Ark of the Covenant is restored (2 Sam. 6:14) to its rightful place. He was a skilled musician chosen to minister to King Saul when he was tormented by an evil spirit. Time and again we see him portrayed as a man of prayer and worship, whether publically or privately.

Godly leaders need to be people who spend time in the presence of God. As we worship, God is enthroned in our praises (Ps. 22:3). It is this life, this presence of Jesus, that is attractive to people, that draws the power of the Spirit, and which empowers us to bring people into life, health and freedom.

Leaders need to know how to find God when alone, to 'dig their own wells', to hear His voice for themselves and others. They also need to be those who set the example to other believers in the way that they worship in public: passionately and extravagantly.

- 7. Quick to repent:** He was not perfect. Indeed he was an adulterer and murderer. Yet he is described as a man after God's heart. How can this be? I believe that in no small part it is because he was open about his failings and quick to repent.

We only know about his sins because he allowed them to be recorded! Most kings of his day would allow only flattering things to be entered into official accounts, only enemies and successors would dare record anything negative. David, however, let all of his failings be recorded. This is a wonderful example to leaders of today. We dare not 'sweep things under the carpet'. People do not feel insecure when a leader confesses to failings, they feel more secure! They know they are led by real people, with real weaknesses, but who are quick to be accountable and to repent.

David was quick to repent and to accept the discipline of God, whether that was the consequence of his adultery and murder or his numbering of his army (2 Sam. 12 and 2 Sam. 24).

The qualities of a David as a leader

- 1. Prepared:** We know of a man who some years ago felt called to preach, though it seemed none of his leaders saw that in him. Every week for a couple of years he would prepare a sermon and practice it, preaching to himself. Every week he prepared and yet was never asked to preach. One day, two years later, the lead elder of the church had to find a replacement preacher at the last minute. He phoned this young man and asked if he could be ready to preach. The young man answered that he had been ready for two years. He got an opportunity, preached well and eventually took over that church, becoming in the process a very popular and prominent preacher.

David was prepared long before he walked in his destiny. He allowed God to use his time in the fields looking after sheep, his time playing the harp for Saul, and his time as a fugitive in the desert, to teach and prepare him. Too many people today want to be recognized before they will serve. In God's Kingdom the opposite principle works: we are recognized once we have served. A number of people for example, have asked me if they can have a chance to preach on a Sunday. My answer is simple: you have plenty of opportunities to preach (Sunday school, home group, work, among friends, etc.), you don't need me to open the door. If God has then gifted you in preaching your gift will make a way for you.

- 2. Anointed:** Many secular businesses today are teaching bible based leadership principles. This should be unsurprising to us because God's ways work! However, there is one significant element to biblical leadership which cannot be ignored. No matter how well trained, educated, committed and popular one may be, the one overriding, essential attribute of a leader in God's Kingdom is that he has been anointed for the task. David was anointed, that is empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform the task of being King. Without it he could not have brought the blessing of God to Israel that he did. Scripture is clear that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to each one as He pleases (Rom. 12, 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4 etc.). Some are gifted and called by Him to be elders, deacons or apostles and some are not. Some have a gift of leadership and some don't.

We must each discover what God has called us to do and do it. We should aspire to church leadership not because it is glamorous (I wish), because it will give us prestige or because it fills some need in us. We must perform the functions for which we have been designed by God. I believe that one of the reasons for the numbers of church leaders who burn out and leave ministry is because a number of them were never meant to be there in the first place.

If, however, that is what we have been called to then we should not settle for anything less (and everything else, in that case, is less)!

3. **Sacrificial:** Kareem Abdul-Jabbar the legendary basketball player once said, "A team will always appreciate a great individual if he's willing to sacrifice for the group." He knew that a true leader is one who knows the value of personal sacrifice. David was a man willing to sacrifice, willing to pay the price and willing to give himself for what God had called him. People often see leadership in terms of power, influence and prestige but in God's Kingdom it is a matter of responsibility, servanthood and sacrifice. This is clear from the words of Jesus (Matt. 19:29-30, Matt. 20:26, Matt. 23:11). Even after he entered into a position of wealth and privilege David remained a man of sacrifice (2 Sam. 24:24).

A leader prepares the way for Christ

The purpose of God's leaders is described in Ephesians Chapter 4. Though it is speaking specifically of the 'five fold' or 'ascension' gifts, it serves as a general job description for leaders in the church:

"to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." (Eph. 4:12-16)

In other words, our job is to introduce people to Christ and then help them to become mature disciples of His. Another Old Testament passage gives us some wonderful principles for achieving this.

"The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, prepared ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and Hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." (Is. 40:3-5)

1. **A highway is needed:** We need to reach out to those in the desert and make a way for Jesus to be revealed to them. Indeed we are the road and Jesus desires to be revealed in and through us, through our actions and our words. We show Christ to the world!

This road needs to be prepared, just as John the Baptist prepared Israel for the coming Messiah. John's purpose was not to glorify himself but to glorify the one who came after him; he knew he was not to be the centre of attention but that he was to point people to the Messiah, to the Hope of Israel.

Elsewhere Isaiah speaks of a road that is safe (Is. 49:11-12, Is. 35:8-10) over which people can travel to the city of God to worship. God wants to build us into a road, a road from earth to heaven, for his glory to come!

2. **Before construction comes destruction:** Before a road can be built the land needs to be cleared. Loggers with chain saws cut down trees and rocks and debris are removed. God must remove every obstacle from our lives, even things that like those trees are old and deep rooted. Large tree stumps are often blasted from the ground, leaving their roots exposed so that they will die and can then be easily piled up and burned.

Our motto at JoshGen is 'Dying to Live' because we understand the biblical principle of dying to self. We understand that we must die so that Christ can live in and through us (Gal. 2:20, John 12:24-25, Matt. 10:39 etc.). We need to allow Him to do this work, to remove the attitudes, values and thought processes that have become ingrained and that are not from Him. We need to yield to Him and pray, as David prayed:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" (Ps. 139:23-24)

Anything that is in us that stands in God's way or is a stumbling block to others must be dealt with radically (i.e. literally from the root).

- 3. Every mountain shall be made low:** Once that process is complete the land is leveled. Rocky outcrops are destroyed and high places are brought low. God is busy dealing with issues of pride and self sufficiency, with things that hold to a place in our lives and which would be an obstacle to a greater knowledge of Christ.

"For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete." (2 Cor. 10:4-6)

By this stage the area does not look beautiful and pristine: we can often feel useless, ashamed, scarred. The things that gave us security have been removed and we can feel naked and vulnerable. It is not God's intention to leave us like this, however, for He wants to cover our nakedness, remove our shame and complete the work that He started.

- 4. Every valley shall be exalted:** God now begins to deal with the low places. He deals with the insecurities, with the secrets of the heart. Hidden places become visible as earth is moved to fill up the valleys. What has been broken is used to fill up what is lacking (i.e. the rubble from the previous stage of roadworks is used to build up low areas). God is able to work with us because we have been humbled and broken. Promotion begins, opportunities can open up and people begin to notice what was previously invisible to them.

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him." (Luke 20:18)

"But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you." (James 4:6-10)

- 5. The crooked shall be made straight:** We have all seen roads that are incredibly crooked and twisted, with hairpin bends and other tight turns. These roads are incredibly slow to travel and are dangerous, especially at times when visibility is poor. The word 'crooked' (Hebrew 'aqob') appears three times in the Old Testament:

- Jeremiah 17: 9 "the heart is deceitful (aqob)above all else.
- Hosea 6: 8 "Gilead is a city of wicked men, stained (aqob) with footprints of blood."
- Isaiah 40: 4 "the crooked, deceitful, polluted and stained (aqob)will be straightened."

Here God is dealing with hidden motives, things that even we might be unaware of. His intention is to make us Holy, a straight, safe and easy path for others to follow.

6. Paving: The road is now level and straight but needs to be paved. In this state it is easy and safe to use in any season, in any weather, day or night. Yet paving itself can be a difficult process. A compactor flattens and compacts the ground, subjecting it to pressure repeatedly to ensure the foundation for the paving stones is solid, safe and will not shift. We must allow God to test us, to put us under pressure to shape our character and to reveal anything that would cause problems once we have built onto the foundation.

It is worth noting that Heavens roads are paved with gold. That is how we will one day be: pure, holy, of great value to Him.

What was dangerous is now safe! People can see God in his leaders, their own journeys made easier and safer. We may not understand the processes as they happen, it may be painful and sore at times, but we need to trust Him, knowing that 'all things work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose' (Rom. 8:28). Of course travellers on that road may sing the praises of view and of destination, but few will sing about the road – but does it matter? Glory belongs to God, and to Him alone!

How leaders are chosen

It must be emphasized that leaders are chosen by God and recognized by man. This requires that leaders rely on revelation not observation. They need to see who God is raising up and recognize them rather than select men out of personal preference, pressure from people or by taking the path of least resistance.

Samuel Brengle said men are chosen:

"By self surrender, a courageous sacrifice of every idol, a bold uncomplaining embrace of the cross, and by an eternal, unfaltering looking unto Jesus crucified. It is not gained by seeking great things for ourselves, but like Paul, by counting those things that are gain to us as loss for Christ. This is a great price, but it must be paid by the leader who would not be merely a nominal, but a real spiritual leader of men, a leader whose power is recognised and felt in heaven, on earth, and in hell."

There is a great need for leadership in the church; a need to return people to the values and ways of the Kingdom. It was prophesied about John the Baptist that he would 'make a people ready for the Lord' (Luke 1:17) which is exactly what leaders are called to do today.

It is not what or who we are, but what and who we can become that causes God to call people into his service. Likewise we need to see not who people are, but what they can become.

Leaders are called to bring hope to the hopeless, and bring them to a place where they reflect the glory of God. Without leadership people slide into mediocrity, into disunity and eventually into death (Matt. 26:31) which is why God is continually searching for those He can raise up into leadership. Such leaders are not elected, neither are they chosen at the whim of existing leaders, they are raised by God. The question must then be, 'What does God look for?' Scripture provides the answers:

"the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart..." (1 Sam. 13:14)

"He raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'" (Acts 13:22)

"Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her." (Jer. 5:1)

"And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none." (Ezek. 22:30)

What a tragedy it is that there are times when God cannot find even a single faithful man. It is for this reason, and also so that His power can be displayed in our weakness, that God most often chooses the willing rather than the gifted.

God sometimes chooses a man based on his ready faithfulness. He has proven himself and has prepared himself. Like David he has fought his lion and his bear. He has been tested and found faithful. Sometimes, though, God chooses a man based on potential, like Gideon (Judg. 6). We have looked already at the life of David so let us look briefly at Gideon.

When he was chosen he was struggling with self doubt, low self esteem and fear. He was beating wheat in a winepress which is an arduous and inefficient task as there is no wind in there to blow away the chaff. His own efforts at providing for his family are laborious and bearing little fruit. He certainly wasn't filled with great faith at this point as we see him first destroying the altar to Baal at night when he wouldn't be seen, and then laying out a fleece to confirm the message brought to him-by an angel!

Though he was young, untried, the least of the least and lacking in faith; God saw what he could become! He saw what Gideon couldn't: He chose him for his potential. We can often feel unprepared when we are called by God but we must be willing. Likewise we need to be those who can see the potential in others, willing to take risks where necessary to see them grow into the fullness of what they can become by grace.

When God finds a person, He desires that they be willing, that they be fully obedient (1 Sam. 15:22) and that they take responsibility for that which God entrusts to them. If they do so then He will use them and use them to their limits. In fact He will go beyond those limits as He increases the capacity of those who have been faithful stewards with what they have been given (Matt. 25: 14-29). He does not expect perfection, but He does expect obedience; look at the men He chose:

- Noah had a drinking problem.
- Moses had a bad temper and a speech impediment.
- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all liars.
- Elijah was a depressive.
- Rahab was a prostitute.
- Samson was a vain skirt chaser.
- Peter was impetuous.
- James and John were ambitious.
- Paul was a murderer of Christians.

Yet each of these was used by God as they allowed Him to change them and as they became obedient to Him and faithful to His ways. God often chooses those we would not. We easily find fault with others whilst finding it difficult to see the good. We often look at the outward whilst God judges the heart (1 Sam. 16:7, Acts 1:24, Acts 15:8). Even those who seem disqualified can become 'vessels for honourable use, ready for every good work' (2 Tim. 2: 20-21) if they are faithful and obedient.

It is easy for leaders to be led by the bleating of the sheep, to spend all their time and energy on those who cry the loudest. This is not how we should lead. In fact this often amounts to little more than management, running round putting out fires. This is an inefficient and ineffective leadership style. We should rather be spending most time with those who are faithful, who will themselves be able to lead others:

"and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Tim. 2:2)

We need to spend time discipling such faithful people, inspiring them and encouraging them to 'fan into flame the gifts that are in them' (2 Tim. 1:6). In short we should be those who start fires not those who are constantly putting fires out!

The cost of leadership

"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'" (Luke 14:28-30)

It has been estimated that eight out of ten church leaders do not 'finish well'. There are a number of reasons for this, one of which is a failure to count the cost before they start. Leadership costs. And the cost is great! What is more: the greater the call, the greater the cost!

A leader must be willing to pay the price that Jesus demands, He must daily take up his cross (as must every believer) and he must pour out his life for others, becoming the servant of all.

"whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the son of men did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:44)

Leaders set themselves up for criticism, for accusations and for the attacks of the enemy. They forge ahead and make the way for others, like a cyclist at the head of a peloton who faces more resistance than those who follow in his slipstream. They are the tall trees that catch most wind. As Nietzsche said, "life always gets harder towards the summit, the cold gets colder, the wind stronger, the burden of responsibility heavier." Leaders are also those who are judged more harshly because they have been given more responsibility:

"Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness." (James 3:1)

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account." (Heb. 13:17)

For the apostle Paul, his physical suffering was even a sign of his authentic apostolicity! Reading the following passages does a great deal to remove any delusions about the glamour of authentic biblical leadership!

"From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus." (Gal. 6:17)

"Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one--I am talking like a madman--with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches." (2 Cor. 11:23-28)

Paul suffered greatly, as do many of God's leaders. Only one of original apostles, John, died of natural causes and even then only after torture and exile. God's leaders willingly take on this burden in order to bring life to others. Just as Jesus laid down His life for the sheep, true leaders of His church do the same.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;

persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you." (2 Cor. 4:7-12)

The glory of biblical leadership

We have seen the cost, but there is a glory to leadership. Just as Christ was exalted because he humbled Himself (Phil. 2) so God's leaders can experience glory if they are willing to humble themselves and pay the price.

1 Timothy 3:1 tells us that it is an honourable ambition to aspire to eldership. We struggle with the concept of ambition in the Kingdom but this is a Godly ambition - a desire and willingness to be used rather than a 'campaign for promotion'. James and John were rebuked for their worldly ambition (Matt. 20:20-23) as Jesus tells them that they have no idea what they are asking for - they want the glory without the price. Glory and sacrifice are intertwined in much of Scripture! In fact, there is glory in the sacrifice! I have often said that I have never sacrificed anything for Jesus! This is because whatever I have given up for Him I know has been, or will be replaced by something better. As Jim Elliott once said:

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

In the previous chapter the disciples remind Him of their sacrifice and here He tells them of the reward and the glory they will receive for having made such a sacrifice. Eventually, of course, they all (except John, though he was tortured and imprisoned) pay the ultimate sacrifice, being martyred for their faith. This in itself was glorious:

The glory of leadership is its sacrifice.

To be ambitious for eldership then is to desire hardship, sacrifice, abuse on behalf others, to pay a greater price, to be judged more strictly and to give oneself to others! All for the sake of His glory!

Fulfilling a ministry

We have seen that God requires faithfulness. His leaders must fulfil that with which they have been entrusted. We need to see that though salvation is a free gift it comes with responsibility. The consequence of receiving salvation is a desire to be obedient, which among other things means committing oneself to serving Jesus and His church.

Jesus spent approximately three and a half years in ministry during which he spent approximately half the time gathering people and half discipling those closest to Him. Interestingly, by the end of His ministry He had only 120 faithful followers and could have been considered a failure. Yet those 120 who had been trained and equipped, those 120 who had proved faithful, turned the whole world upside down. These ordinary men and women, unschooled, fishermen, prostitutes, tax collector, etc.; these foolish things confounded the wisest of their day (1 Cor. 1:27). Jesus focussed on reliable men who themselves were qualified to teach others! (2 Tim. 2: 2).

How does Jesus see who is trainable?

Luke 5 gives us a wonderful insight into how He tested for faithfulness and teachability.

- The crowds were listening (not doing/obeying)
- He saw the boats. Jesus watches our every move, there is nothing hidden from Him.
- They were washing nets. They were faithful with what they had. Failure to wash the nets would mean they would rot and then they would lose fish the next time they went out. If he was to become a 'fisher of men' Jesus would expect the same faithfulness and dedication. Peter did not let the basics slide even in his time of frustration, tiredness and 'drought'. Neither can we let the basics (prayer, the Word, worship, etc.) slide when we are tired or seeing little fruit.
- He got into the boat. He interrupted Peter's routine. God often interrupts us, when He does we need to accommodate Him.
- He asked Him to put out a little way. He didn't ask too much of him at first. Only later does He ask Peter to go out into deep water. Peter would have been exhausted from fishing all night and perhaps a little frustrated. To put the boat out at all was a major inconvenience and yet he was willing to obey. He was willing to place his resources at Jesus' disposal.
- Peter then is asked to go out deeper to fish. Jesus was not a fisherman like Peter. It would have been easy for Peter to rely on his own knowledge and experience but He chooses to obey even when it made no sense. After all, he knew that the right time to fish was the evening and he had caught nothing. There seemed little chance of catching anything now. Peter did not let his pride, his intellect or his tiredness prevent him from submitting to the Lord's instructions. He obeys simply because he is asked, not because he feels like it or understands it. We need to have the same response, not just to the direct prompting of Jesus, but to those He chooses to use - His leaders. We submit to them as we would to Christ Himself.
- With this obedience comes fruitfulness. The blessings of obedience are obvious. God does want to bless us abundantly, but He cannot bless disobedience. By being obedient and submissive we position ourselves to receive.

- Peters' response to this is to see his own sinfulness. This is the inevitable response of having revelation of Christ. No matter how 'holy' we seem to others, compared to Christ we are dirty and sinful (cf. Is. 6). It is when we see our sinfulness, our spiritual bankruptcy that we cry out for and receive His mercy; that is when we are truly ready to be used. It is from this place that he is commissioned. (Matt. 4:19 "come follow me and I will make you fishers of men")
- Peter then had a choice. To leave behind his livelihood and everything he knew, to 'put to death' his old way of life, his security, his provision; or to carry on as before. He chose to follow, will you? Often a leader feels that he wants a person to fulfil their destiny, to make the right choice more than they do. Jesus Himself was grieved when the rich young ruler chose not to follow Him. All we can do is paint a picture of a glorious future, to encourage and exhort, but we cannot make the choice for a person.

Servant leadership

"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life." (Rom. 6:22)

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?'" (Ezek. 34:2)

We are called to be slaves to Christ. In order to understand servant leadership we need to understand the nature of slaves/servants.

1. A slave exists for the good of his master; he has no rights. A godly leader gives up his rights for the good of the Kingdom. I was once asked why a woman does not have the right to be an elder (more on women in leadership later). My answer was that no one in the Kingdom, man or woman has any rights at all!
2. A slave sees to his masters needs before he sees to his own. Leadership in the church means often giving up one's own preferences, comforts and desires for the sake of the church.
3. A slave possesses nothing, everything belongs to his master - even his family. Fortunately we serve a good master who desires the well being of ourselves and our families, but we must place these things into his hands.
4. Conversely a slave was not able to provide for himself and so was reliant on his master for food clothing and lodging. As we put our masters needs first he will provide these things (Matt. 6: 25-34).

It is interesting that God's leaders are often referred to as his servants (e.g. Consider my servant Moses, not my leader Moses). Jesus the revolutionary turned the principles of the world and the religious institutions upside down. He showed by example that we must humble ourselves, not lord it over those we lead, not put a burden on people we are not prepared to carry ourselves, not be hypocritical, lead with our lives not just with words, put the needs of others first, and to humble ourselves - even to the point of death.

Galatians 5:13 sums up the attitude of servant leadership, "serve one another in love". In reality too few leaders serve, too many serve their own interests, not enough follow Paul's exhortation:

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil. 2:1-8)

If we are not there, how do we get to that point? By being transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2), so that we see things from His perspective, so that we see the glory of service, the wonder of His ways and the joy set before us (Heb. 12:2).

Faithful servants face a number of challenges:

1. **Fatigue:** There is no leadership without the expenditure of energy (2 Cor. 4:16, Mark 5:30). If we are never fatigued then we are never giving all. The price of avoiding fatigue is mediocrity.
2. **Criticism:** It is true that you can't please all the people all of the time and so criticism is inevitable. The answer is simply to try and please one person all of the time - Jesus.
3. **Rejection:** Jesus was rejected by those He came to serve and promised us the same fate. People will often not want what we have come to give them. Children rarely thank their parents for a hiding or a dose of medicine even if they need it and it is given with love. Paul promises that in the last days people will be, among other things, rebellious and ungrateful.
4. **Pressure and pain:** A leader who loves the church will carry the burden of the church (2 Co.r 11:28). He will feel the pain of those he leads. He will also feel the heart of Jesus for every backslider, every rebel and every person who rejects the gospel.

Given all this, many will wonder why anyone serves at all. The answer is clear:

- A love for Jesus: Love produces obedience and good deeds; just as a mother is willing to bear the pain of childbirth and many sleepless nights out of love.
- A love for our brothers
- We have been chosen: It is what we have been designed and called to do. It is only by walking in this calling that we fully develop our faith.
- Rewards: We are promised rewards for faithfulness, in this life and the next.

Key passages for leaders to know, understand and live by

Whilst "all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16) there are two particular passages that it would serve every leader well to study, meditate on and follow. They are Psalm 23 and 1 Corinthians 13 which I consider useful for obvious reasons.

PSALM 23

This Psalm describes the Good Shepherd. If we are to be His under-shepherd who represent Him well, then it will describe us also. We can take a line by line look at it to discover the essential ingredients of a Godly shepherd.

The Lord is my Shepherd: We need to recognise that we are under-shepherds. First and foremost we serve Him and the sheep that we lead are HIS sheep. Jesus said "I will build my church" in Matthew 16. He did not say You will build my church, neither did He say I will build your church. It is his church, His sheep and we are His leaders. We therefore need to recognise that we have been given responsibility for what is most precious to God, His people, and that any authority we carry is authority that has been delegated to us by Him.

Shepherds of the biblical era were very different to those of today.

- They would often know their sheep by name. It has been said that such shepherds, even if blindfolded could recognise each sheep by touch. In the same way we need to know those for whom we care. They are people, not projects.
- The shepherd would remove burrs and ticks etc. from the fleeces of his sheep to keep them healthy. We too need to help free the sheep from those things that will make them spiritually sick.
- A shepherd walked in front, calling the sheep on. Today's shepherds walk behind, often using a dog and/or a stick to drive the sheep. We need to lead by example, paving the way for the sheep, not driving them on. People catch what we are, not what we say.
- The shepherd would look for the stray sheep and bring him back.

I shall not want: Paul wrote to the church in Rome, 'I long to come to add what is lacking'. That should be the heartbeat of every leader; to meet the needs of the sheep. We need the ability to perceive a person's real needs and bring them to a place of wholeness and maturity.

He makes me lie down in green pastures: This speaks of a healthy diet for the sheep. Green pastures are lush and succulent. In our leading we need to provide a sufficient, healthy spiritual diet for the sheep.

It is almost impossible to make a sheep lie down unless four requirements are met. They must be free of fear, free of friction with other sheep, free of being tormented by flies or parasites and free from hunger. This can only occur under the watch of a diligent and faithful shepherd.

He leads me besides still waters: The shepherd needs to know where water can be found; clean, healthy water. When sheep are thirsty they will wander off in search of a drink. They will often end up drinking from polluted sources where they pick up parasites or other diseases. A skilled shepherd, to keep the sheep in the pasture, will not build fences, but will dig wells.

He restores my soul: When a sheep is described as 'cast down' it means that it has fallen onto its back. A sheep in such a position is unable to right itself and will usually die if help does not arrive. We often find people who are 'cast down', who need to be gently lifted, put on their feet, having their souls restored.

He leads me in paths of righteousness: If sheep are left to their own devices, they will follow the same old paths until they become ruts. They will graze the same areas until they are ruined, and pollute the ground with disease and parasites. We need to lead people out of their ruts, along paths to life and health.

Whilst each individual is responsible before God for how he lives his life, a leader will be responsible for how he has led the sheep. Great leaders take people from one point to another along the path of righteousness. Whether counselling, preaching or leading a meeting, the leaders aim is to take people somewhere. There is a school

of thought that if we simply preach the Word then people will change. I believe that this is not sufficient; when preaching we need to help people 'see a preferable future', create a desire for change and then show them how to get there.

Godly leaders also have a high regard for righteousness and a no-compromise attitude to sin. We need to model, preach about and equip people to live righteously.

For His name's sake: There is an old saying, 'The sun (Son) doesn't shine when the stars are out'. God is not looking for superstars, for men who want to take glory for themselves. Godly leaders are those whose heart is to bring glory to God, who lift high the name of Jesus, and who point people to Him.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for you are with me: Sheep would be taken to certain ranges in the summer and then brought closer to home as winter approaches. As the pastures were on the hills, the return journey often involved travelling through a valley. We all experience valley times, winter seasons, etc. and a good leader will help to encourage the sheep at such times, encouraging them to continue the journey toward the destination. Such encouragement is not done from afar but by being with the sheep.

Your rod and your staff they comfort me: The rod was the main weapon the shepherd used to defend the sheep, and he also used it to correct a sheep when it was wandering off the right path. The rod was also used to count and examine the sheep (Ezek. 20:37); at such times the rod was used to closely examine the state of the sheep's skin as it parted the wool. Leaders need to examine and know the condition of the sheep placed under their care.

The staff on the other hand was used to draw sheep together (e.g. a lamb to its mother) or to draw a sheep to himself. It is used for gently guiding sheep or even just to touch a sheep to let it know the shepherd is there.

A leader needs to know when and how to use each of these tools skillfully. As Scripture tells us, "Exhort, rebuke and encourage".

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: The Good Shepherd is here recognised for honouring the Psalmist. For a king to invite a person to eat with him was considered the greatest honour. Leaders need to be those who honour the sheep. It is easy to become critical, to look at faults and weaknesses but we need to be those who see with the eyes of Jesus. We need to see what a person may become in Christ, and to help them become this.

You anoint my head with oil: Anointing oil is a type or picture of the Holy Spirit. We need to be people of the Spirit. Whether preaching, worshipping, praying, counselling or ministering in any capacity, we need to be people of the Spirit. We are not called to be great orators, skilled musicians, spiritual gurus or dispensers of good advice! Without the Spirit we will fight a losing battle. However if we, as leaders, can be those from whom the Spirit flows, we will bring life, healing and freedom to those we lead.

My cup overflows: If we lead well, and minister in the power of the Spirit, then there will be an overflow into the lives of those we lead. They in turn become those who minister to others, who have an overflow from which others will receive. Churches often speak of a 'priesthood of all believers' but we actually need to prepare people for ministry and then release them into it.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: A sheep that has the care of an expert shepherd will be content, feel safe and full of faith. This statement of faith is made by a man who knows that the Good Shepherd is providing care, provision, protection, guidance, direction, encouragement and, where necessary, discipline. This is a man who is not being 'managed', not being treated like a project, but is lovingly led into the fullness of life God intends for him. In the same manner, we are called not to be managers but leaders who love and care for God's flock.

And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever: A leader should always have eternity in mind. God is more concerned with our eternal state than he is with our momentary comfort. It is a sobering thought that the actions and words of a leader have eternal consequences. This is why Scripture tells us that not many should aim to become teachers and that teachers will be held doubly accountable.

1 CORINTHIANS 13

Without love I am nothing. Love is the driving force behind everything I do as a leader. Love for Jesus and for His people. When a leader loses his love for the people, He needs to get before God and find it again. A leader without love quickly becomes controlling, manipulative, insecure and ineffective. This passage is the definitive description of love.

Love is (NIV translation):

Patient: Patience is a vital characteristic of a leader. People often do not respond as quickly as we would like. They can often fail to listen, fail to obey, get stuck in unhelpful or sinful patterns in their lives; all of which can easily become a source of frustration to those who lead them. We can never lead out of frustration. Whilst we can never compromise on truth or Kingdom values, we need to realise that people are on a journey. There is a process of sanctification and we need to lovingly and patiently guide people along this path, remembering how patient God has been with us.

"The greatest sin of leadership is impatience" Henry Blackaby.

Kind: We serve a kind God, a God of grace and mercy, a God who is benevolent. His leaders need to reflect His kindness. Scripture says, "Your kindness leads me to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). The context here is the mercy of God, that though we deserve eternal punishment, He has given us the opportunity to repent and receive forgiveness. Those we lead need to know that their leaders are approachable and will show mercy, that they will point them to repentance and forgiveness.

Does not boast, is not proud: Pride is called the original sin because it was the downfall of Lucifer. Any attempt by man to take from God the glory that is rightfully His is no less of a sin than that. If we achieve anything in God, it is because of His grace, his power flowing through us, and the glory belongs to Him. As Philippians 2 states clearly, we must have the attitude of Christ Jesus who humbled Himself. There is an old saying with reference to James 4:10 (Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord that he may lift you up") that says if we try to do God's work then He has to do ours.

Is not rude: This speaks largely of acting in an appropriate manner and not being offensive. Whilst we acknowledge that the gospel message in itself will be an offense to some we must ensure that they are not put off by what we do. Jesus is the rock of offense, not us.

Is not self-seeking: Leaders serve the people. The people are not to be used for the advancement, the comfort, the ego or the financial gain of the leader. Leaders need to represent Christ who laid down his life for the sheep.

Is not easily angered: Being temperate is a requirement for both elders and deacons. This essentially means being even tempered, not easily losing one's temper (and, I suggest, being emotionally stable). It is not difficult to see why a leader must be even tempered. A leader must never react to circumstance in such a way that emotions cloud judgment. We are called to be those who respond, as Christ would, to any situation.

Keeps no record of wrongs: This can be one of the hardest characteristics of love to develop and live in. Our natural tendency is often to bring up the past when dealing with people's failings. Again we must represent our Heavenly Father well, as he does not hold our sin against us once we have repented (Is. 43:25 etc.).

Wisdom dictates that this does not simply mean we forget about a sin, in some contexts (for example, there may need to be restitution that needs to take place, legal consequences, etc.), but it does mean that people need not fear approaching their leaders with their failings.

Does not delight in evil: It seems that this is stating the obvious and perhaps it is. Yet we do need to be people who will not compromise with sin, excuse it or accommodate it. Furthermore we must never rejoice in another's failures. Schadenfreude is a word meaning 'to derive pleasure from another person's misfortune'. It is scary that this happens often enough for there to be a word to describe it! We need to understand that a victory for one is a victory for all and a failure for one is a failure for all (1 Cor. 12:24-26).

Rejoices with the truth: Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). To delight in truth is to delight in Him. It is truth that sets us free (John 8:32) and sheds light on dark places, The Holy Spirit leads us into all truth (John 16:13). Yet it can be difficult to sometimes rejoice in the truth, for as we sometimes say at JoshGen, the truth hurts and then it sets you free.

When we are in a position where we have to communicate a hard truth to a person we must not shrink back from doing so, but we must do so with love. It has been said that, 'truth without love is brutality, but love without truth is sentimentality.'

Always protects: Shepherds are responsible for the state of the sheep. They need to be protected from harm that may come to them: from wolves, from enemies, even at times from themselves.

Always trusts: This essentially means believing the best of a person. Needless to say, there are times when a degree of trust must be withheld (we do not, for example, allow anyone with a history of child molestation to work with our children). We do need to trust that, as any person subjects themselves to the headship of Christ, he WILL complete the work He started (Phil. 1:6).

Whilst we need to be wise, those we are leading need to feel that we are on their side, that we are for them and that we believe the best of them.

Always hopes: At the end of the chapter, Paul speaks of three things that are eternal: faith, hope and love. If we can ensure that we hold to these three virtues in our leadership, we will see tremendous fruit in the lives of those we lead.

People often come to us without hope, sometimes without faith. It is our responsibility to bring them to a place of hope no matter their current circumstance. This we can never do if we cannot find faith, if we cannot be people of hope.

Always perseveres: It is so easy to be tempted to give up on people when they have failed, especially if they fail repeatedly. Yet love NEVER fails. Even when we have had to discipline somebody and 'hand them over to Satan' (as per 1 Cor. 5), love continues. In fact discipline itself is an act of love, it is redemptive, with the intent of seeing people restored.

Offices in the church

Scripture only recognizes two offices within the local church: elders and deacons. Before we move on we need to define what these are and how they operate:

Definitions

Elder

There are three words in the New Testament that, describe the same office and are virtually interchangeable. They are:

- **Presbuteros:** translated elder
- **Episkopos:** translated overseer (or bishop)
- **Poimén:** translated shepherd (or pastor)

We see each of them used, for example in 1 Peter 5:1-2, in connection with the same office. Driscoll gives this definition of elders:

"Elders are the male leaders of the church who are synonymously called pastors, bishops, and overseers throughout the New Testament. While the various words are used interchangeably, they each refer to a different aspect of the same role in the same office. As an elder, a man has rank and authority to rule and govern a church. As a bishop, he has the responsibility before God to rule and protect a church. As a pastor, he has the high honor of caring for Christians and evangelizing non-Christians. As an overseer, he has the responsibility before God of leading and managing the church." On Church Leadership (A Book You'll Actually Read) Pg. 14.

On Page 19 he continues:

"An elder is not someone who is a helper that does a lot of work for the church, because that is the definition of a deacon. Rather, an elder is a leader who trains other leaders to lead various aspects of the church. Therefore, no man should be an elder unless he can effectively train people to not only be mature Christians, but mature Christians leaders who train others".

He categorises elders into three main groupings, as follows, with each individual elder carrying one or more of these roles within the team. Together they fulfill the offices that made up the ministry of Jesus Himself:

- **Prophet:** Strong in vision, study, preaching and teaching, doctrine and calling people to repentance.
- **Priest:** Compassionate, pastoral, merciful, loving.
- **King:** Administration, planning, maximizing resources, executing plans.

Needless to say, we need a mix of all three, for each has weaknesses that are covered by the others.

In the Old Testament the elders would sit at the gates of a city where they would govern who could enter, pass judgment on matters concerning the citizens of that city, and interpret laws. Each city would have its elders who would administrate the affairs of their own city. This is a picture of elders in the church. We see in Scripture that there was a church in each city, governed by elders.

Eldership is exclusively male, as we have already stated, the reasons for which we will look at separately.

Deacon

The word “deacon” actually comes from the Greek word diakonos, which simply means “to minister” or “to serve”. The definition of the word gives us insight into the actual role and daily responsibilities of a church deacon. The Greek word for deacon is mentioned over 63 times in the New Testament and each mention gives us insight into the original role of a deacon. This role may vary according to the needs of a particular church, but a deacon's function is to serve the people of God. The office of deacon is mentioned on two occasions in the New Testament. Both occasions are in relation to elders because the two groups of leaders work so closely together. The office of a deacon was created to free up the elders to seek Gods will for the church and to make sure the necessary needs of the church were still met (Acts 6: 2-4). They could be described as ‘pastoral assistants’ as, practically speaking, they work hand in hand with the elders. If elders are the commissioned officers of the army of God then the deacons are the NCO's. A strong deacon team (diaconate) is essential to the health and life of a church.

Biblical qualifications

We need to look in some detail at the biblical qualifications for leaders in God's church. To quote Driscoll again:

“Human leadership in the church is little more than qualified Christians who are following Jesus and encouraging other people to follow them as they follow Jesus. Because of this, church leaders must be good sheep who follow their Chief Shepherd Jesus well before they are fit to be shepherds leading any of his sheep. This is in large part what Paul meant when he told Christians in various local churches to “be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (1 Cor. 11:1)” On Church Leadership (A Book You'll Actually Read) Pg. 12.

We need to take care, for it is remarkably easy to confuse three aspects of a person's make up when considering them for leadership. These are:

- **Character:** i.e. The mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual. The distinctive nature of something. It has been said that, “Everyone tries to define this thing called Character. It's not hard. Character is doing what's right when nobody's looking.” Character is what qualifies the leader in God's Kingdom.
- **Charisma:** i.e. Compelling attractiveness or charm that can inspire devotion in others. Whilst it is often beneficial for a leader to have charisma, this should not be confused for character or substance. It can often be skin deep.
- **Charismata:** i.e the spiritual gifts (literally ‘gracelets’). Whilst we need to ensure that a man is graced to fulfill a particular function, such giftedness is independent of character. As a grace gift it is undeserved and it is irrevocable. Furthermore strength in one gifting does not ensure strength in another. For example a number of men gifted in signs and wonders have fallen into error in the mistaken belief that such acts confirm that their teaching is correct.

Elders

"The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil." (1 Tim. 3:1-7)

"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you-- If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." (Tit. 1:6-9)

There are a number of overlaps in this list, but if we combine them we see the following list:

1. **He desires a noble task:** There must be a desire to serve and take on the responsibility of an elder. This desire should be a Godly desire to serve, not a selfish ambition or desire to 'lord it over' others. As Peter wrote:

"So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly" (1 Pet. 5:1-2)

2. **Above reproach:** Reproach speaks of criticism, disapproval or disappointment. Of course an elder need not be perfect (for then there would be no elders) but he must be a man who lives an exemplary life. A wonderful example is James, who was thrown off the temple pinnacle and then beaten to death. He was nicknamed 'The Just' because of his virtue. It is said that even his enemies could find no fault with his actions.
3. **The husband of one wife:** The first point to make here is that eldership is described as male (note that it does not say the partner of one spouse). We will deal with this issue separately. Second, a more accurate translation would be 'a one woman man'. There are various opinions about whether this disqualifies a man who has been divorced, though it would obviously rule out a man who has multiple wives!

There is a variety of opinion on the eldership team of JoshGen as to whether a divorced man can be an elder and there is not space here to go into an in depth study. However we should perhaps note that these qualifications relate to current character, not past failures and that divorce and remarriage in itself is a complex and multi faceted issue. We take the view that if a man has been divorced, then at the very least, there should be an examination of the reasons that led to that divorce and whether there are any consequences to that which would affect him leading the church into the future.

4. **Sober minded/temperate:** an elder must be even tempered, not given to extremes of behaviour.
5. **Self controlled:** An elder who cannot control himself cannot lead others.

6. **Respectable:** This means 'of good behavior' or 'modest'. In other words an elder cannot be given to lewd behavior. This does not mean conforming in behavior to the cultural expectations of certain segments of society, but that he does not act in such a way as to hinder the gospel message. It could be said, of course, that David acted in an unrespectable or undignified manner when dancing before the Lord (2 Sam. 6:14) but he was not acting in a way contrary to the culture of the Kingdom. Elders must exhibit, by example, behavior that is pleasing to our King, whether that be in meeting or in 'everyday life'.
7. **Hospitable:** This is defined as receiving or treating guests or strangers warmly and generously. An elder sees the church as family and acknowledges that it is his responsibility to draw people into the life of the family and to do so without prejudice or favoritism (James 2:1-4).
8. **Able to teach/hold to the Word/Instruction in sound doctrine/able to rebuke.** This speaks of more than simply the ability to impart information. It speaks of carrying the authority to establish correct doctrine in the life of the church. At a time when we are surrounded by many strange and dangerous doctrines the elders must be able to protect the sheep. They must be able to hold to sound biblical teachings and practice and be able to competently and persuasively counter any false doctrine that comes into the life of the church. It would be erroneous to think that elders should allow the sheep access to any teaching and to decide for themselves what is acceptable. Throughout Scripture it is shown that is the eldership team's responsibility to protect the sheep from deception; failure to do so will result in much damage to the church and to many individuals. Indeed much of the New Testament is given over to refuting false teaching. The apostles were not reluctant to condemn what they saw as heresy and to warn the church to avoid the teachings of certain men who they were willing to name (e.g. 1 Tim. 1:20, 2 Tim. 4:14, 3 John 1:19).
9. **Not a drunkard:** Whilst it is self evident that an elder should not be an alcoholic I think it is fair to say that we could interpret this as not having addictions, and not be too wide of the mark. An elder must be able to have control over the 'desires of the flesh' (Gal. 5:16-26). An elder must not be mastered by anything except Christ, not wine, drugs, food, TV, computer games, internet, sport, etc. It is interesting that often sobriety and watchfulness are linked in Scripture. As the 'watchmen' elders must remain sober and able to fulfill their obligations. Ezekiel 33:6 gives a stark warning to watchmen who fail in their responsibility to protect the people.
10. **Not violent but gentle:** This goes beyond physical violence. An elder must have a gentle spirit. He must be approachable (2 Tim. 2:24). There is a difference, however between a peacekeeper and a peacemaker. Elders are not called to avoid or prevent conflict, they are called to resolve conflict to bring true peace. Sometimes conflict is unavoidable in leadership and a Godly leader will not shy away from this.
11. **Not quarrelsome:** In 2 Timothy 2:23 and Titus 3:9, Paul warns against indulging in meaningless controversies. Elders must discern when it is necessary to discuss/debate or fight for a truth, and when to 'let sleeping dogs lie'. Furthermore an elder's priority must always be to bring people into truth, rather than in winning an argument or being right.
12. **Not a lover of money.** Not a lover of money: It is impossible to serve both God and money (Matt 6:24). As a servant of Jesus Christ and His church an elder must be free from the temptation to make decisions and guide people from a motive of materialism. For example, an elder must not minister in such a way as to avoid displeasing those who are key financial contributors in the life of the church. An elder must be free from the temptation of counseling, preaching or administering church life in such a way as to benefit materially in a personal capacity. Of course we know that a worker is worth his wages (1 Tim 5:18) and an elder who works well should receive a financial reward but such rewards should not be the motivation for ministry. An elder must be motivated by love and a desire to serve.
13. Furthermore an elder needs to set the example for believers in all things, including faithfulness with the resources God has entrusted to Him, obedience in such things as tithing and in generosity. A love of money would result in a lack of giving, a lack of generosity and would therefore disqualify such a man from the role of elder.

- 14. Manage his household well:** The church is a 'household of faith', if a man cannot be faithful with the small (his immediate family) how can he be expected to be faithful with the large (the church family)? He must be a man who loves and leads his wife and children, as well as all the people and possessions he has been given care over.
- 15. Submissive/believing/faithful children:** The word sometimes translated 'believing' here can also be rendered 'faithful'. We do not believe that a man is disqualified from eldership if his children grow up to become unbelievers. Even a perfect father can see his children go astray (Jesus lost Judas, God as Father of Israel saw them repeatedly fall into apostasy). What we can say though is that the fruit of the way he has parented is usually evident in the lives and attitudes of his children. If they are rebellious and disrespectful this can often be attributed to a lack of guidance and discipline. Whilst each child is free to make their own choices, if all of a man's children are rebellious it should raise question marks about his ability to be a 'father' in the household of God. We would need to look at each case individually, for example if a man only received Christ in later life when his children have already grown into disrespectful and rebellious adults, this may not necessarily disqualify him.
- 16. Not a recent convert:** Again we need a flexible and Spirit led approach as it is difficult to define what constitutes a 'recent' convert. The principle to follow here is surely more linked to spiritual maturity and a developed track record of faithfulness, love and humility.
- 17. Well thought of by outsiders:** The character of a man should be seen not just when he is in church. We must look at his family life as we have already seen, but we must also look at his work life and his social life. Does he act the same way in front of his unsaved work colleagues as he does with his church friends? Is he a good employee or an honest businessman? Does he work hard and live a life of integrity? Do people know that he is a believer, does he share his faith? These are all questions that need to be asked of an individual before he is brought onto eldership. If it is valid to ask for a reference from a previous employer before recruiting a person into a secular job, is it not also valid when ordaining someone into eldership? At JoshGen we have sometimes contacted an employer (or customers in the case of a businessman) to ask pertinent questions about a potential elder.
- 18. Not arrogant:** Humility is an essential quality of a Godly leader.
- 19. A lover of good/upright/holy:** Holiness is a positive attribute, it is not made up of things we do not do (for example not smoking, not drinking, and not swearing does not make us holy). We act a certain way because we have been made holy and a leader needs to show this by example. He behaves in a good, moral, upright way, not because he 'has to' and not in order to try and 'earn religious brownie points'. An elder behaves in a Godly way because he is a 'lover of good': he loves to please God and recognizes that God's ways produce good fruit that last into eternity.
- 20. Disciplined:** Paul wrote of the importance of being disciplined (1 Cor. 9:24-27) for he knew that a lack of self discipline could lead to disqualification from the race. To be a follower of Jesus means to subject oneself to discipline (if we do not discipline ourselves, our loving father will do it, Heb. 12:8) as we are called to be Disciples. We must be disciplined with our time, our thoughts, our emotions and our actions. An elder must lead by example in the spiritual disciplines such as prayer, worship, studying the word, giving, fasting etc.

"Three things are noteworthy about this list. First, the list is really about men being good Christians, assuming that good Christians will make good pastors. This is curious because too many pastors are not very good Christians. Second, the qualifications for a pastor are in large part tied not to his work at the church, but rather to whether or not he has been a good pastor in his home with his family and in his world with his neighbors and coworkers; too many pastors are good pastors at the expense of being good husbands, fathers, neighbors,

and the like. Third, establishing whether or not a man actually meets these criteria requires relational time in community over a long season because the list is about counting character, which is more difficult than counting rocks, as one pastor has quipped." On Church Leadership (A Book You'll Actually Read) Pg. 16.

Of course a man may meet all of these qualifications and not be called to be an elder. Elders are not self appointed, nor are they appointed by committees or congregational votes. They are called by Jesus Christ and recognized by men. Paul tells elders that "the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). Ordination onto eldership is in recognition of what a man has been called to and to some extent what he is already doing in the church (though with ordination comes an anointing to equip him to be more effective in this calling). Such recognition must come from the existing eldership team, especially the leader of that team, often with the input and advice of an apostolic figure working into that church.

Deacons

"Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted too much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. (1 Tim 3:8-12)

We see that the qualifications are almost identical to those of elders except they need not have the ability to teach. That being a deacon in itself is a high calling, essential to the well-being of the church, is seen in the story of the choosing of the original deacons. The apostles say to the people, "Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty" (Acts 6:3).

The only glaring difference is that 'deacons wives' are mentioned here. We need to look at this in some detail.

The Greek word here literally means women, not wives, so some translations have 'Likewise deaconesses ...'. We must therefore ask what Paul had in mind here. Was he referring to women who assist deacons, deacons wives or women deacons? Which of these is in view will determine whether there is a biblical mandate for women deacons. For the following reasons we would view 'deaconesses', to be the more accurate translation, which would then encompass all three of those options. The reasons for this are:

- Paul seems to refer to some women in the church as deacons e.g. Phoebe in Rom. 16:1. Likewise Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Euodia and Syntyche may well have been deacons.
- If he was speaking of the wives of deacons then he would have been setting a higher standard for deacons than elders as there is no qualification mentioned for elder's wives.
- Grammatically the word likewise fits best with an interpretation that the preceding list is for male and female deacons, with the next list being for female deacons exclusively. This, incidentally is followed by a subsequent list that seems to be for male deacons exclusively.
- Women do hold positions of leadership and influence in the church, even if that is restricted in many churches to Sunday school, women's ministry or administration.

Whilst it is true that Paul has previously forbidden women from teaching, we cannot take this as a blanket ban on all teaching or positions of leadership. Paul was specifically alluding here to the exercise of authority in terms of doctrine, that is the preserve of eldership (and which the ability to perform is a requirement for). Few people would suggest that women are forbidden from all teaching (even in Sunday school, the home, school etc.) especially since Priscilla (along with Aquilla) are described as having a teaching role.

Therefore we can see that female deacons did, and should still, exist and that there are qualifications for them as there are for male deacons:

Exclusively female qualifications: " must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things." (1 Tim. 3:11)

Exclusively male qualifications: " the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well." (1 Tim. 3:12)

Paul seems to be indicating here that a male deacon is most vulnerable to sexual sins and abdication of authority in the home, whilst a woman is more vulnerable to emotional and verbal sins.

Interestingly, after the qualifications are listed, two rewards are mentioned for deacons who serve well

- A good standing for themselves
- Great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

It is also stated that a person must be tested before being ordained as a deacon. We see this testing as follows:

- They have been watched over a period of time and have demonstrated faithfulness, character and a servant heart.
- At JoshGen we announce the names of prospective deacons to the church before they are ordained. The church members then have the opportunity to inform the elders of anything which may disqualify such a person from being ordained.

Roles

Elder

The duties and responsibilities of elders are listed in Scripture as follows:

- Prayer and study of the Word
- Ruling/leading/governing/managing the church, rightly exercising Godly authority and power and being good stewards of finances
- Caring for God's people (for which they will give an account). Feeding and protecting the sheep.
- Living exemplary lives
- Teaching the Bible correctly, establishing right doctrine and combating false teaching
- Preaching
- Praying for the sick

- Working
- Protecting the church
- Setting the vision/direction of the church
- Disciplining unrepentant Christians
- Obeying the secular laws as the legal ruling body of a corporation
- Developing other leaders and teachers
- They learn from each other
- They lead our corporate meetings
- They strengthen the church

We know that as elders we will give an account before God for how we have led the church (Heb. 13:17) so it is a responsibility and a privilege that we take very seriously.

We understand that the church does not belong to us, but to Christ and that it is, in fact, Him that builds His church (Matt. 16:18). We are called to represent Him, to love the people and lay down our lives for them just as He did. Our role is that of servant leaders whose motivation is love (Luke 10:27, 1 Cor. 13:1-3, 1 Pet. 5:1-7). Despite the seriousness of the role we do so gladly and willingly, knowing it is by doing so that we fulfill the calling of God on our lives and serve His church the best way we can.

Deacon

Deacons are not governmental. They support the elders and to take away the burden of a lot of the practical aspects of church life from them (Acts 6:1-3). That is not to say that deacons are merely those who help practically. We read in Acts of deacons ministering in great power (Stephen preached powerfully and was martyred, Philip was a powerful evangelist). A deacon holds a high office and receives great spiritual reward if he is faithful (1 Tim. 1:13).

We cannot define exactly what deacons do in a church as their duties can be anything the elders need from them in order to keep the church functioning well. By performing their role they allow the elders to find God and lead God's people into all that He has for them.

Deacons in JoshGen often lead communities (home groups), though not all do and some home groups are led by people who are not deacons. Deacons may be responsible for other ministries in the life of the church (the poor, the kids, administration, etc.). Some may be full time and some part time. What they all have in common is that they have proven reliable and can be entrusted to lead others (2 Tim. 2:2). They should carry the values of the eldership team and, in turn, teach these to others. It is likely that most members of the church will be closer relationally to deacons than they will to most elders.

Examples of the work of our deacons include:

1. Looking after the needs of the poor. Ensuring resources are allocated effectively and to the right people, in line with biblical principles and the values of the church.
2. Following up and looking after new converts. Inviting visitors into homes and connecting them into home groups (communities). Making sure new converts are discipled.

3. The smooth running of church services. Including set up of chairs, tea and coffee facilities, sound and A/V systems. Cleaning the venue (yes this includes toilets), ensuring visitors are welcomed and made to feel comfortable. Anticipating and meeting the needs of the elders.
4. Ensuring practical needs are met. Such as food for sick families, looking after children, etc.
5. Administration. We have full time deacons as PA's, overseeing salary payments and expenses, organization of events etc. Part time deacons are involved in overseeing other administrative tasks that need to be performed.
6. We have deacons overseeing children's church, youth, multimedia presentations and other 'portfolios' in the life of the church
7. Ultimately the role of a deacon is to make whatever the elders of the church need to be done, happen.

Deacons are an integral part of the church; without them we would not be healthy. They are a vital cog in the structure of the church, helping to disciple members, facilitate meetings and events, etc. They are to be honoured and respected as men and women whose lives are worthy of following and imitating (Heb. 13:7).

“Doing coffee”

We sometimes joke that JoshGen was built on coffee. Because we understand that 'I am my brother's keeper' and that the mandate of every leader is to 'make disciples' not just converts; there has always been a willingness to speak into each other's lives. This has often been done over a cup of coffee, hence the joke.

That we see the necessity, and are committed to it, doesn't make it easy. Many of us dislike conflict but conflict is sometimes a necessary consequence of taking discipleship seriously.

“Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.” (Prov. 9:7-9)

“Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” (Prov. 27:5-6)

“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” (Prov. 27:17)

Yet we must love people enough to risk our friendship. We must be 'peacemakers' not 'peacekeepers'

So, practically speaking, if this is something that all leaders need to do, how do we go about it?

- Ask yourself if what you have seen is a real issue. Often we can become upset or irritated with another person because of what is in us.
- Ask yourself “will it help that person to hear what I have to say?” We should only speak for the other person's benefit, not to make life easier for ourselves.
- Pray first. We have no right to address a person until we have prayed for them.
- Go in humility, especially if that person is a leader or is older (1 Tim. 5:1).
- Find an appropriate time and place for the conversation.

- Speak first to that person alone (only if they refuse to repent of a sin issue should you ever discuss it with somebody else).
- Speak the truth in love.
- Be specific, be truthful, be encouraging and redemptive. The aim of such a conversation should be to help the person become more like Christ not to make them feel guilty or ashamed.

Of course this works both ways. We need to be open to people speaking into our lives. This can be difficult at the best of times, but what do we do if we disagree with the perspective a person gives us?

- Check what was said against the Word and Holy Spirit, not your own emotions. Do not simply react. We cannot listen only to things we agree with; the most offensive things are probably those that are true.
- Pray sincerely about it and ask God to show you what you cannot see (Ps. 139:23).
- Obey those put over you unless their advice is clearly contrary to the Word or is clearly a sin.
- If necessary get an HONEST 2nd opinion (don't simply keep getting advice until you hear what you want). Sometimes we simply CANNOT SEE what a person is saying, however if several people say the same thing then we need to believe them even above our own judgment. This is a true test of teachability. Submission speaks of 'positioning oneself to be persuaded'. We need to do this, not entrench our position and defend ourselves. Many of our leadership team have been in this position before and we have learned: trust the judgment of the team over your own, even if what they are saying seems to make little sense at the time.
- Remember God always rewards obedience.
- Be especially cautious of reacting if somebody 'attacks' one of your 'sacred cows' (e.g. your spouse, your children, the way you drive, etc.).
- Do not rely on 'having peace' about something in judging its truth. We sometimes can 'lose our peace' (temporarily) because God tells us something that we do not want to hear what He has to say.

Women and leadership

As we have seen, we believe that women can and should, fulfill leadership roles. They can exercise leadership in certain areas of church life and in the home (over their children, under the headship of the husband).

It needs to be stated, also, that men need women, just as women need men.

"Men need wives so utterly that, even though sin had not yet entered the world (and the world was technically perfect), it remained incomplete and therefore "not good" until the creation of Eve ... men alone simply cannot be fruitful, multiply, honor God, and have the Trinitarian intimacy they were created to enjoy, and so God made women to be of help to men. Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9 Paul says, "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." On Church Leadership (A Book You'll Actually Read) Pg. 31.

So why can women not be elders?

We have also seen that we consider men and women are equal before God. They are, however created to be different (and not just biologically) to fulfill different functions and to complement one another. Men and women do not have to be identical to be equal. As they were created together 'in His image' it is clear that God's image and likeness is best shown by men and women who function together in partnership like the Trinity, with distinctions, submission, and unity.

Paul uses the creation argument to argue for the headship of men:

"I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." (1 Tim. 2:12-14)

Interestingly, though Eve sinned first, God called out rhetorically to Adam, "Where are you?" God held the man primarily responsible! Adam chose to blame God and the woman instead of accepting responsibility for his failure to lead and Eve, in effect, defended Adam by blaming Satan. The curse that God pronounced included the following:

To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." (Gen. 3:16)

Some have suggested this infers male leadership came after the fall and no longer applies since Jesus has broken the curse, but this shows an incorrect understanding both of the preceding chapters and of this particular verse which is best read as meaning that woman will have pain from both her husband and children, as she will desire to rule her husband, but he will rule over her. In other words it is not male rulership that came with the fall, but a failure to accept and be happy with male rulership. That this is so is confirmed by a reading of Genesis 4:7 which describes sin's desire to rule Cain, and which uses the same language.

It is argued that the story of Deborah shows that women can hold the highest positions of leadership. Yet even here we see that though she acted as judge and prophet, she clearly wanted a man to lead. Barak refused to lead strongly and was rebuked for it. What we learn from this story is that occasionally, God will work with a godly woman rather than an ungodly man.

Elders in the Old Testament were exclusively male. Should there have been a radical change in the New Testament period, we would expect to read of it as such a change would have required much teaching to change mindsets. For example, we read a lot about circumcision as there was a radical departure from Old Testament norms.

Jesus Himself continued with the Old Testament by selecting an exclusively male leadership team. Every apostle was male. Some have argued that Jesus did not select female apostles because the culture in his day would not have accepted this. They forget that the disciples were chosen by the will of God the Father that was revealed to Jesus after spending a night in prayer. Also, rather than obeying social customs, Jesus frequently broke them! He was, in part, killed because of his violation of social customs.

We should note, also, that Jesus elevated the status of women above social norms on a number of occasions: he spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well, used women as examples of faith, did teach women theology, allowed a sinful woman to anoint him, had the first reports of His resurrection given by women. Two of His closest friends were women. Jesus honored, taught, and loved women and even included them in vital positions in his ministry; but he did not elevate women to the highest level of leadership, in keeping with the creation order and Old Testament precedent.

No female elders are mentioned in the New Testament though we do read of many women who are highly regarded and fulfill essential roles in the church. For example Priscilla worked alongside her husband Aquilla as a teacher, though she is never described as an elder. Lydia likewise was a blessing to the church and presumably was head of her household in the absence of a husband.

1 Timothy 2:11-3:5 seems to exclude the possibility of women elders. First, unlike the list of qualifications for deacons, there is no mention of women. Second women are forbidden from teaching.

As we have already seen, this cannot mean all teaching, nor can Paul have wanted women to remain absolutely silent in church (elsewhere he gives instructions for women who prophesy).

Driscoll clarifies as follows: "(I) believe that the word used here for "authority" (the only place it is used in the New Testament) refers to the highest authority in the church, that of elder-pastor. This also seems logical in the context, as what immediately follows in the next chapter of 1 Timothy is the requirements for elders-pastors, which include being a mature Christian man and an exemplary husband and father. Correspondingly, Paul forbids women to teach (which would include preaching because it is an elder duty, according to 1 Timothy 5:17) and exercise authority (such as enforcing church discipline or setting doctrine) as elders-pastors. The teaching spoken of in 1 Timothy 5:17 likely refers to preaching and teaching as done by the elders, as every other time teaching is spoken of in the remainder of the letter it is in reference to the teaching of an elder" On Church Leadership (A Book You'll Actually Read) Pg. 42.

Again, the argument that this was a bending to the social norms of the day, forgets how much Paul suffered for defying social and religious traditions. In fact Paul, and the Scriptures in general, held a much higher view of women than the religio-societal norm generally did. As Driscoll elaborates on page 44.:

"Clearly, God's intention is that Christian women would be well-informed theologians, and to do so they must first learn to respect the male pastors whom God has appointed to instruct them. While this simple admonition may appear patronizing to our modern ears, it is in fact because of this verse that it seems so. Ironically, if it were not for God's command through Paul that women be taught theology, modern-day feminist theologians would not be theologically astute enough to argue against the rest of Paul's teaching. After all, it is only in those places where Paul's influence has spread that women have been liberated, while throughout much of the rest of the world women are more likely to be considered mere property, denied an education, and handed a veil behind which to disappear into oblivion."

We have the evidence of church history: throughout the history of the Christian faith, this position has been widely agreed upon by everyone from the early church fathers John Chrysostom and Augustine, to the Catholic theologian Erasmus, to Lutheran reformer Martin Luther, to Presbyterian reformer John Calvin, to Baptist theologian John Gill.

Finally logic dictates that women in eldership would be problematic. If this were so then a woman who is called to submit to her husband would hold a position whereby he was called to submit to her. Whilst we can accept the principle of mutual submission this would provide an untenable situation. God is a God of order not confusion, which would surely result from such a situation.

We highly value and esteem the women of the church, but we believe that eldership is a role for men. This is not because men are in some way superior to women but because we are created differently for different functions. Though only men are elders, our wives play a crucial role on the leadership team. They don't just support their husbands, but often bring insight and perspective that is highly valued. They are spared, however, carrying the burden of responsibility of taking decisions and the consequences thereof.

We know that this is a contentious issue in the church today, but we must take a stand on what we believe to be a clear biblical principle. Please appreciate that we believe women are not second class citizens in God's Kingdom and are essential to the body. They can prophesy, lead worship, teach in certain contexts, etc. just as men can. They cannot however fulfill 'governmental' positions.

I appreciate that this is not an exhaustive treatment of the subject so if you have any problems or questions regarding our position on women in ministry please feel free to contact one of our elders.

Credits and thanks

It is impossible to credit every person who has had a contribution to make toward the compilation of this manual. It is the distillation of things I have learned over thirty years, from many different preachers, authors, leaders, friends and family. It is possible though, to single out a few individuals that have had a direct bearing on the content contained within these pages:

Thanks to the following whose work this really is:

Andrew Selley, lead elder of Joshua Generation. A good friend and amazing leader with whom I have had the privilege of serving for the last decade or so. Much of this content is derived from or inspired by his preaching, our discussions and debates, times spent together either formally in elders meeting or informally, and by the example he sets in his life.

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Mark Driscoll whose book 'On Church Leadership (A Book You'll Actually Read)' I have quoted from liberally. He is an amazingly gifted communicator and has a handle on leadership that few people seem to have these days. I heartily recommend his book to you.

*The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been.
~Henry Kissinger*

People are more easily led than driven. ~David Harold Fink

Lead and inspire people. Don't try to manage and manipulate people. Inventories can be managed but people must be lead. ~Ross Perot

Additional Notes:

