

CHAPTER 1

“When God wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part;

When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!

How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him

Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!

How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses,
And which every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out-
God knows what He's about.”

- Author Unknown

1. INTRODUCTION

“REDISCOVERING BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP?”

On April 10, 1912, the steamship Titanic set sail on its maiden voyage for New York City. It was the fastest and largest passenger ship known at the time. As you know, the Titanic crashed into an iceberg and sent hundreds of people to a watery grave. What is not commonly known however about the Titanic is that the reason it crashed was attributed to a failure to heed multiple warnings.

For example, the captain knew that they were headed into an area filled with icebergs, but did nothing. Radio messages from other ships warned the Titanic, but they were ignored. The ship operator, it was reported, did not copy even one critical message, because he was preoccupied with sending personal messages from the wealthy passengers to their friends on the shore. The lookout on the crow’s nest did not bother to report that his binoculars were missing, which would have spared the ship. Because the captain wanted to have the prestige of breaking the speed record, he did not travel through those waters safely, but recklessly.

In the same way, the Word of God is filled with instruction and guidance to navigate us through the waters of sin and temptation on our course towards holiness – it is our map and compass. We cannot afford to risk the tragedy of steering carelessly to our destination of God’s will for the church. We must listen carefully to the Word of God.

This series on Biblical Eldership is an attempt to steer the church of the Living God out of its troubled waters because its faces a threat more deadly than an iceberg. The mission of the church, the health of God’s people, and the glory of God are at stake. We cannot mock at danger by thinking that we will survive despite our carelessness.

The name of the ship that we are sailing on is called, “spiritual leadership.” The fear is that too many are distracted with other things that occupy their watchfulness as they travel, and in many places the church is already taking in water and beginning to sink. The leadership of the church is in peril. We must redirect our course now, and every hand must heed the call! *The purpose of this study is to understand the Biblical teaching on the nature of spiritual leadership in the context of the leadership crisis facing the church and world today.*

1. CONFUSED ABOUT OUR COURSE

Leadership is a phenomenon in our day! At present, there are over 18,553 books dealing with leadership on www.amazon.com. You can buy 21 video series, peruse 50 different magazines so named, hang various frames of leadership art work, or doze off during countless hours of late night television infomercials that are full of ads by people who claim to be gurus in the area of leadership.

Our culture values leadership but does not understand it at all! There will always be those strong, natural leaders that rise to the top and persuade the masses to chase after them or their ideas. But this reveals something most interesting – men will grope to discover something about the nature of leadership, innately given by God, but because of sin, they miss the mark.

Many people throughout the ages have wrestled with this problem and have attempted to come up with their own definitions of leadership. Consider the following attempts to capture leadership by men and woman whose definitions reveal something of the innate pattern set by God, but which ultimately fall short of spiritual leadership.

Bernard Montgomery (great military leader), “Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose, and the character which inspires confidence.”

Fleet Admiral Nimitz, “That quality that inspires sufficient confidence in subordinates as to be willing to accept his views and carry out his commands.”

Li Hung Chang (Chinese leader), “There are only 3 kinds of people – those who are immovable, those who are movable, and those who move them!”

Student leader John Mott describes a leader as, “a man that knows the road, who can keep ahead, and who pulls others after him.”

President Harry Truman defines leadership as “a person who has the ability to get others to do what they don’t want to do and like it.”

He echoes the sentiments of Dwight Eisenhower, “Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it.”

Napoleon Bonaparte, “A leader is a dealer in hope.”

Warren G. Bennis, “Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.”

Tom Landry says, “Leadership is getting someone to do what they don't want to do, to achieve what they want to achieve.”

Norman Schwarzkopf, the great military officer, “Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.”

Rosalynn Carter (wife of former president Jimmy Carter) said, “A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but ought to be.”

This shows that the world understands something of the nature of leadership that God intends for men, but apart from His Word and grace have no ability whatsoever to arrive at the standard or the potential that God has created him to know. All of these represent characteristics of natural leaders. These are answers on how to be “self-made leaders.” But God is not looking for self-made

leaders. He is looking for believing men and women through who He can work to accomplish His will in the world.

Furthermore, leaders will only fulfill their God-given potential if they know God. Therefore, you would expect in the Christian world to find those who recognize the value of leadership. Yet at www.Christianbook.com you can buy 1,003 different books and 57 other products related to leadership at the click of a mouse. A casual glance at the titles shows how each one of those resources claims to be the only help you need, in order to know and be what God has called you for as a leader, in the church, in the home, on the job, etc.

The question is: how do you as a Christian wade through all the data? How do you choose which seminars to attend, which books to buy, and which audio tapes to listen to on your commute? With so many different definitions of leadership on the best-sellers list, where do you begin? The answer is: you begin with one book – the Word of God!

2. JUMPING SHIP

The failure to rely on the Word of God seems to adequately describe our culture and even the church. Roles are reversed in the home and in the church. The Bible is said to be antiquated and unable to guide us through the sophistications of the 21st century, cultural and without relevance. Women pastors fill seminaries and pulpits across the land. Conferences and seminars have replaced the local church. The Internet and television have become an alternative option for church goers instead of Sunday morning fellowship and worship. Church growth advocates are borrowing the best marketing strategies from secular corporations, saying that if we do not reinvent the church soon, it will go out of existence by the year 2050.¹ Seminaries are removing theological education in order “to emphasize ministry competency development” for its pastors and lay leaders.² The church mirrors the world, because its leaders have become worldly, despite the warning of Scripture **Matthew 20:25-28; 2 Corinthians 6:17.**

3. FIGHTING FOR THE HELM

Within the church, a tug-of-war for power exists between the leaders and the laity as to who will lead, what leadership style is most acceptable, and how church business will be run. Some leaders dictate to their people with authoritarian dominance, while other leaders are apathetic figureheads who represent the interests of the vocal or wealthy members of the congregation. Some churches exalt the well-liked or specially talented members of their church to positions of leadership, not knowing if they are even believers. The moral example of the leaders is often secondary to their ability to draw a crowd or raise funds. With that in mind, we seek to recover true spiritual, Biblical leadership.

¹ George Barna, *The Second Coming of the Church*.

² Saddleback Seminary, <http://www.crossroad.to/Excerpts/community/rockbridge.htm>

4. FULL SPEED AHEAD

The issue of leadership must be solved by the Scriptures only. Our series, *Shepherding the Flock of God* must begin therefore, by answering one key question: “What is spiritual leadership, Biblically defined?” Here is the definition I believe the Bible would give, which this lesson will unpack:

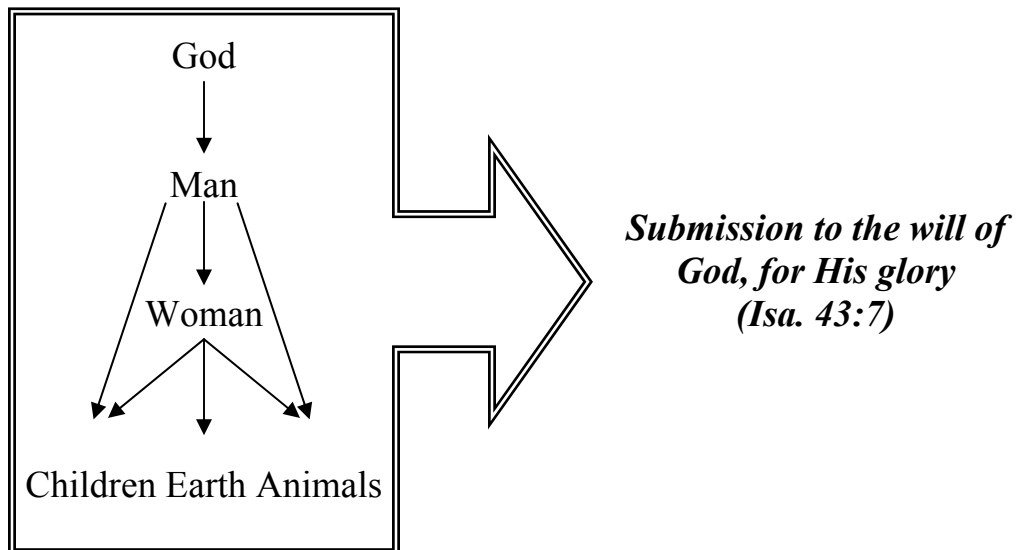
**SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IS THE ABILITY TO
INFLUENCE A PERSON WITH GOD-GIVEN AUTHORITY
INTO THE WILL OF GOD.**

By *spiritual* leadership, we are speaking of that which comes from the God of the Bible, and which is only available to believers in Jesus Christ. By *ability* we mean that which is bestowed by God yet a skill developed into ever-maturing effectiveness. By *influence*, we differentiate leadership as something that is compelled and earned by character, not merely by position or rank. By *a person* we mean that leaders are primarily stewards of other people, with eternal souls, not properties or materials. By *God-given authority*, we acknowledge that God Himself delegates a measure of His authority to spiritual leaders for a specific purpose, thereby defining and limiting the scope of this authority. And by the *will of God*, we identify the goal of every spiritual leader as bringing men and women under the submission of Jesus Christ.

This description of leadership in the Word of God plays out in the drama of redemption, where God, the Supreme Leader and Authority, delegated some aspects of His leadership to man. Understanding the purpose of man’s leadership clarifies our responsibility to fulfill God’s specific intent for all levels of spiritual leadership, formal or not.

- A. Leadership: Established at the Creation – God’s design for leadership began with the creation of man, in which God gave very specific responsibilities to man, “**to rule.**”
- 1) What does **Genesis 1:26-27** say is the first function of man as the only image bearer of God?
 - 2) To whom is the command given in **1:28**?
 - 3) What is the essence of this command? In other words, how are the men and women to “**rule?**”

- 4) Who and what are they to “**rule over?**”
- 5) What is the role of the woman in this command, according to **2:18-22?**
- 6) What does this say about the authority structure of the family?



- 7) Who then is called to be a spiritual leader, to one degree or another?
- B. Leadership: Perverted at the Fall – No sooner had God’s design been put in place than it came under severe attack in the Garden of Eden. **Genesis 3** gives the account of the loss of man’s leadership to Satan, who would become the “**ruler of this world**” (**John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11**).
- 1) Who does Satan appeal to first in his attack on humanity, according to **Genesis 3:1?**
 - 2) What does this reveal about the strategy of Satan?
 - 3) What other authority did Satan challenge in v. 1?

- 4) What role did he thereby assume?
 - 5) What goal did he have in mind for Eve, in light of our definition above?
 - 6) Where was Adam as his wife ate from the tree, according to the end of **v. 6**? What does this imply about his leadership?
 - 7) How did God respond according to **v. 8-9**?
 - 8) What does singling out the husband teach concerning authority?
 - 9) What were the consequences for the woman in **v. 16**?
 - 10) What does it mean to “**desire**” him (cf. **4:6-7**)?
 - 11) What were the consequences for the man in **v. 16-17** (cf. **4:7**, “**master**”)?
 - 12) What are the two extremes that reside in the heart of every male leader?
 - 13) How does this corruption contribute to the mar the image of God in man and compound the frustration of every leader who searches for fulfillment?
 - 14) What does **1 John 5:19** say about whose authority fallen men are under?
 - 15) What then does man need?
- C. Leadership: Recovered in Redemption – The authority of Satan over fallen men and the marring of God’s image in men was overturned at the cross for those who believe. In salvation, God transferred the

believer from the authority of Satan to God and renewed the image of God in him, which included a return to God's original purpose, however not perfect.

- a. What does **Colossians 1:13** say happened to believers at conversion?
 - b. What does **Colossians 2:13-15** say happened to Satan at the cross?
 - c. What does this tell us about how we can recover what we were created to do as spiritual leaders (cf. **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**)?
 - d. By what *authority* do we go and bring men into submission to the Lordship of Christ, according to **Matthew 28:18-20**?
- D. Leadership: Matured through Growth – If the image of God is being constantly renewed in those who believe, then our ability to influence others into the will of God grows as we mature in Christ.
- a. What does **Colossians 3:9-10** say about the image of God being renewed in us as we mature in Christ?
 - b. What does **Ephesians 6:12** say about our spiritual battle as believers?
 - c. What is this process called in Scripture, where we use of influence to help others grow in Christ as we grow?
- E. Leadership: Perfected in Eternity – There is a day coming for believers, where what was originally entrusted to man will be recovered completely and fulfilled perfectly, when the Lord Jesus comes to establish His reign, and us with Him.
- a. What does **Revelation 2:26-27** promise to those who overcome (believers)?

- b. How does **Revelation 22:5** describe that in the New Heavens and New Earth?
- c. What special promise does God give to leaders in heaven, according to **Daniel 12:2-3**?
- d. What does God say about unbelieving leaders who guide His people away from His will in **Revelation 2:18-23**?

5. NAVIGATING WITH A COMPASS

Based on a right understanding of God's plan for spiritual leadership, the Scriptures provide 5 requirements that are prerequisite for any leader at any level of spiritual influence, from parent to pastor. If you are going to fulfill God's original design to bring others into the will of God by your influence, you must:

- A. Believe the Gospel of Christ – You cannot be a spiritual leader who influences another into the will of God, if you are not saved. A blind surgeon cannot correct the vision of another blind man.

- **John 3:1-10**

- **Luke 6:39-40**

- B. Know the Mind of God – You must know the will of God before you can attempt to lead someone else into it. And the will of God is revealed for us in the Scripture. You do not need to focus on techniques, methodologies, or programs to be a leader. You need to focus on the Scripture and what God wants you to know about His will for you and those you influence. No one wants to follow a leader who does not know where he is going! You cannot you teach a language to someone that you do not speak.

- 1) How do the following verses speak to the need for knowing the mind of God as a leader?

- **Ephesians 5:17**

- **1 Corinthians 2:14-16**

➤ **Isaiah 48:17**

➤ **Jeremiah 23:16**

2) What happens when you lead with the Word as a leader?

C. Practice the Will of God – To know the will of God is essential, but knowing must translate into doing for you before anyone will follow your influence as a leader. We have a word for people who tell others what to do but do not do it themselves – hypocrites. They are like chefs who refuse to eat their own cooking, doctors who refuse to be treated when they are sick, crash test experts who refuse to wear seat belts! What makes your leadership compelling is that not only do people think that you know where you are going, they see you taking the path that leads there.

➤ **John 6:38**

➤ **Romans 12:1-2, 8**

➤ **Proverbs 12:26**

➤ **Isaiah 9:16**

➤ **1 Corinthians 11:1**

J. Oswald Sanders, in his classic book, *Spiritual Leadership* says, “*The personality of the spiritual leader influences others because [his leadership] is...penetrated and empowered by the Holy Spirit. As a leader gives control of his life to the Spirit, the Spirit’s power flows through him to others.*”

D. Pursue the Interests of Others – You must be committed to people if you are to be a spiritual leader who influences *others*, meaning that you must always pursue their greatest good. The goal to guide others

into the will of God has to be your greatest priority. A true leader does not move at the expense of people! A leader always does what is in their best interest, even if the people he or she leads do not always completely understand or agree. This requires the heart of a servant.

➤ **Matthew 20:25-28**

➤ **Acts 20:24**

➤ **2 Corinthians 11:23-29**

➤ **2 Timothy 2:10**

E. Execute the Authority of God – It is clear, if you have been entrusted with authority by God, then you must properly wield that authority. A leader must guard against ever temptation to use the role that God has given to abuse and mistreat His people.

➤ **2 Corinthians 2:19-13:3, 10**

➤ **3 John 9-10**

➤ **Titus 1:12-13, 2:15**

CONCLUSION

The standard and cost for true spiritual leadership is high but fulfilling the design of God for our lives is incalculably satisfying. And yet, we cannot impart what you do not possess, making leadership first an issue of character. Identify a person who is saved, knows the will of God, practices it in his or her daily life, is committed to people, and knows how to use the authority he's been given, then he or she will be a faithful leader. Pray about what the Lord might do through your influence as He provides you the opportunity to guide others into the will of God.