

Leadership Tips

A publication for Open Bible Churches

by

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LEADERSHIP QUOTES

Leadership Quotes on Leadership in an Age of Biblical Illiteracy _____

- "Leadership is...doing the right things."* Bennis and Nanus
- "Leadership is getting others to want to do something that you are convinced should be done."* Packard
- "Leadership is influence."* Sanders
- "Leadership is mobilizing others toward a goal shared by the leader and the followers."* Wills
- "Leadership is the willingness to accept responsibility for results."* Tracy
- "Leadership is the special quality which enables people to stand up and pull the rest of us over the horizon."* Fisher
- "A leader is someone who helps improve the lives of other people or improve the system they live under."* Ervin
- "Leadership is practiced not so much in words as in attitude and actions."* Geneen
- "Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations."* Drucker
- "Leadership is the wise use of power. Power is the capacity to translate intention into reality and sustain it."* Bennis
- "The very essence of leadership is that you have to have vision."* Hesburgh
- "I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people."* Gandhi
- "Leadership should be born out of the understanding of the needs of those who would be affected by it."* Anderson
- "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."* Eisenhower

Wow, quite a list! And I could have included several (hundreds, maybe thousands) more. There seems to be no limit to the attempts of people to study, evaluate, and formulate definitions of leadership. Many of these are excellent, but at best, they all are limited to the “human” perspective.

Like the fable of the blind men and the elephant, each is limited by his own experience of the elephant. The one who touches the tail “sees” the elephant as a snake; the one who touches a leg “sees” it as a pillar; and the one who touches the tusk “sees” it as a tree branch. Together they may get a more complete picture of what it is that they are experiencing, but they are still limited by their blindness. And so are we. That is why we need Godly perspective that comes from God’s word.

BIBILICAL ILLITERACY

The Importance of the Right Foundation

Jesus told his followers a story about the importance of foundations in Matthew 7. He said,

*“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who builds his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its **foundation** on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”* (Matthew 7:24-27, NIV, **bold** added)

Notice that the only difference between the wise and foolish builders was the **foundation** on which they built. The wise builder built on a foundation of “hearing and practicing”, while the foolish builder heard but did not put the words of Jesus into practice. They both built houses (the foolish builder’s house may have been “nicer” than that of the wise builder, we do not know for sure) BUT when the storms of life came, only the wise builder’s home remained standing.

What then (or who) is this foundation that Jesus is talking about? Paul (I Corinthians 10:4) identifies Christ as the “spiritual rock” in reference to the Old Testament story of the exodus. The Psalms repeatedly state that the “Lord is my rock...”, often referring to salvation (see Psalms 89:26). And in the New Testament, Jesus is called “a rock of offense” for those who refuse to believe that he is the promised Messiah (see Romans 9:33 and I Peter 2:8).

Later on in Jesus’ ministry, he further explains to his followers the importance of foundations when he says, “I have told you these things, so that **in me** you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NIV, **bold** added). So if Jesus is the rock on which wise people build their lives, why are so few in the American context doing it?

An Endangered Species

Have any of you noticed that there seems to be a major shift in the way people view the world? Over the last couple of decades, there has been a move away from a “Judeo Christian” worldview informed by Biblical values and principles to a more “progressive” or “postmodern” worldview based on personal experience and preferences. Several researchers and writers have documented this trend.

Thom Rainer in *The Bridger Generation* describes this worldview transition in America in terms of generational percentages (p. 169) that consider themselves “Bible-based believers:”

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Builders (born 1927-1945) | 65% Bible-based believers |
| Boomers (born 1946-1964) | 35% Bible-based believers |
| Busters (born 1965-1983) | 16% Bible-based believers |
| Bridgers (born 1984 or later) | 4% Bible-based believers |

J. Robert Clinton in *Having a Ministry that Lasts* calls “Bible-centered” believers and leaders an “endangered species” (p. iii). Fewer folks (even those who claim to be followers of Jesus) know their Bible.

George Gallup (along with Timothy Jones) in *The Next American Spirituality* (subtitled “Finding God in the 21st Century”) describes this trend further:

“At the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of Americans practiced their faith in at least a general framework that could be called Judeo Christian. They went from cradle to grave in a specific religious tradition. Now people are less likely to turn to church or religious institutions, more apt to depend on self-help books or tips from talk shows to arrive at their beliefs” (p. 38).

Gallup (chapter 1) suggests that this trend has been fueled by cultural trends such as:

- Unsettled violence
- Corruption in leadership
- Lifestyle gaps
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Poverty
- Racism
- Family breakdown
- Consumerism and materialism

Gallup concludes that, “amid such tumult, Americans speak of their spirituality growing while they perceive... religion’s impact diminishing... As a result, churches experience continuing decline and a seeming slide toward the cultural margins. With churches growing seemingly more irrelevant, people grow more confused and more anxious in their seeking” (p. 35).

Although there is a shift in worldview occurring in the American context, it is not all negative for those who embrace the more traditional Judeo Christian view. Gallup (p. 42-43) points out that with the decline in interest in “tradition” and “organizational” forms of spirituality has come an increased popularity in experiential spirituality. He states that “the interest in spirituality in itself is not an unalloyed cause for rejoicing. *But it provides a starting place for conversation; it can bring life and fresh energy to stale custom; it can open people to the transforming presence of an enduringly real God*” (p. 46, *italics added*).

Along these lines, George Barna in *Think Like Jesus* states that “few Americans currently possess a biblical worldview, most are immersed in daily exercises of covert worldview training via the mass media, public law, public school education, the Internet, and conversations with peers” (p. 58). Barna further points out that worldview is important because “*you become what you believe*” (p. 56).

This is why becoming a Bible-centered leader is so important and strategic for “such a time as this” (Esther 4: 14). To quote Barna again, he says that “developing a strong Bible-based foundation from which to think and act is the only reliable safeguard against the complete demise of our culture, the loss of meaning and purpose in life, and the rejection of all that God holds dear and significant” (p. 57-58).

A Great Opportunity

The Bible says (a statement that is “politically incorrect” in a post-modern context) that when people have “no revelation, [they] cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law” (Proverbs 29: 19, NIV). In other words, when people turn away from God and his revelatory standards, moral chaos will follow.

This fact was carefully recorded in the Old Testament story of Israel and has been repeated again and again through out history. Remember, worldview matters because “*you become what you believe*” (Barna). If you believe a lie (or even a really clever counterfeit) you will eventually experience the fall out of a faulty foundation (Matthew 7). BUT, the promise of the Bible is that “the truth will set us free” (John 8:32) from falsehood and the subsequent fall out. This is why becoming a Bible-centered leader is so important for our personal lives, relationships, and ministries.

The author of Hebrews puts it this way: “Jesus has become the guarantee of a *better* covenant” (Hebrews 7: 22, NIV, *italics* added). The word better is used about a dozen times in Hebrews to emphasize this point. Being Bible-centered disciples and leaders is a better way to live life! The word used here (*kreisson*) means “stronger, more powerful.” The Apostle Paul puts it still another way when he calls true followers of Jesus “Christ’s *ambassadors*, as though God were making his appeal through us” (II Corinthians 5:10, NIV, *italics* added). Remember Jesus’ prayer, “[God’s] kingdom come, [his] will be done *on earth* as it is in heaven...” (Matthew 6:10, NIV, *italics* added).

We, his *ambassadors*, have the opportunity to *demonstrate* (and share, if given an appropriate opportunity) his truth to a world that has lost its way and desperately needs to *see* (and know) that there is a *better* way to live life! Bible-centered leaders, through love, humility, and service will have greater opportunities to engage people in “loving conversations” about foundational issues of worldview in the days ahead as the American culture “reaps the whirlwind” of “casting off restraint.”

What is a Bible-Centered Leadership? _____

J. Robert Clinton, in his book *Having a Ministry that Lasts*, defines Bible-centered leadership as,

“a leader whose leadership is informed by the Bible, who has been personally shaped by Biblical values, has grasped the intent of Scriptural books [and passages] and their content in such a way as to apply them to current situations and who uses the Bible in ministry so as to impact followers.” (p. 26, 30)

There are four components to this definition. Let’s examine each of these a little more thoroughly. A Bible-centered leader is a disciple:

1. “Whose leadership is informed by the Bible.”

Knowing the Bible is important, but just knowing the information is not enough. The Bible is a source of truth, but the truth is intended to set us free from our selfishness.

Remember that our Biblical understanding of leadership involves both “being” and “doing.” Who we are (and who we are becoming) is foundational to how we live our lives and impact others. Transformed

“being” (becoming like Jesus) is critical for effective kingdom impact. We reproduce in kind. Who we are will in a large degree determine how we influence others. That is why modeling (or demonstrating through our lives what we believe and tell others) is so powerful in impacting others.

This does not diminish the power of the word itself. We know from Scriptures that “the word does not return void” (Isaiah 55:11). Thank God that we do not have to be perfect in order to use the Bible with impact.

But gross hypocrisy does confuse and may even discredit the message. That was a primary concern of Jesus regarding the religious leaders of his day: “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. *But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach*” (Matthew 23:2-3, NIV, *italics added*). Later, in this same passage, Jesus calls them “hypocrites” and concludes that they “have neglected the more important matters of the law – *justice, mercy, and faithfulness*” (verse 23, *italics added*).

So leadership that is “informed by the Bible” involves knowing the information in the Bible but it does not stop there. It involves a “transformed” life that demonstrates the power of the words by manifesting character qualities like “justice, mercy, and faithfulness.”

2. “Who has been shaped personally by Biblical leadership values.”

With a general understanding of the Bible and “transformational” growth as a disciple/leader, the Bible-centered leader begins to gain insight into God’s kingdom design for life and leadership. This process takes place in the context of real life and real leadership challenges.

Remember that God sovereignly uses people, circumstances and ministry assignments to shape the life of the leader. It seems that this shaping process regularly involves “tough times.” James states:

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers [and sisters], whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4, NIV

Notice here a couple of important details. First, James says that we will encounter trials. This is not optional. Everyone will encounter trials of one type or the other. After all, we live (and learn to lead) in a fallen world. James even goes on to say that we will encounter “many kinds” of trials. Just because we are followers of Christ does not mean that we are immune from trials. In fact, Jesus warns his disciples that “in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NIV).

This leads us to James’ second insight related to trails – trials can be productive. Notice here that James says that trials can help develop “perseverance.” Perseverance is used here to describe the maturing process that God intends for leaders, that we might become “mature and complete, not lacking in anything” (verse 4).

We may not like the process very much, but if we learn to cooperate with God we can be transformed through our trials and not destroyed by them. This process will also bring to light Biblical values that will inform our understanding and decision-making processes as leaders. This leads us to our next component of Bible-centered leadership.

3. “Who has grasped the intent of Scriptural books [and passages] and their content in such a way as to apply them to current situations.”

From a transformed life and awareness of our Biblical values, we will become more sensitive to the “contextualization” of Biblical truth to leadership application. This process involves developing a

framework, more than a system or formula. Remember that the “righteous live by faith” (Hebrews 10:38). Leadership is a faith journey (based on trust).

Ultimately, we need to center our lives and leadership on the person of God and learn to TRUST him to be faithful to his nature, which is sovereign, loving, and faithful. He is faithful to keep his promises “in his time and his way.” We need to learn how to hear his voice (primarily through his Word) and obey it by submitting to him if we are to become effective Bible-centered leaders.

Over time, we will give up our formulas for the real adventure of trusting God in faithful reliance upon his word and spirit to empower us for life and leadership. This leads us to our last component of Bible-centered leadership.

4. “Who uses the Bible in ministry so as to impact followers.”

As we have already seen, the Bible has its own “impacting” power. The Bible claims that it is the source of “true Truth” (Francis Schaeffer), and it claims that this truth can “set us free” from sin and, at least in part, its consequences. Paul states that:

“Thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”
Romans 6:17-18, NIV

Wow! Do you see the significance of this claim? Because of obedience to the truth, people can be set free from the “slavery of sin” to experience a new “slavery to righteousness.” Paul is using “redemption” language here. Redemption (*apolutrosis*) refers to a “loosing away” from one authority structure to another. It literally means to buy a person out of slavery.

There is also a personal impacting power that comes from a life that is being transformed by the truth. As we grow in God’s grace we learn to be “controlled” by his spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The control of the spirit leads to the manifestation of the “fruit of the spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23).

In other words, we no longer have to be defined by our selfishness (and its many dysfunctional qualities). We have been “bought out” of the slave market of sin and given a new redemptive nature. We can now become defined by the power of God through his word and spirit!

This is really GOOD NEWS! We can be free from our selfishness, from having to always get our own way (which I have learned does not work out so well), from manipulating others, from performance-oriented insecurities, from fear of failure and rejection... and on and on. We can be free from all this and have the privilege (and honor) to impact others in kind.

This is awesome! Jesus died, rose again, and is currently interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25) so that we can be FREE, not just to go to heaven someday (which is not bad), but to live life to the fullest potential. Jesus said that he came “that [we] may have life, and have it to the full [“abundantly” in KJV]” (John 10:10, NIV).

Why is becoming a Bible-centered leader important? Remember what the author of Hebrews said about the Christian life? It’s just a “better” way to live life. As leaders, becoming Bible-centered, will help us to avoid three common errors that leaders make:

1. Being a “fad-centered” leader.

These folks may mean well, but they are usually superficially grounded in the word. They use the word as a way to “sanctify” their own ideas or are prone to follow the newest, hottest, etc. ideas and/or

ministries. They tend to load up on formula, self-help types of books and/or CDs/DVDs and make their rounds on the conference circuit. They tend to take other people's ideas and try to implement them in their own circumstances.

This can seem exciting (at least for a while), but it will ultimately lead to superficiality, shallowness, and lack of fulfillment. Over time, this orientation can wear pretty thin and expose one's immaturity and even lead to burnout and/or blowout in life and ministry. Like the foolish builder, they have no foundation to withstand the storms of life (Matthew 7).

2. Being a “traditional” leader.

These folks also may mean well (and probably do), but they have learned to use the Bible to “maintain” the establishment. They tend to be “defenders” of the great traditions (which may be more cultural than Biblical) of their organizations and/or denominations.

They tend to become “inflexible” in terms of the form ministry takes and loose site of the needs of people outside their tradition. Bible-centered leaders throughout history have understood that the message of the “gospel of the kingdom” (Matthew 24:14) is never to change, but the methods of communicating the message may need to be adapted to the culture in order for people to be able to hear the message.

3. Being a “floundering” leader.

These folks tend to have a basic understanding of the Bible. They probably know basic doctrine but have not come to the realization that Bible truths are for life transformation and leadership insights. They have not “connected the dots” yet, so are left to make it up as they go. They do the best they can, but tend not to understand the importance of “revelation” vision in effective kingdom ministry.

They tend to learn by “trial and error.” Even Bible-centered leaders will learn by trial and error at times, but they can go to a source of “true Truth” to evaluate and learn. The floundering leader hopes that if he/she keep “trying hard enough” to lead he/she may get it right (whatever that means)... some day... maybe? For them (the conscientious ones), the answer to every challenge is to work harder, longer, etc. Sooner or later this “formula” may lead to burn out! There is a better way to lead, and that is to become a Bible-centered leader!

How do I Become a Bible-Centered Leader? _____

Clinton describes the “lifelong Bible mastery paradigm” or “the equipping formula” (*Having a Ministry that Lasts*, p. 80-81) that Bible-centered leaders need to establish in their lives. The equipping formula is composed of four components. The first two are ongoing while the last two are situational. Let's take a look at the four components:

1. Devotional Input (ONGOING) – devotional input involves establishing a regular devotional life that incorporates a variety of spiritual disciplines as a compliment to the study and meditation of the word for intimacy with God and integrity. Spiritual disciplines (according to Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*) include inward, outward, and corporate disciplines:

- *Inward disciplines* – meditation, prayer, fasting, study
- *Outward disciplines* – simplicity, solitude, submission, service
- *Corporate disciplines* – confession, worship, guidance, celebration

A great model for establishing a regular devotional life is the SOAP model developed by Wayne Cordeiro (*The Divine Mentor*). This approach involved reading *Scripture*, making *Observations*, writing down *Application*, and *Prayer*.

2. Core Work (ONGOING) – Core work involves a focused and in-depth study of specific books and/or passages of the Bible that seem foundational for our understanding of our relationship with God, ourselves, ministry, and destiny. These are the books and passages that we keep coming back to throughout life that give insight into critical developmental issues related to personal growth, ministry philosophy, and finishing well.

Remember the passage in Hebrews 4 about the power of the word (“living and active”) to penetrate, divide, and judge. Later on in Hebrews, the author makes reference to Biblical “milk” and “solid food” (Hebrews 5:12-6:3):

- **“Milk”** – elementary truths for infants (formational)
 1. Repentance
 2. Faith
 3. Baptism
 4. Laying on of hands
 5. Resurrection of the dead
 6. Eternal judgment
- **“Solid Food”** – food for the mature (transformational)
 1. Distinguishing good from evil

Note here what is considered “milk.” Many of us have a pretty basic understanding of these elementary truths, let alone the deeper truths reserved for those who are maturing through the eating of “solid food.”

3. Familiarity Reading (SITUATIONAL) – Familiarity reading involves a regular program that may focus on reading through the Bible in a year or through the Gospels over the next couple of months. This is important so that we regularly are reminded of the big picture of the word and are exposed to the “whole counsel” of the word.

As we develop our regular devotional life and core item study we may become “over focused” on certain topics or issues. By including regular familiarity reading in our development as a Bible-centered leader, we will become more aware of the overall context of Scripture and the complexities of certain topics and/or issues.

If you are having trouble following through, find a friend to do it with. This will help provide encouragement and accountability. **YOU CAN DO IT!!!!**

4. Situational Study (SITUATIONAL) – Situational study involves periodic study of specific topics and/or issues that come out of life and/or ministry situations. A Bible-centered leader looks more and more to the Bible for insights into life and ministry challenges as he/she learns how to feed on “solid food” for personal growth and leadership effectiveness.

Over the years, we develop a Biblical resource base from which to consider options from a Godly perspective. The Bible talks about the “renewal of our minds” as an “act of worship” (Romans 12:1-2). We gradually begin to exercise the “mind of Christ” (I Corinthians 2:16) as we learn to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (II Corinthians 10:5, NIV). Remember, we have the “sword of the spirit, which is the word of God” (verse 17, NIV) as a resource for our growth and development as Bible-centered leaders.

We need to work out the “equipping formula” in our own way over time. If we do, and in the process become Bible-centered leaders, we will experience God’s best for our lives and leave a legacy of righteousness. To experience this in our lives, we need to have a starting point. We need to honestly

interact with God and his word so that we have a realistic understanding of where we are and where God wants to take us!

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