

## A BIBLICAL PHILOSOPHY OF LEADERSHIP

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“The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, **He that ruleth over men *must be just, ruling in the fear of God.*** And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, *when* the sun riseth, *even* a morning without clouds; *as* the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain” (II Samuel 23:2-4). These words, spoken by King David on his deathbed, magnificently sum up the biblical philosophy of leadership—a leader must be morally righteous while leading in absolute submission to God Almighty. As one called to ministry, and therefore Christian leadership, I grow weary of “Christian” textbooks, manuals, devotionals, guides, and seminars which attempt to outline and synthesize a philosophy of leadership based on Oswald Chambers, the latest statistics, or “scholarly research” by bible-rejecting secularists, while at the same time subverting and/or avoiding altogether God’s Word. A typical example of this reads:

Most research about leadership is not taking place in the church. Most of the best research and writing on leadership in recent years has not been done in the context of the church or not-for-profit institutions. Those in business have done most of this work, followed by those in politics and government. Today there is an increasing interest in the subject of leadership in the not-for-profit arena and, one would hope, much of this can be done in the church. Much of the research has been done in recent years and has the advantage of being up-to-date, but its newness does not give opportunity to compare with data over a long period of time. Another bias in the research is that most of it has been extremely limited in racial and gender inclusiveness. Studies about racial/ethnic persons and women are not totally missing from the research, but their representation is limited. The literature on women in leadership is beginning to grow much more rapidly and showing both key similarities and differences from studies that were done primarily with men . . . [BLAH, BLAH, BLAH]<sup>1</sup>

While perusing this nonsensical jargon, think about Jesus or Paul discussing such “scholarly research.” The contemplation is absurd and downright laughable. Most research about leadership is not taking place in the church? Why should it? The Body of

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<sup>1</sup>Lovett Weems, Church Leadership (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 23-24.

Christ need not waste a minute of its time with these “vain and profane babblings, and oppositions of science so falsely called” (I Timothy 6:20). For, we have the absolute monarch of the Books—the Holy Bible—and should seek its authority in all matters of faith and practice, the issue of leadership being a case and point. The purpose of this brief excursus is to go back to the Holy Bible and see what it has to say about effective Christian leadership. In doing so, the exhortation of Titus 3:9 will be heeded—“But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.” Those, like the example above, who fail to do so are doomed to err concerning the faith that they profess (I Timothy 6:21).

**A LEADER MUST SERVE.** A wise man once said, “He is a leader who looks across at others, but not down.” The Scriptures present this same truth as servant-leadership. Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, is the best model of this. In Matthew 20:25-28, the LORD says,

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. **But it shall not be so among you:** but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Later, He goes on to demonstrate such leadership by washing the disciples’ feet (John 13), a shameful duty only the lowliest of servants would have performed in that day. A leader must not think that he is someone or something better and those he leads. This is prideful egotism, and unfortunately, it saturates local churches, the mission field, and Christian educational institutions. A Christian leader should recognize Christ’s calling to serve with his people, working *alongside* his followers. This was the plain example of the Saviour—he worked with the apostles and among the people; he did not hold himself

above the people even though he was better than they.<sup>2</sup> In other words, authority is not bestowed but *earned* through servanthood. Paul writes of this, “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church. **Whereof I am made a minister**, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God” (Colossians 1:24-25). He, an apostle, saw himself foremost as a servant of the people he was leading.

Such an attitude of service is best illustrated by a leader’s ability to shift roles between authority figure, peer, and follower. “The effective leader knows which role is appropriate under particular circumstances.”<sup>3</sup> All situations do not call for leadership. The Christ-like servant-leader can lay aside authority and submit to the authority of others, even to the point of preferring that others get served before him; the egomaniac is unable to do this.

**A CHRISTIAN LEADER MUST HAVE UNDYING CONVICTIONS AND BE WILLING TO STAND ALONE IN THOSE CONVICTIONS AGAINST ALL OTHERS.** Some of Paul’s exhortations to Timothy need no commentary.

Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles [his authority]. For which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed [his undying conviction]; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day (II Timothy 1:11-12).

At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me [he stood alone]: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all Gentiles might hear [his undying conviction]: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (II Timothy 4:16-18).

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<sup>2</sup>Rev. Thomas Mowery, interview by author, 17 October 2001.

<sup>3</sup>Weems, 74. This author of the previously cited nonsense actually had something biblical to say here.

No law or preference of man should be able to induce the Christian leader to flinch from maintaining a pure conscience before God. Alas, such ranks have apparently been depleted in today's politically correct society.

Some Old Testament examples take undying convictions a step farther—**A LEADER MUST HAVE A SENSE OF WHAT IS RIGHT AND BE WILLING TO STAND FOR IT EVEN IF IT APPEARS INSIGNIFICANT.** Eleazar, one of three mighty men who stood with King David to defy the Philistines, arose to defend a parcel of ground full of barley until his hand literally stuck to his sword (cf. II Samuel 23:9-10; I Chronicles 11:12-14). Barley was insignificant; it was a poor man's food, a basic staple. However, it was wrong for the Philistines to try and take a piece of ground that belonged to God's people. Eleazar was right for standing to defend it. "And the LORD wrought a great victory that day (II Samuel 23:10)." In II Samuel, another example of this immediately follows. This time, a seemingly less significant piece of ground was involved—one full of lentils, which were mainly used as fodder for animals or to make tasteless pottage. "And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentils: and the people fled from the Philistines. But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory" (II Samuel 23:11-12).

Now more than ever, such men are needed to stand up for the so-called "insignificant details" of righteousness and God-fearing morality. In the lukewarm Laodicean churches of our society, many aspects of God's Word are brushed aside to accommodate political correctness, other people's feelings, and comfortable lifestyles. Christian leaders, of all

people, are to “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins (Revelation 18:4).” Moreover, “as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (I Peter 1:15-16).

### **A CHRISTIAN LEADER MUST BE BLAMELESS AND ABOVE**

**REPROACH—NOT SINLESS, BUT BLAMELESS (I TIMOTHY 3:2).** “Blameless suggests humility and integrity, that when he has done wrong, he has gone to the offended and made that wrong right.”<sup>4</sup> King David is a prime example of this. He sinned greatly by committing adultery and murder. When confronted with this sin, he did not try to lie, deny, or play semantic games; he simply confessed: “I have sinned against the LORD” (II Samuel 12:13). Because of such integrity, God could call David a man after His own heart, a testimony reiterated a millennium later by the Apostle Paul: “He raised up to them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will” (Acts 13:22). Unfortunately, those with authority willing to humble themselves in this manner are few and far between in today’s times.

Those that would fulfill God’s will as leaders in the furtherance of His Kingdom must be blameless and above reproach, as stewards of God (Titus 1:7). In I Timothy 3, Paul sets blamelessness forth as the foremost qualification of anyone desiring the office of pastor.<sup>5</sup> All the other subsequent qualifications are natural outgrowths of a life of blameless integrity. Therefore, effective and blameless God-fearing leaders will also be:

. . . the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that

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<sup>4</sup>Rev. Thomas Mowery, interview by author, 17 October 2001.

<sup>5</sup>See also Titus 1:6-9

ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Timothy 3:2-7).

### **A CHRISTIAN LEADER MUST BE MEEK AND GENTLE (II TIMOTHY**

**2:24-25).** Moses, perhaps one of the greatest leaders of all time, was described as “very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3).” In the New Testament, the Greek term for “pastor” is the same used for a shepherd. As sheep cannot be driven like herds of cattle, the pastor must lead the Body of Christ and love them. “The leader must be firm about his convictions and firm regarding sin and matters of holiness in the body, but gentle in his handling of these matters.”<sup>6</sup> This does not mean to avoid being offensive; the truth of God offends by its very nature so that man can be brought to repentance. The kindest thing a leader can do is to speak the truth even when he knows it will cause division and hardship. Such need not be done in anger and disgust, for “a soft answer turneth away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1). Moreover, a Christian leader need not argue over God’s Word. The Bible is like a lion; turn it loose and it can defend itself. A meek leader will respond to rejection of the truth by remembering the biblical injunction, “But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant” (I Corinthians 13:48).

### **CHRISTIAN LEADERS MUST SEEK OUT AND GROW IN LIFE**

**EXPERIENCE.** College degrees and academic training will not suffice. After all, “of making many books *there is* no end; and much study *is* a weariness of the flesh (Ecclesiastes 12:12).” Valuable life experience can only be gained when one is willing to sacrifice the security of routine and GO. Chris McCandless, a twenty-four year old

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<sup>6</sup>Rev. Thomas Mowery, interview by author, 17 October 2001.

unsaved idealist who died in the wilderness of Alaska, after disconnecting himself from a greedy society he despised, once wrote something that should ring true for the Christian, who has the very answer to meaning for which McCandless was searching, but never found.

So many people live within unhappy circumstances and yet will not take the initiative to change their situation because they are conditioned to a life of security, conformity, conservatism, all of which may appear to give one peace of mind, but in reality nothing is more damaging to the adventurous spirit within a man than a secure future. The very basic core of a man's living spirit is his passion for adventure. The joy of life comes from our encounters with new experiences, and hence there is no greater joy than to have an endlessly changing horizon, for each day to have a new and different sun. If you want to get more out of life . . . you must lose your inclination for monotonous security and adopt a helter-skelter style of life that will at first appear to you to be crazy. But once you become accustomed to such a life, you will see its full meaning and its incredible beauty . . . Don't settle down and sit in one place. Move around, be nomadic, make each day a new horizon . . . You are wrong if you think joy emanates only or principally from human relationships. God has placed it all around us. It is in everything and anything we might experience. **We just have to have the courage to turn against our habitual lifestyle and engage in unconditional living.**<sup>7</sup>

God has not called those that would serve him to security and bland conformity.

Such are to be nomads, willing to pick up and move to wherever they may be needed.

Paul's example is unquestionable. He never planted himself in one place for very long.

There is too much that needs to be done; large fields are white unto harvest. The Book of

Acts records a number of different reasons Paul and his team left cities in which they

ministered. Obviously, sometimes they left for their own safety (e.g. Pisidian Antioch, 13:50; Iconium, 14:6; Lystra, 14:19; Thessalonica, 17:10; and perhaps Ephesus, 20:1).

But more importantly, they also departed because of their desire to lead and to confront

as many people as possible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. After nomadically residing

briefly in certain cities, they returned to previously visited areas to strengthen the

believers and appoint elders (Acts 9:32; 14:21-22; 15:36, 41). When revisits were

delayed or prevented altogether, he wrote letters of instruction and encouragement to the

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<sup>7</sup>Jon Krakauer, Into the Wild (Thorndike, ME: G.K. Hall & Co., 1996), 93-95 [emphasis mine].

new communities of faith.<sup>8</sup> Through such insecure and non-routine situations, Paul gained valuable life experience to undergird his leadership. Thus, he could say, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day (2 Timothy 4:6-8).”

In conjunction with life experience, **leaders MUST NOT WASTE TIME WAITING FOR A CALL.** The call has been given—Matthew 28:19-20. While reflecting upon this, Keith Green, a late epitome of genuine modern-day Christian leadership, once spoke something worthy of duplication:

There’s a little command found in the Bible that says, ‘Go ye into all the nations and preach the gospel unto every creature, and make disciples of men.’ And, we like to think that was for the disciples. That’s for old ladies that can’t find husbands and need to bury their troubles on the mission field. That’s for humanitarians. Or that’s for *real* Christians who are so spiritual they can’t stay in society, so they gotta go overseas and bury themselves in some tribe somewhere down in the Amazon! I’ll tell you what folks, the world isn’t being won today because we’re not doing it! It’s *our* fault! This generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of souls on the earth. Nowhere in the world is the gospel so plentiful as in the United States. Nowhere! And I don’t want to see us stand before God on that day and say, ‘But God, I didn’t *hear* you call me!’ Here’s something for all of you to chew on—you don’t need to hear a call. You’re *already* called! It’s either God’s will that the world’s going to hell, or it’s the Church’s fault because they’re not being obedient to what the Bible says about going into all nations and preaching the gospel. If you stay at home from going into all nations, you’d better be able to say to God, ‘You called me to stay home. I know that as a fact!’ . . . There’s a rule in the armed forces. Always obey the last order you got, until you get new orders from command headquarters. The last order I got in my Bible was ‘GO!’<sup>9</sup>

Leaders must live out and demonstrate the above so that others will follow in obedience to the Great Commission.

**CHRISTIAN LEADERS MUST BE CONSISTENTLY READY AND WILLING TO SUFFER PERSECUTION, FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAVIOUR.** One is reminded of Peter’s exhortation in I Peter 2:21—“For even

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<sup>8</sup>Tom Steffen, Passing the Baton (La Habra, CA: Center for Organizational & Ministry Development, 1993), 15.

<sup>9</sup>Melody Green and David Hazard, No Compromise: The Life Story of Keith Green (Chatsworth, CA: Sparrow Press Book, 1989), 260-261.



hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.” A leader unwilling to risk life and limb for the cause of the Gospel, while getting his hands dirty with the people he ministers to, is no leader at all. Rather, he is an egotistical Nicolaitan, which thing Jesus Christ hates (Revelation 2:6,15). “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2-4).”

Twelve additional qualifications of good leaders can be gleaned from the pages of the Old Testament:

1. Able and God-fearing (Exodus 18:21; Ezra 7:25)
2. Truthful (Exodus 18:21; Deuteronomy 16:19)
3. Having hatred of covetousness (Exodus 18:21)
4. Of a disposition to refuse bribes (Exodus 23:8)
5. Wise and understanding (Deuteronomy 1:13)
6. Prominent in the tribes (Deuteronomy 1:13)
7. Having love of justice and judgment (Deuteronomy 1:16; 16:18-19; 27:19; Zechariah 7:9-10)
8. Without respect of persons (Deuteronomy 1:17; 16:19; 25:1; Isaiah 5:23)
9. Fearless (Deuteronomy 1:17)
10. Conscientious (Deuteronomy 1:17)
11. Strong and courageous (Joshua 1:7)
12. Obedient to the law of God (Joshua 1:7-8)

**FINALLY, ALL OF THE ABOVE IS MEANINGLESS UNLESS THE CHRISTIAN LEADER PLACES HIMSELF UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE BOOK, NOT THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK, BUT THE BOOK ITSELF (PROVERBS 30:5; REVELATION 22:18-19)—THE BIBLE SAYS IT! I BELIEVE**

**IT! THAT SETTLES IT!** All too often, leaders in Christian circles subvert Biblical authority by setting themselves up as “pitch men.” In other words, the “pastoral scholar” pitches two conflicting authorities against each other (*e.g.* KJV vs. NIV) so that he, the pitch man, becomes the authority himself, deciding which reading is correct.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, this is all too common. “All apostasy begins with questioning what God said (Gen. 3:1), and all men who promote or tolerate (or aid or encourage) apostasy recommend conflicting authorities so that they themselves (or their friends or employers) can become the final authority.”<sup>11</sup> Conflicting authorities are set up by Christian “leaders” for the purpose of “*splitting and dividing the body of Christ* and bringing it under the dominion of either an authoritative body of scholars (*a school*) or an authoritative ecclesiastical organization (*a church*).”<sup>12</sup> A biblical leader, on the other hand, is to be a perpetual student of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>13</sup> “Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deuteronomy 6:8-9). He is to be one who holds fast “the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by

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<sup>10</sup>The purpose of this paper is not to debate Bible versions, but ultimately the question must come up with regard to FINAL AUTHORITY. Is it in the BOOK or in what man says about the BOOK? The true leader will opt for the former.

<sup>11</sup>Peter Ruckman, *The History of the New Testament Church* (Pensacola, FL: Bible Baptist Bookstore, 1982), xx.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>A scholar is someone who has mastered his subject. No man has ever mastered the Bible, so the term “biblical scholar” is an oxymoron.

sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Titus 1:9-11).” This requires absolute submission to the authority of the **MONARCH OF THE BOOKS—THE HOLY BIBLE**. Only then can one say with the Psalmist, “I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies *are* my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts (Psalms 119:99-100).”

So, such is a biblical philosophy of leadership, apart from the hot air of “scholarly research.” Christian leadership is not management; it is not administration; it is not purpose-driven. **IT IS A MORAL, VALUE-DRIVEN ACT OF SUBMISSION UNDERTAKEN WITH CONVICTION, WITHOUT COMPROMISE, AND UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD.** Then, the Christian leader can say with the Apostle Paul, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).”

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