

# Biblical Leadership: Five Levels of Leadership

By Bob Young

## ABSTRACT OF THIS ESSAY

### INTRODUCTION

*The importance of effective leadership training for the future of the church*

- *This is a general need, it exists everywhere.*
- *It cannot be solved only at a congregational level.*
- *We must cooperate to meet the challenge.*

*Four challenges*

- *We must train leaders, and the right kind of leaders*
- *We must train indigenous leaders*
- *Churches must see this as a shared mission and must participate financially*
- *We must share a global view of missions*

*Three generalizations*

- *The church today and members of the church do not understand spiritual leadership*
- *The church does not operate on the basis of a biblical definition of leadership*
- *The church has adopted leadership concepts from the secular sphere and thus has a distorted view of spiritual, Christian leadership*

### THREE GENERALIZATIONS EXPANDED

*Misunderstandings of Christian spiritual leadership*

*Biblical definition of leadership*

*Distorted view of leadership*

### A BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP PARADIGM

*Effective spiritual, Christian leaders are spiritual individuals, actively involved in God's work*

*Effective spiritual, Christian leaders are good Bible students and good teachers, wise, knowledgeable, counselors.*

*Effective spiritual, Christian leaders know how to lead, guide, equip, mentor, shepherd*

*Effective spiritual, Christian leaders know how to train other leaders.*

*Effective spiritual, Christian leaders know how to develop leaders who can develop even more leaders.*

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There are many things I would like to share today but time is limited. I will note the importance of leadership training, suggest four challenges, and share three generalizations. Finally, I will suggest a model that will sharpen our view of what Christian leaders must do to lead the church.

**First, I want to emphasize the importance of effective leadership training for the future of the church.** (1) This is a general need in that it exists everywhere. (2) This is not a provincial matter; it is not a local need that can be solved at the congregational level. (3) The development of effective leadership is a general challenge in every place and we must cooperate together to meet the challenge. We must share resources; we must not grow weary in doing good.

I want to emphasize, and especially to those who are leadership trainers, the importance of this work. **We face four great challenges.** (1) We must train leaders—we must train the right kind of leaders. (2) The future of the church depends on training effective Christian leaders, indigenous leaders who can help the church move forward. (3) Churches must see this as a shared mission. I applaud those churches that provide funds for leadership training. (4) We must develop a global view of missions. I am thankful for those who have a global view of missions and not a local view of missions. We struggle with this at Baxter as we recruit students. Churches in the mission field often want their “young men” to come back home and help in the local work. We must see the great need,

the great cities of the world, the multitudes that need the gospel, and we must facilitate mission efforts everywhere.

**Let me share three generalizations.** The problem with generalizations is that they are general. There are exceptions, but I am summarizing the general condition of the church today.

First, (remember that I am speaking in general), the church today does not understand spiritual, Christian leadership. This is true in the U.S. where we have often chosen leaders with secular abilities and secular worldviews. It is true in Latin America where years of Catholicism and more recent Pentecostal successes have inserted false views of Christian leadership.

Second, the church in many places does not operate on the basis of a biblical definition of leadership. When members of the church describe leaders, they do not use biblical concepts and words. When churches choose leaders, they do not choose spiritual leaders based on spiritual qualities. They most often choose leaders based on one factor—their level of involvement in church activities.

Third, the church has adopted leadership concepts from the secular realm and as a result has a distorted view of Christian leadership. We have sacrificed spiritual leadership for leadership that we think will move the church forward more quickly. One place this incorrect view is apparent is in the tendency of elders to become managers rather than genuine leaders.

Let me expand these generalizations before I present a new biblical paradigm for spiritual leadership, based on a biblical understanding of leadership.

### **Misunderstandings of Christian Spiritual Leadership**

The church must develop internal leadership. The church must become self-governing. This is not one preacher who oversees everything. This is biblical leadership by a group of leaders who function as spiritual leaders. Generally, the church will not become self-sustaining until it is self-governing. We do not need priests and we do not need preacher/pastors, or evangelist/pastors. We must develop biblical elders who lead spiritually.

### **A Biblical Definition of Leadership**

A biblical definition of leadership should include a study of the words that describe leaders: elders, bishops-overseers, pastors. These words refer to one group of leaders. What do these leaders do? They teach, they provide counsel, they equip, they mentor, they shepherd. These are leadership responsibilities.

### **Distorted Views of Leadership**

One area in which we can clearly see the difficulty is in a comparison of management and leadership. Managers have a responsibility to make sure everything works. A good manager is one who keeps things working. Leaders have a different function. Leaders do not make sure everything works. That is a deacon role in the Bible. Elders have dreams, they envision the future, they share the vision, they motivate; they bring others along with them. Spiritual leaders are risk takers; they have a vision of how things could be and they take the initiative to bring it about. Managers simply take care of things, maintaining the status quo. They make sure systems work well. Leaders develop a vision of how things should be and can be, and cast that vision broadly. Leaders step up, articulate the vision and take the first bold step as a risk-taker. Leaders see things that are not and ask why they cannot be.

## **A New Paradigm of Christian Leadership—Five Levels of Leadership**

Finally, I share briefly what effective Christian leaders do.

First, effective Christian leaders are spiritual men who are actively involved in the work. They are men who know how to care for others. They are men who are spiritually active in prayer and personal spiritual growth. They are men who are involved in the work of the church. Spiritual growth is desirable for every Christian. Those who excel in spiritual growth and involvement are developing their abilities to serve as spiritual leaders. They are examples, as the Bible says.

Second, effective Christian leaders know the Bible, are men of wisdom and knowledge, are able to provide wise counsel, and are teachers. It is important to select men as leaders who know the Bible. A man who wishes to be a leader must know the Bible.

Third, effective Christian leaders are able to lead. They are capable of providing wise counsel as elders; they are able to mentor and guide as overseers. They are able to equip as Ephesians 4 describes. They are the shepherds of the flock, and do not become distracted as managers when their biblical responsibility is to lead and guide.

Fourth, effective Christian leaders know how to train other leaders. The product of a leader is another leader, not a large group of followers. If leaders do not train leaders, the church cannot grow. Eventually, the Latin American churches must develop leaders who train other leaders. This is Paul training Timothy, or Titus. This is Jesus training the Twelve. This is the apostles delegating responsibility to the Seven. This is perhaps Peter helping Mark, or Barnabas having influence on Mark.

Fifth, effective Christian leaders know how to develop leaders who can develop other leaders. This is a multi-generational sequence, 2 Tim. 2:2.

Our goal should be to develop a certain kind leader.

- Leaders who are spiritually strong and developed Christians; actively involved and examples
- Leaders with wisdom and knowledge, able to teach and to provide good advice and counsel
- Leaders who influence others, help toward ministry, equip, mentor
- Leaders who can develop more leaders
- Leaders who can develop more leaders who can develop more leaders

May God help us in this task so that the church understands the nature of spiritual leadership and describes Christian leaders with biblical words.

May we overcome distorted views of leadership that are influenced more by secular values than by the word of God.

May we develop the kind of leaders that can insure the future of the church, spiritual leaders that really lead, that develop more leaders who develop more leaders.