

## 1. Five Priorities of Spiritual Leadership

Today, we will be starting a new series of topics on the topic of leadership development. However, we will not just be talking about leadership. Rather, we will be talking about the topic of godly leadership. Moses was considered one of the great leaders of the Old Testament. However, Moses did not begin as a great leader. In fact, his style of leadership followed the pattern of the world and was a very destructive form of leadership.

We see the first attempt of Moses to exercise leadership in Exodus 2:11-14, where we read, “Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, ‘Why are you striking your companion?’ Then he said, ‘Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?’ So Moses feared and said, ‘Surely this thing is known!’” Moses thought he could lead the people of Israel by killing the Egyptian. However, the result was much different. Moses was rejected for leadership both by the Egyptians and by the Israelites.

Moses thought he was somebody and God had to show him that he was a nobody, so Moses spent the next forty years in the Lord’s school of leadership on the backside of the desert. During that time, he learned to lead sheep. Then, God taught him the first lesson in spiritual leadership when God called Moses to become a leader for God. In Exodus 3:10, God told Moses, “Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” Moses needed to know that he was called of God and was not leading out of human will.

Moses finally obeyed God and went to Egypt and led the people out of Egypt. However, Moses had to learn other lessons in leadership in order to become an effective leader. God used his father-in-law to teach him that he would not be an effective leader if he tried to do all of the leading himself. In Exodus 18:17-18, Jethro told Moses what would happen if he tried to do all of the leading, “So Moses’ father-in-law said to him, ‘The thing that you do *is* not good. Both you and these people who *are* with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself.’”

Then, Jethro gave Moses five priorities for effective spiritual leadership. In Exodus 18:19-21, Jethro told Moses, “Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.” In these verses, we see that Jethro gave Moses five priorities:

1. Pray for the people.

2. Teach them the Word of God – teach them statutes and laws.
3. Show them the way to walk.
4. Show them the work to do.
5. Share the work.

Notice that Moses was to teach two things by example. He was to teach potential leaders how to develop godly character by his own example. (People who follow us will become what we are whether that is good or bad. In fact, they will follow any negative things in our character much faster than they will follow the positive.)

Second, Moses was to show people how to do the work of the Lord rather than just telling them. Today, we have many Christians who have been told what to do but they have no idea how to do it. The result is that they do nothing and feel fear, guilt and shame for not doing what they are told to do. Instead, they need to be shown how to serve the Lord so that they can learn from your love and by your example how to be led by the love of Christ. (You can tell most Christians about how important it is to witness to relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and other acquaintances, and they will have a desire to witness. However, most Christians will not begin to witness until you have taken them along with you enough times that they have seen your prayer and dependence on the Lord, heard the passages of Scripture that you used to answer questions that came up and watched how you have led people to Christ. Remember, Christ said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.”)

Moses was also given some basic qualifications to look for as he selected men to take leadership. Those qualifications are given in verse 21, “Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.” In this verse, we see that Moses was to choose:

- Able men – men of valor or godly strength
- Men who fear God
- Men of truth
- Men who hate covetousness

Notice that the qualifications for leadership deal with character rather than human abilities. Only after Moses knew that he had men of character was he to give them different levels of responsibility according to their ability. Once Moses knew that he had men of godly character, then he could give them leadership over thousands, hundreds, fifties, or tens according to their present level of ability. Many churches and Christian organizations today, reverse the process. They look first at levels of ability and often never even look to see if the individuals have godly character. The result will always be disaster.

The interesting thing is that when Moses listened to his father-in-law, he found that he did have men who were qualified for spiritual leadership. Exodus 18:24-26 tells us, “So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and

rulers of tens. So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves.” One of the great failures in many churches today is to help each person who meets Biblical qualifications for leadership develop a ministry.

If we are in a position of leadership, we need to look around us and identify each person around us who meets the four qualifications given in Exodus 18:21. Then, we need to help each of those persons develop a ministry, which will make it possible for them to become effective functioning parts of the body of Christ. According to Ephesians 4:11-13, our job is not to do all of the work. Instead, our job, as a leader, is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. We do this by taking them with us and showing them how to minister as we minister. When they have observed us enough times to know how to carry out ministry effectively, we need to help them develop a ministry that fits their SHAPE:

S spiritual gifts  
H heart – passion for ministry, what kind of ministry gets them excited?  
A abilities  
P personality  
E experiences in life

Our job is not to find people to carry out our programs. Our job is to equip people to carry out the ministries that God has equipped them and gifted them to do. As you look at the ministry that God has given you, are you looking for able people who fear God, speak the truth and hate covetousness? Are you equipping those people to serve and lead others? Then, are you giving them the opportunity to serve and lead others? May the Lord richly bless you as you apply these five Biblical priorities to your ministry:

1. Pray for the people.
2. Teach the people the Word of God.
3. Show the people the way to walk.
4. Show the people how to do the work.
5. Share the work.