

**WEEK OF
MARCH 26**



**DAY
1**

The Crisis of Leadership **Psalm 78:70-72**

I (Brian Rice) have a list of 30+ definitions and descriptions of leadership. Perhaps a simple way to understand leadership is that it is the power and authority to influence people toward a desired outcome.

Power is the ability a person has to do something.

Authority is the “right” a person has to do something.

Leaders are those who have the ability, skill, capacity, resources, as well as the right (or mandate, approval, permission, legitimacy) to use their power. Usually, the authority comes from being in a particular role. A role does not confer ability or skill. Incompetent people may be in positions of authority and not have the capacity to be in that role.

People talk about the crisis of leadership. That means we don’t have enough leaders, we don’t have enough competent leaders, and we don’t have enough ethical leaders.

The theme of character is core to leadership. Skill and right, by themselves, are not enough (in the biblical way of thinking). There must be an internal integrity or consistency of good character, positive virtue, and personal ethics that shape how power and authority are used. Without character, leaders will inevitably hurt those they lead.

In our culture today, we have seriously lowered our expectations and requirements for moral and ethical leadership for our politicians, business leaders, and culture makers. When leaders are immoral and unethical, it is not possible to build a good society. It is time we return to the way of God and get leaders into roles who will be moral and ethical leaders.

What are some of the qualities you want to see in a leader, whether it is a church leader, a business leader, or a political leader?

**DAY
2**

The Character of a Leader **Deuteronomy 17**

There are several passages in Deuteronomy where the theme of leadership is the focus.

In 1:9-18 there is a description of appointing leaders who would have the role of judges that help people deal with problems and conflict. Notice how important it is that there is fairness, justice, and no partiality. These values are for the Israelites and foreigners living with them.

In 17:8-13 the realm of courts, law, and justice is the focus once more. Now the work is in the hands of the priests.

But the most substantial passage about leadership in Deuteronomy—and in fact, the entire Old Testament—is about the future kings of Israel. In 17:14-20 we have a model for anyone who would be in the highest levels of leadership in Israel. It is a VERY SOBERING and encouraging description.

Leadership, whether religious or secular REQUIRES character. Character is non-negotiable. Character relating to money, sexuality, power, and pride is described. Moral flaws in those areas are clear indications that a leader is NOT LEADING in the way of God. Nor is that leader leading in the way a good society will need.

In addition to the warnings and prohibitions given (17:14-17), there are positive exhortations for leadership. Above all, the leader must be attuned to the way of God and the will of God in the law. The leader must be fully obedient to God and his words.

Above all – leaders do not “boss” the people. Leaders serve the people. The biblical NORM of leadership is the servant leader. And not in name but in reality. It is true. Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts absolutely. And there are very few people who can safely use power for the good of the society.

DAY
3

The Good Shepherd Leader Ezekiel 34

According to the prophets, every leadership group in Israel failed. Kings, priests, false prophets, corrupt officials, military leaders – they all failed. In Ezekiel 34, we find one of the most sad and severe indictments of that leadership failure. Here the language used is “the shepherd.” Whereas David shepherded the people with integrity and skillful hands (Psalm 78:72), the consistent message of the historical books and the prophets is that the Kings of Israel “did evil in the sight of the Lord.”

When Ezekiel speaks about the shepherds of Israel, the focus is certainly on the kings, but it is on all the various roles of leadership that failed God, hurt God’s people, and disrupted the missional plans of God to bless the nations.

It is worthwhile to read Ezekiel 34 twice. First, simply read it to be familiar with it.

On your second reading, look for these things:

What are shepherd-leaders supposed to do for the people?

How are the bad shepherds described and what are the bad things they are doing?

What is God’s new plan in light of the bad shepherds that have hurt the people? (Be sure to spend a lot of time here. It is striking to see God’s new plan.)

If you have time, look at Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. Isaiah tells us that God will raise up a new Servant and it will be a Suffering Servant.

In light of God’s plan in Ezekiel 34 (where God says he will step in to shepherd the people) and in light of Isaiah’s vision of the suffering servant – do you see how God’s plan for true, real, authentic, leadership will be displayed and defined in Jesus Christ? See Matthew 12:15-21.

DAY
4

Jesus as the Servant Leader Matthew 18:1-5; 20:20-28, Colossians 1:24 - 2:5

In the New Testament, the PRIMARY word that describes leadership is the word SERVANT.

Jesus says he is among us as one who serves (Luke 22:27). Jesus says he did not come to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28). Greatness in God’s kingdom is to be a servant (Luke 22:26).

Jesus is the source of the very idea of a servant leader. The servant leader is motivated by love on behalf of others. The servant leader is willing to make sacrifices and suffer on behalf of others. Servant leaders empower and build others up. Servant leaders GIVE generously to and for others. Servant leaders are careful about how they use power and authority.

A servant leader is not concerned with their own status, or the privileges they have, or the perks they get, or the honor they receive. A servant leader does not ask “what’s in this for me?”

Jesus models a counter-cultural way of leadership that is unlike anything in the world. In fact, it stands in opposition to all leadership done in the way of the world. When Jesus told his disciples they must lead in his way, he contrasted his way with how the world does things. He used the powerful phrase: NOT SO WITH YOU (Matthew 20:26).

Everywhere we look, we see a leadership crisis. There is rampant leadership failure. Abusive and toxic leadership is everywhere. Self-serving leadership is the norm in the world. Jesus says – NOT SO WITH YOU. And that is what Paul heard

and the kind of leader Paul became (see the Colossians text).

The church is not the only place that needs leaders who lead like Jesus. The world needs leaders in every sphere of society – politics, business, culture, education, law – every sphere of life, we need servant leaders. Jesus needs you to be one of his servant leaders.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP CONVERSATION

Before you dive into this week's group questions, start with a few moments of catching up. How was your week? How can your group pray for one another?

ONE: Who are leaders that had a very positive influence and impact in your life? What was it about their leadership that was so beneficial for you?

TWO: How important is character for leadership? This is one of the most vital questions of our time. For most of the 20th century, the conservative Christian world had a strong commitment to the biblical standard that leaders must be men and women of character. In the last 10-15 years, one of the great shocks is that many evangelicals no longer believe character is essential for leadership. Read that sentence again! Why and how did that happen to Bible-believing followers of Jesus?

THREE: For most of church history, there has been a shared understanding that leadership is most corrupted by money, sex, power, and pride. Why are those things so damaging to godly leadership? When and why did we stop believing those things are dangerous and think that leaders who mess up with money, sex, power, and pride will be good leaders for us?

FOUR: Make a list of the things that need to be “evident” in the life of a leader you will trust and follow.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 reminds us:

“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

As a group, take time to pray for our leaders. First, pray for your own spheres of leadership: in your home, in your workplace, in your community. Then, move into a time of praying for those in positions of leadership over you. Pray for the leaders of Living Word. Pray for the leaders in our county, state, and country. Pray for good leadership to be evident in some of the most pressing issues facing us globally.