

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP Student's Guide

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About the author

Dr. Roger Smalling has been in the ministry since 1964, when he went as a missionary to Europe with an independent mission. His leadership experience includes Field Leader for France, then later in South America as Team and Field Leader for Ecuador, as well as Assistant Regional Director for Latin America with that mission.

Later, while serving with the Presbyterian Church in America in Ecuador, he was instrumental in creating a successful leadership training system for the national Presbytery. This book was born out of that system.

Dr. Smalling served with Ministries In Action for twelve years as director of their Hispanic branch, under the title, “Visión R.E.A.L”, an acrostic in Spanish for “Reformation In Latin America.” This involved establishing and supervising leadership-training centers throughout Latin America. He currently cooperates with Miami International Seminary as a lecturer throughout Latin America.

Roger is married to Dianne, his wife of over 40 years. Together, they have authored ten books, available at: www.smallings.com

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Introduction

Purpose

- Establish in the mind of the student the biblical concept of servant leadership, by comparing it with the authoritarian hierarchies generally practiced in worldly contexts such as business, government and some religious institutions.
- Create in the student a strong sense of integrity with regard to leadership, help him identify unbiblical motives for desiring offices in the church, and replace those motives with the right ones.
- Identify and practice non-manipulative techniques for helping his subordinates to grow in Christ.

Content

The required textbook for the course is **CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP**, available free on [Smalling's website](#), or through [Kindle](#) for a small fee. The textbook is homework reading that the teacher may assign as needed.

Materials

- Materials: Textbook, **CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP** by Roger Smalling
- Bible: English Standard Version (ESV)
- Study guide for students

Scriptural basis

The leadership philosophy of this course is taken from Mt.20:20-28. It shows the key elements of Christian leadership as taught and modeled by Christ.

Lesson 1: Christian leadership is simple

Corresponds to Chapters 1-4 in textbook.

Purpose: Explain the elements of Christian leadership as Christ taught and modeled it. The text for the course is Matthew 20:20-28.

How does Christian leadership differ from secular?

In the manner in which we relate to people

In the objective pursued

Elements

1. Leadership is based on _____, not _____.

2. The Bible recognizes _____ of Christian leadership.

3. Paul declares in 2 Timothy 3:16,17 that the Scriptures are sufficient for _____.

The key strategy of Christian leadership is to _____.

4. Christian leadership is anti _____ and anti _____.

5. Management techniques in can be helpful as long as they correspond to _____.

The central virtue

Illustration of the honorable lieutenant

2 Corinthians 1:12,13

The Caiaphas principle

John 11:50; James 3:17

Illustration of the presbytery moderator

The three pillars of Christian leadership- Matthew 20:20-28

First pillar: Disposition to suffer

Verses 20-23

Second pillar: Parity

Verses 24-26

Third pillar: Service

Verses 27,28

Dangers in hierarchical government

(Chapter 4 of textbook)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Discussion: How can we mitigate the dangers in hierarchical government in Christian organizations?

- Periodic anonymous evaluations of the leaders by the subordinates. Rarely does a Christian leader have the courage or integrity to do this.
- Ask advice of your subordinates.

Discussion: Compare the following two people and discuss differences in their leadership. Timothy, Philippians 2:18-21; Diotrephes, 3 John 8,9

From this lesson we learn...

- Christian leadership is fundamentally simple.
- The recognizes on sole concept of Christian leadership, taught and modeled by Christ himself.
- Integrity is a central virtue in Christian leadership.
- The word of God is sufficient for preparing effective Christian leaders.

Homework: Read Chapters 1-6 in the textbook.

Lesson 2: Strategies and vision

Corresponds to Chapters 5 & 6 in textbook.

The leader's strategy

His function- Acts 20:28

His approach to a congregation- Ephesians 4:11,12

His principle product- 2 Timothy 2:2

Three kinds of leaders in the church

Pioneers

Managers

Spiritual janitors

The leader's vision

Vision is an attainable dream

It involves three aspects:

- A dream
- A plan
- Passion

A person without a vision is not a leader

A vision without a plan is visionary

Characteristics of a good vision and plan

Simplicity

Difficult but not impossible

Benefits the kingdom of God

Based on a person call of God

Having a good idea does not mean it came necessarily from God. You know it is a vision from God because you can't get rid of it. It sticks to your soul like paint on a wall. It cannot be ignored.

From this lesson we learn...

- A vision is a reachable dream of great value, difficult to achieve and requires major investment of resources.
- A vision must be accompanied by a workable plan with the passion to see it happen.
- A vision should be sufficiently simple in its basic conception that those who you call to participate in it will understand it.
- Getting a vision from God normally results from one's personal walk with God.
- A genuine vision is oriented toward the progress of God's kingdom, not merely for one's own personal satisfaction.

Lesson 3: Creative planning

Corresponds to Chapters 7 & 8 in textbook

Purpose

Show how to initiate a good plan and use creative thinking

Elements of a good plan

1. What _____ are necessary and how will they be obtained?
2. How can the project become _____?
3. What are the _____?
4. Regular _____.
5. Everything should be _____.

How to invent a plan

Get the facts

1. Learn all you can about what is involved to implement your vision.
2. Find out who else is attempting a similar thing. Determine what they are doing that's different from what you would like to do.
3. If your vision is something that has been accomplished elsewhere, learn all you can about it.
4. Find out what efforts have failed and why, to avoid duplicating mistakes.

Define the short-term goals

Make plans for obtaining the resources

Have plans for dealing with opposition

Group Exercise: Goal Setting

Students may work in class to write together a brief paragraph on a goal to be accomplished in the church, with at least two *means* towards that goal. This is an exercise only, not to be implemented in reality.

Creative thinking: What is it?

Barriers to creative thinking

1. Fear of failure or ridicule: “If this new idea fails, we’ll look like fools and the people will lose confidence in us.”
2. Negative thinking:
3. Comfort Zone:
4. Laziness:
5. Theological error regarding divine guidance:

Brainstorming

Group exercise- Crazy ideas

Exercise one: Idea for evangelizing

Create a novel idea for evangelizing, with the condition that it be as strange as possible. The idea is to break through the barriers and be imaginative.

Exercise two: Idea for a sermon

From this lesson we learn....

- A good plan incorporates short-term goals to measure progress toward the vision.
- Revise progress with subordinates regularly to stay on track.
- Do not allow problems or opposition to deviate you from the goal.
- There exists barriers to creative thinking that leaders must learn to overcome.
- Setting intermediate goals is a good way to measure progress.

Lesson 4: Ethics and traps

Corresponds to Chapter 9 in textbook

Purpose

The ordained office has certain rights and privileges. No one may disregard these rights without due process. If we understand these rights, we can more easily avoid treating our fellow ministers unethically.

Ministerial rights

- 1.The right to respect- 1 Timothy 4:12
- 2.The right of authority over our own flock- Acts 20:28
- 3.Freedom from accusations without due process- 1 Timothy 5:19
- 4.The right to voice and vote in matters relative to his ministry- Philemon 14

Christian hierarchies sometimes disregard these rights in their treatment of ministers within their ranks. If you are an officer in a Christian hierarchy, be aware of this tendency and take measures to avoid it.

Relationships between ministers

A mutual defense agreement among leaders

Two or more leaders can make a contract among themselves to always defend each other when one of them is verbally attacked. This includes the agreement never to talk negatively about one another to others. This presents a solid and united front to critics.

Accountability partners

It is wise to belong to a group of three or four fellow ministers to have mutual accountability for their actions. Few ministers have a desire for such a group because of an attitude of self-sufficiency. Experience shows great benefits may come from having accountability partners.

Traps in leadership

Neglecting the family

According to 1 Peter 3:7, what is a danger for those who fail in this aspect?

This is the most common complaint we have heard from wives of leaders. As one wife said, “My husband is cheating on me with the church.”

I have a question for you, pastor. Are you happy in your ministry? If not, could it be negligence of the family? God is able to make you as unhappy and frustrated in your ministry as your wife is in the case of negligence.

Fireman trap

Accepting mediocre elders or deacons

Questionable preaching

What is the theme of the last verse of the Bible? _____

A danger for pastors is to preach moralistic messages without the grace of God and work of Jesus Christ central.

From this lesson we learn...

- Although ministers are servants, they have certain rights, along with the right to defend those.
- It is a good idea for a leader to have a personal accountability committee.
- The Christian leader must be aware of the kind of traps that the enemy can set for him.

Lesson 5: Effective communication

Corresponds to Chapters 17 & 18 in textbook

Purpose

Explain the general principles of effective communication with subordinates.

General principals

- Good communication is the _____, not of the subordinate.
- Communication must be _____.
1 Corinthians 2:1; 2 Corinthians 1:12

Common mistakes in communication

1. Never assume the person has _____.
2. The “Mr. Incognito” syndrome
3. Only negative communication
4. Unilateral decisions without consulting subordinates.

Positive Affirmation: The practice of praising your subordinates

Why praise?

- People are encouraged to live up to your expectations.
- It creates a general positive atmosphere and makes you a more approachable person.

If you give a job to a person in the church and they do well, take a minute and thank them. Don't use general terms. Be specific. Describe specifically what it was they did well and why you like it. Show how you *feel* about their work. This makes a leader approachable. Let them know you appreciate their work and value them.

How to praise others, from **THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER** ¹

"Tell people that you are going to tell them how they are doing."

"Praise people immediately."

"Tell people what they did right... be specific."

"Tell people how good you feel about what they did right, and how it helps the organization and the other people who work there."

"Stop for a moment of silence to let them feel how good you feel."

"Encourage them to do more of the same."

"Shake hands or touch people in a way that makes it clear that you support their success in the organization."

Some tips

- Do not flatter. Be sincere.
- Congratulate immediately.
- Congratulate in front of others.
- Touch the person (if culturally appropriate.)
- Speak well of the person in their absence.

Group exercise

Practice One: Freddy and the chairs.

A new believer in the church, Freddy, has asked to help serve the Lord in a tangible way. You recommend that next Sunday, Freddy could arrange the chairs for service. When you arrive at the church on that Sunday, you notice that Freddy has done an excellent job. Congratulate Freddy, applying the steps taught in the lesson.

Practice Two: The elder candidate and his first sermon.

One of your elder candidates has taken a course in Homiletics preaching. It seems he may have a talent for this, although he does not do an outstanding job because of a lack of practice. Next Sunday, he preaches a sermon, more or less well. Encourage him, applying the steps taught in the lesson.

Negative affirmation: Minor corrections

Suggestions from **THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER**² with some personal elaborations.

1. Correct immediately. Do not let a series of incidents accumulate and then explode. Do not reprimand people for things they did weeks or months ago.
2. Tell people what they did wrong. Be specific.
3. Tell them how you *feel* about what they did wrong.
4. Stop for a few seconds of uncomfortable silence. This allows them *feel* how you feel.
5. Hold them accountable.
6. Shake hands, or touch them in a way that lets them know you are honestly on their side. Don't let them perceive you as an enemy. You aren't out to *get* them. Their problem is something you and they are going to work on together.

7. Let them hear that you highly value them. Remind them you appreciate them as people, but are concerned about their level of performance in this situation.

8. When the reprimand is over, it is over. Don't harp on it. Treat it as an anomaly, until it is repeated. Note Paul's exhortation to *walk worthy* of their calling.³ This implies their errant conduct is beneath their dignity.

From this lesson we learn...

- Good communication between leaders and subordinates is essential in ministry.
- Good communication is the responsibility of the leader not the subordinate.
- Both positive and negative communication are effective tools for establishing good relations.
- The leader must avoid common errors in communication.

Homework reading: Article on *Wolves* by Smalling

Lesson 6: Problematic people

Corresponds to Chapters 13-16 in textbook.

Purpose

Show the kinds of people who cause problems in the church and how to deal with them.

Highly recommended: **ANTAGONISTS IN THE CHURCH** by Kenneth C. Haug. This book is a must for the library of any church leader. Many of the ideas in this lesson are amplified and illustrated in Haug's book. Several of the observations on problematic people are influenced by it.

Definition of problematic people

Problematic people are those who, motivated by a desire for control, cause division and confusion through constant complaining, criticism and resistance to authority.⁴ The apostle Paul labels such as "wolves," Acts 20:29

Their basic motivation

Control. Behind the complaints of problematic people, the desire for control and power reigns. Never give it to them. This is the worst possible thing you could ever do.

Characteristics of problematic types

Most of these characteristics are typical, though not all will apply to a given individual.

- Incredibly tenacious
- Extreme self-esteem
- Aggressive
- Tendency toward anger
- Rigid attitudes
- Very manipulative and charming
- Independent attitudes
- Frequently very intelligent

Modes of operation

- They operate behind the backs of _____ . (John 10:1,2)
- Criticize the leaders. (2 John 9.10)
- They are spiritually _____ . (2 Corinthians 10:12)

First clues of when a problematic person is about to attack

- Begins to express "concerns," which are really complaints about the condition of the church, especially the leadership. Goes around seeking support for his concerns.
- Meddles in church affairs that are none of his business.

Common errors in dealing with them

- Being as patient with them as with others who err on a less dangerous level. This is the most serious mistake in dealing with them. Titus 3:10.
- Trying to reason with them.

- Trying to please or placate them.
- Giving them any authority or recognition.
- Taking a lot of time listening to their complaints.

Dealing with internal wolves:

What does Paul say to do in Titus 3:10? _____

Big mistake! — Being patience with a Wolf

Do not try to reason with wolves. They do not respect you and think you lack discernment, spirituality or intelligence. The more you say, the more ammunition they are collecting to criticize you. Simply apply your spiritual authority and warn them of the consequences if they continue in their conduct.

Two common dangerous problematic people in the church

Gossips

Generally these do not respond except by strong rebukes, especially those who criticize the leadership.

Spiritual pride

This sin usually produces rebellion and a spirit of division if not dealt with quickly. It is the most difficult sin to deal with in the church.

From this lesson we learn...

- Part of the calling of a leader is to protect the congregation from wolves.
- Two classes of wolves exist: Internal and external; members of the church versus false cults.
- Two kinds of members who can become wolves are gossips and those with spiritual pride.
- The leader must not show patience with those who cause division. Two warnings at the most are permitted by Titus 3:10.

Lesson 7: Decision making and guidance

Corresponds to Chapter 17 in textbook.

Making decisions

The inductive reasoning process

A detective uses induction to arrive at conclusions. “Give me the facts, nothing but the facts.” He doesn’t go about to prove anyone guilty or innocent. Likewise, as leaders are called on to make decisions, they must be careful to gather all relevant information. Some of the sources of information may be subjective, such as what God seems to be indicating in their personal quiet time.

Deductive reasoning: Deduction starts with an assumption about what is valid, then looks for the evidence to confirm it. This is legitimate in some contexts. We may assume it is God’s will to evangelize a certain area and look for evidence from the Lord to confirm it, such as open opportunities.

Spiritual evidence

Decision making in Christian leadership is primarily a spiritual process, rather than intellectual. Often the evidence gathered for making the decision is a mixture of spiritual and circumstantial. We serve God principally in our *spirit*. See Romans 1:9

•**Your devotional life:** As a leader, it is imperative for you to listen to God in your devotional life and note what He is indicating to you out of the Word.

•**Prayer and fasting for seeking God:** The Bible clearly teaches this as a practice among church leaders when it comes to making important decisions. It is something to take seriously. Acts 13:1,2; 14:23

•**Counselors:** Proverbs 24:6

Principles of divine guidance

1. According to James 3:17, what is an indication of the will of God?

2. According to Colossians 3:15, what is an indication of the will of God?

3. According to Hebrews 13:17, what is an indication of the will of God?

4. According to Revelation 3:8, what is an indication of the will of God?

Incubating the data

God created us with a subconscious. This is the subliminal part of our brain that functions by itself with its own type of logic of which we are not usually conscious. If we encounter a complex and serious problem, we can put our subconscious to work by a process we can call *incubation*. We simply put in our minds all the relevant data and then forget it for the moment. Frequently the answer will come to mind a few days later.

From this lesson we learn...

- For the leader, decision making is intimately connected to one's personal walk with the Lord.
- The wise leader gathers all the evidence possible on the matter before making decisions, without depending too heavily on his intuitions.
- Divine guidance in this dispensation is founded principally on the characteristics of godly wisdom.
- Indications of God's will are: Godly counselors, peace, open doors of opportunity.

Lesson 8: The work of the mentor

Corresponds to Chapter 19-21 in textbook.

Purpose

Show what is the biblical process of leadership preparation within a church context and give the student the confidence to do that work.

In this lesson, the term *mentor* means the process of discipleship necessary for the preparation of leaders.

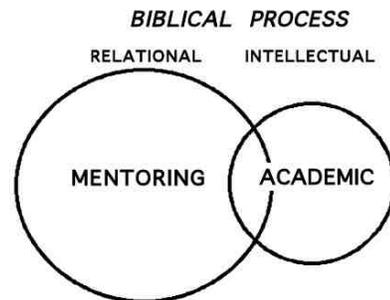
Principles

The preparation of leaders is fundamentally simple. This does not mean it is easy.

The two sides of the process

1 Corinthians 4:16,17; 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6,7

- Modeling
- Teaching



The heart of the mentor and his competence

Those who feel capable to be mentors probably should not do it

Call, not competence

The anointing is there if you are called

Virtue, not personality

Spiritual authority

2 Corinthians 13:10; Luke 9:35

Select your candidates

Some leaders tend to accept anybody interested in the program. This is the way Christ selected his leadership candidates.

- Choose _____.
- Select candidates from their openness and _____
- Choose people with _____. Experience is secondary.

Establishing a covenant with your disciple

- Avoid letting the person know right away that you are thinking of him for leadership. Give him ministry to do in order to give him a chance to show his faithfulness.
- After sufficient proving, make an agreement with him for the learning process.
- Meet with him regularly and teach him.

Traps in mentoring

- Beware of trying to make _____ of yourself.
- Avoid _____.
- Do not give your candidate leftover bits of unimportant ministry that you or others don't want to do. This is demeaning.
- Do not focus on the weaknesses of your candidate. It is a temptation to focus on what the candidate cannot do well.

From this lesson we learn...

- The process of leadership preparation is largely relational and only then academic.
- The two sides of the mentoring process are modeling and teaching.
- If a person is ordained to a biblical office of leadership, he is also called to prepare other leaders. With this, comes spiritual authority.
- A mentor must look for candidates with the follow qualities: Faithfulness, self-motivation, stable devotional life, a spiritual gift with a sense of call to serve the Lord.

Conclusion

Christian leaders deal with weighty matters involving the lives of God's people. To float a heavy object, we must have something underneath to sustain it. A brick will float if it is resting on a board. So it is with leadership. The "board" is our personal integrity and humility before God and man. We can float a lot of weight on that. Without it, we are sunk.

People learn quickly if our integrity has a sellout price. Without this principal virtue, our leadership is crippled. With it, other elements fall naturally into line.

Christian leadership is fundamentally simple if we remember this central truth. The quality of our personal walk with God has more to do with leadership than managerial techniques.

The world's paradigms constantly shift. Christ modeled only one leadership paradigm which has never changed: Servant leadership accompanied with the virtue of integrity, a disposition to embrace suffering, treating others with respect as God's image and dealing with our fellow ministers as equals along with a servant attitude.

It is dangerous for Christian organizations to emulate the world's organizational structures and mind set. Most become authoritarian hierarchies, which are the antithesis of Christian leadership. Such structures bring out the worst in us: Arrogance, authoritarianism, jealousy and incompetence. To mitigate the damage, the world must invent a plethora of managerial techniques to get by.

Good communication between leaders and their subordinates is a key to success. Followers need to feel they are valued as persons and can express their views without fear of reprisal.

A leader must have *vision*. A vision is an attainable goal of great importance involving intense commitment. Without this, a person may be a manager but not a leader. Likewise, a leader must be able to do realistic planning, with intermediate goals. Without planning he is merely a visionary.

Finally, a leader needs to keep in mind that God's call gives him privileges and authority to do his job even though he is a servant. As with other aspects of Christian living, he lives in paradox. He is a slave with authority, a servant who directs. He attributes his accomplishments to Christ and views his greatest honor in terms of bringing glory to Him alone.

Appendix A: The honorable lieutenant

(This anecdote goes with Lesson 1 to illustrate integrity in leadership.)

West Point, the U.S. army officer training college, is known for its strict code of honor. In response to any question, cadets may give only 4 answers: “Yes sir, no sir, I don’t know sir, and no excuse sir.” Making excuses is practically a crime. If a person under a cadet’s responsibility makes a mistake, then the cadet takes the blame. This is to teach them responsibility and honor.

One of these officers arrived in Vietnam after graduation and was sent out into the jungle to supervise the construction of a runway. Unfortunately, he knew nothing about runways, but a sergeant there said he had done it before. So he said to the sergeant, “Are you sure the direction of this runway is correct?” The sergeant assured him it was. So the Lieutenant said, “Well, continue on therefore and I’ll trust your judgment.”

An hour and a half later, a Colonel came by who was an expert in runways and said, “Who is the *idiot* who ordered this runway to be built in this direction!?” The Lieutenant almost said, “Well this sergeant here, he said he knew...etc.” But the words that actually came out of his mouth were, “I did, Sir.”

At this moment the sergeant approached, with his hand upraised as though to speak. The Colonel apparently deduced what had happened and asked the Lieutenant, “You just came out of West Point, didn’t you?” The Lieutenant said, “Yes Sir.” The Colonel looked at the sergeant, then at the Lieutenant and said, “Well in that case, it was an honest mistake.”

Later on the Colonel invited that Lieutenant to join his staff. This represented a substantial promotion.⁵

Appendix B: The Peter Principles

(From the book **The Peter Principle**
by Dr. Lawrence Peters, Sociologist)

In his classic, *The Peter Principle*, sociologist Dr. Peters outlines the dynamics of a hierarchy and how it produces inefficiency. Below are the problems he has observed in his study of hierarchies.

1. Every employee rises to his level of incompetence.
2. Any productive employee has not reached his level of incompetence.
3. Super-competent employees will be fired. They represent a threat to the stability of the hierarchy, which is the supreme value of a hierarchy.
4. Contrary to popular belief, production is not the supreme value. Stability is.
5. "Pull" is more important than "push". Pull means being favored by superiors. Push means trying harder to do a good job, or self-improvement.
6. Downward pressure of seniority always neutralizes "push." To the hierarchy, he who has been around longest has more chance of promotion than the employee who is better qualified. The employee whom the superiors happen to like, for whatever reason, has the best chance of all. Qualifications do not necessarily matter.
7. Being a good follower is guaranteed to make you a poor leader.
8. In a hierarchy, creativity and innovativeness will be viewed as incompetence.
9. Leadership potential may be viewed as insubordination in a hierarchy.
10. Higher level incompetent officials are rarely aware of their incompetence.
11. Higher echelon officials will always project the impression they are wise and have things in control. This is not necessarily so.

Endnotes

¹ Blanchard, Kenneth. **THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER**. Spencer-Morrow, 1981, PP.44

² PP.59

³ Eph.4:1

⁴ From the book **ANTAGONISTS IN THE CHURCH** by Kenneth Hough. Augsburg Publishing, Minn., Min, 1988. Much of this lesson contains ideas found in this book, which is a must read for any church leader.

⁵ This anecdote is taken from cassette tape series on West Point Leadership which may be found in your local library.