



INTRODUCTION

Matthew 20:20-28 (NASB)

²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.

²¹ And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."

²² But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able."

²³ He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

²⁴ And hearing *this*, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.

²⁵ But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them."

²⁶ "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

²⁷ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

What makes a leader?

Rank? Status? Celebrity? Caste? Clout? Style?

Is leadership automatically bestowed by a box on the organizational chart? Where do position and power figure into the formula for leadership? And what is the ideal model for leaders? Is it the corporate CEO? The military commander? The head of state?

TWENTY-SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE LEADER

- 1. A LEADER IS TRUSTWORTHY.**
- 2. A LEADER TAKES THE INITIATIVE.**
- 3. A LEADER USES GOOD JUDGEMENT.**
- 4. A LEADER SPEAKS WITH AUTHORITY.**
- 5. A LEADER STRENGTHENS OTHERS.**
- 6. A LEADER IS OPTIMISTIC AND ENTHUSIASTIC.**
- 7. A LEADER NEVER COMPROMISES THE ABSOLUTES.**



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8. A LEADER FOCUSES ON OBJECTIVES, NOT OBSTACLES.
9. A LEADER EMPOWERS BY EXAMPLE.
10. A LEADER CULTIVATES LOYALTY.
11. A LEADER HAS EMPATHY FOR OTHERS.
12. A LEADER KEEPS A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
13. A LEADER IS DEFINITE AND DECISIVE.
14. A LEADER KNOWS WHEN TO CHANGE HIS MIND.
15. A LEADER DOES NOT ABUSE HIS AUTHORITY.
16. A LEADER DOESN'T ABDICATE HIS ROLE IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION.
17. A LEADER IS SURE OF HIS CALLING.
18. A LEADER KNOWS HIS OWN LIMITATIONS.
19. A LEADER IS RESILIENT.
20. A LEADER IS PASSIONATE.
21. A LEADER IS COURAGEOUS.
22. A LEADER IS DISCERNING.
23. A LEADER IS DISCIPLINED.
24. A LEADER IS ENERGETIC.
25. A LEADER KNOWS HOW TO DELEGATE.

Jesus answered all those questions in a few words. His views on leadership are conspicuously out of step with the conventional wisdom of our age:

Matthew 20:25-28 (NASB)

²⁵ “But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them.”

²⁶ “It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

²⁷ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

According to Christ, then, the truest kind of leadership demands service, sacrifice, and selflessness. A proud and self-promoting person is not a good leader by Christ's standard, regardless of how much clout he or she might wield. Leaders who look to Christ as *their* Leader and their supreme model of leadership will have servants' hearts. They will exemplify sacrifice.

I realize those are not characteristics most people associate with leadership, but they are essential qualities of a biblical approach to leadership, which is the only kind I'm interested in.



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Notice, by the way, that Jesus was expressly teaching Christians to approach leadership in a different way and from a radically different point of view than the leaders of this world. It's folly for Christians to assume (as these days many do) that the best way for Christians to learn leadership is from worldly examples.

There's a crucial reason for this: Leadership for the Christian *always* has a spiritual dimension. The duty of leading people carries with it certain spiritual obligations. That is as true for the Christian president of a secular company as it is for the stay-at-home mom whose sphere of leadership might extend no further than her own children. **All Christians in every kind of leadership are called to be *spiritual* leaders.**

I'll be speaking about the spiritual dimension of leadership throughout this teaching, but please don't imagine that I'm writing only to pastors, career missionaries, or church leaders. Every leader who is also a Christian—including the manager of the widget factory, the football coach, and the public-school kindergarten teacher—**needs to remember that the leadership role is a spiritual responsibility, and the people we lead are a stewardship from God,** for which we will **one day be called to give an account** (cf. [Matthew 25:14–30](#)).