LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Biblical Leadership New Testament Theme Report

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Biblical Foundations of Leadership

by

Curtis Boozer

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**Introduction**

The writers who contributed to the book *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader* collaborated to analyze books of the Bible and to extract leadership truths that have the singular characteristic of having come from the inspired Word of God. [[1]](#footnote-2) This distinction is the guiding principle behind the information that the writers convey as they highlight the leadership lessons that are provided throughout Scripture.

The book is composed of writings from thirty-four contributing authors, some of whom write on different topics. The first nineteen chapters focus upon leadership concepts that can be gleaned from the Old Testament. The following fourteen chapters examine the books of the New Testament for leadership content. The epilogue reminds the reader that Christian leadership is a subset in the area of knowledge on leadership. [[2]](#footnote-3) The paradigms differ from worldly methods, and the goals of Christian leadership are often at odds with the practice of secular leadership. The writers challenge the reader to be a contributor to the on-going discussion of how to communicate Christian leadership to those of this generation and those in the future.

This paper will review selected topics chosen from the fourteen chapters that covered the books of the New Testament. Specifically, summaries will be provided on the leadership concepts illustrated by the Gospel of John, the leadership priorities provided by Early Church Polity, the leadership attributes conveyed in the Petrine Epistles, and the leadership paradigm presented in Hebrews, James and Jude. The paper will explain why these themes are important to this writer and to my ministry.

**Leadership Themes from the Gospel of John**

The gospel of John begins with an affirmation of Jesus’ divinity and presents the reader with an explanation of how a divine person became incarnate as a human being. This incarnation establishes that the divine Jesus experiences the very human experiences of humiliation, weakness and vulnerability as God became fully human. John was an eyewitness to Jesus’ miracles and recognized His divinity. John also witnessed Jesus’ courageous persistence in sharing His message, even as He faced rejection and hostility from those around Him.

John’s account of Jesus’ washing the feet of the disciples provides important leadership guidance.[[3]](#footnote-4)  The authors suggest that Jesus was presenting an example that a leader is expected to sacrificially love others, even beyond normal limits. Jesus showed that He was willing to give His live for the sake of those He loved. Jesus honestly disclosed that serving Him would cost the disciples a great deal. For instance, Jesus told His disciples that joining Jesus in His mission would result in persecution. He honestly shared the challenges with the disciples, yet Jesus encouraged them to remain connected to Him, so that He could empower and support them as their leader.

Jesus repeatedly showed that He cared for others. During His arrest by the palace guards, Jesus intentionally drew attention to Himself in order to protect His followers. He also showed compassion to the man that Peter attacked with a sword.[[4]](#footnote-5)  Even as Jesus was dying on the cross, He reached out to make sure that His mother would be taken care of.

Jesus has provided an example in John’s account of the reality of following His path. I clearly understand that I will face opposition and know that Jesus stands ever ready to support me as I strive to serve Him. I also understand that I will face opposition and know that Jesus stands ready to support me as I strive to serve Him. I also understand that Jesus wishes for me to love others in a manner that would seem irrational to others. This love should motivate me to sacrificially give of myself to serve others.

**Leadership Concepts from the Petrine Epistles**

The writings of the Apostle Peter challenge readers to recognize God’s authority in establishing leaders. Peter proposes that all leaders are established by God, whether they are spiritual leaders or a civil leader. It encourages leaders to reflect upon their role as appointed leaders and to be cognizant of Who established them in their role. Peter pointed out that biblical leaders should “live the Way as well as describe the Way” as they journey through life.[[5]](#footnote-6)  Godly leaders should demonstrate adherence to God’s commands in their lives. These same leaders should also be skilled in relating to others how to apply God’s Word to their lives.

Peter shared that God appointed leaders should lead by sacrificial example, accept responsibility for their example of Godly living.[[6]](#footnote-7)  They should also remember that God distributes gifts to men and they should not be prideful about their abilities. Peter also reminded readers that they are responsible to follow leaders that God has appointed. Willing and respectful submission to leadership is expected of believers.

Peter’s words are helpful to my ministry as they remind me that I have been appointed and gifted by God to serve His people. I must somberly accept my role and live up to the expectations that God has for me. I can also confidently lead as God has established my authority as a leader and supports me as I lead. I should be more forward and serve boldly, lovingly serving those that God has placed under my leadership.

**Leadership Themes from Hebrews, James, and Jude**

The books of the Bible, Hebrews, James and Jude provide guides to those that want to become leaders or to become better in the leadership roles that they have. Continuing the theme seen in prior sections, they writers of these books affirm that authority is necessary and serves mankind well. The writer of the book of Jude chastises those who disregard heavenly or worldly authority. The book of Hebrews and the book of James encourages leaders to show respect to those who are in authority.

There is also an admonition to accept your leadership appointment and to avoid taking an appointment that is not one that God assigns.[[7]](#footnote-8) As one works at the task that is given, the readers are told to lead people toward God and to constantly review their work to make sure it leads others to God. Finally, these passages remind leaders to be a person who spends a great deal of time in prayer.

These books remind me to submit to authority willingly. I must recognize my rebellious spirit and pridefulness. I need to work to remain in self-control and not allow myself to behave in a manner that is not appropriate for a leader appointed by God. It is a sin for me to act otherwise. I must remain focused on directing others toward God and conscientiously review the work that I do to make sure that I am correctly oriented upon God and pointing others towards Him.

**Conclusion**

The themes that are visible in the New Testament highlight key biblical leadership principles. My prior paper that studied Old Testament writings pointed out that there are many truths that speak to the need for a leader to choose to be a person who seeks a relationship with the Lord. God demonstrates His love for His people in that He has provided a leader to serve them. The leaders are wise if they remain humble and recognize that God is always in control. This confidence in the sovereignty of God allows the leaders to understand themselves better and to quickly turn to God for answers instead of relying upon their own wisdom. The New Testament aligns with the Old Testament concepts, as can be expected in an on-going revelation from God. Leaders are expected to serve others sacrificially, motivated by their love for others. A leader is to be a person of godly character. Character matters to those a minister serves, and leaders are responsible to God to diligently serve in a proper manner. A godly leader must accept their role and rely upon God to support them in their ministry.

The gifts that have been given to a leader are to be gratefully and humbly accepted. A recognition that all authority lies with God and He assigns those who He wishes to lead others. It is not a right to be a leader. God assigns leaders and those who serve Him well will always recognize that they work in submission to Him. Passionate pursuit of a relationship with God and adherence to His Word are the fundamental practices in an effective minister’s live. Any biblical leader who ignores those fundamentals is destined to be limited in their effectiveness.

**Bibliography**

Forrest, Benjamin, and Chet Roden. *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2017.

1. Benjamin Forrest and Chet Roden. *Biblical Leadership: Theology for the Everyday Leader*, 2017, page 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Ibid., 512. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Ibid., 355. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Ibid., 358. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Ibid., 457, [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Ibid., 459. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Ibid., 493. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)