



LEADERSHIP and PURPOSE

A God-Given Ability

A spiritual leader understands
that God is his Source
and that He is the ultimate leader

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ABOUT JOEL

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INTRODUCTION

The following report by *Time* typifies the dramatic shifts that have taken place in U.S. Catholicism since the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965— Even as Pope John Paul II landed in the United States in 1987, an adult Bible class met at the red brick Our Lady of the Assumption school in Claremont, California. The 25 participants quickly fell into heated disagreement over two issues: Is it morally licit for couples to live together outside of marriage? Should the church approve the remarriage of divorced parishioners? A generation ago, members of such a group would not have challenged the church’s “No” to both questions. But at this meeting, a member pointed out: “Everybody had a different opinion. That’s the state of American Catholicism today. People are practicing what they want to practice, and priests are giving individual advice.” From a *Time* poll came this statistic: “While 75% of American Catholics see the Pope as an important world leader, 93% believe they can disagree with him and still be good Catholics.”¹

¹ This illustration is only used to indicate the disagreement between the people about the issues; See, Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), n.a.

This is a general view in all communities and denominations. There is always someone or a group that seeks to speak against, or rebel, or cause controversies in a Church or an organization, over programs, buildings, personalities, staff, teaching etc. This is true especially in churches or organizations that replace biblical principles with secular-physiological ideas or replace prayer by secular-marketing strategies. What are the reasons for such controversies? Why would one dispute with another? Certainly every individual have his/her own opinion on certain things, therefore, they voice their opinions. One could say that the reason for these controversies is the lack of proper-biblical leadership! A Church or an organization needs a God-centered leadership! Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to emphasize a God-centered leadership that is necessary in today's world, and its purpose, so that the leadership that seeks God's glory will move people toward God's strategy.

What is Leadership?

Many definitions can be found for defining the term “leadership.” It could mean “influence;”² more than a position;³ a function; a commitment to the “cause,” but not the “cause” itself.”⁴ Others define it is a reciprocal relationship between the leaders and the community,⁵ or “a dynamic process in which a man or woman with God-given capacity influences a specific group of God’s people toward His purposes for the group,”⁶ or “influencing God’s

² John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Most Powerful Minutes In A Leader’s Day* (Nashville: Nelson Business, 2000), 136.

³ Fred Smith, *Learning to Lead: Bringing Out the Best in People*, vol. 5 (Carol Stream: CTI, 1986), 13.

⁴ Effective Leadership in the Church, A training tool to help congregations, pastors, and other church leaders effectively work together to accomplish God’s mission,” (Kalamazoo Avenue SE Grand Rapids, MI 49560), accessed on 5/8/2012 http://www.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/spe/spe_effectiveleadership.pdf

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Mark Schmitz, “The Second Man in Ministry,” *Journal of Ministry and Theology*, 03:2 (Fall 1999), 78-9, accessed on 5/8/2012 under “Theological Journals” <http://pbcweb.pbc.edu:2052/article/10743>

people toward God’s purposes,”⁷ or it is “moving people on to God’s agenda.”⁸ Though there might be many definitions for leadership, simple definition is: Leadership is a God-given ability to fulfill God’s purposes for His glory.

Why Leadership?

Can a boat navigate in the intended direction if it does not have rudder to operate? Can a car turn in the intended course if it does not have a steering wheel? Can a plane land in high winds without the involvement of a pilot? Or can a computer function without the operator? Undoubtedly, for something to function properly, there must be someone or something to operate and guide it. Without the operator or a guide, anything can go astray.

The concept of ‘why leadership’ can be traced back to the initial chapters of the Bible. In the beginning, God

⁷ Henry Blackaby, and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2001), 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

created the heavens and the earth according to His purpose.⁹ He created humankind according to His purpose.¹⁰ He blessed them to multiply and subdue the earth.¹¹ He commanded them what to eat and what not to eat, but humankind rebelled against the Creator of the universe.¹² Therefore, from that very point of the human history mankind lost the privilege to be under the leadership and guidance of God, and chose to cope lives and situations on their own, thus mankind is in need of leadership and guidance.

⁹ The purpose of God creating the universe is evident in the foundational verse of the Bible (Genesis 1:1).

¹⁰ Genesis 1:26, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth”; All Scriptures are taken from the Authorized King James version, unless otherwise stated; *The Holy Bible: King James Version* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009).

¹¹ Genesis 1:28, “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”

¹² Genesis 3.

One can notice in 1 Samuel 8, which is the most significant chapters in the historical books of the Old Testament, that the nation of Israel gathered together and asked Samuel to appoint a “king” over them, just as the other nations. The reason why Israelites decided to have a new king rather than having God as their King was clearly because of their desire, but of not necessity.¹³ But God granted the Israelites what they have asked for. What this indicates is that *people* tend to follow *people*. They need a leader who can guide them. Israelites rejected God to be their leader, because they have seen the kings of other nations visibly. David Tsumura argues that it might be Samuel’s lack of faith which caused this situation or that people were so used to seeing Samuel as their leader. And when Samuel grew older, they wanted someone new to rule

¹³ David Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 242.

over them, instead of Samuel or his sons.¹⁴ Nonetheless, one can notice the need for a new leader in their situation.

Since the beginning of the history of mankind, God has raised many leaders to guide His people such as: Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Samson, Saul, David, Elijah, Daniel, Nehemiah and many more.¹⁵ All of these leaders were appointed by God to accomplish *His* purposes.

The Biblical Leaders

It is evident that God raised different leaders to accomplish His purposes. Proverbs 28:2 states: “For the transgression of a land many *are* the princes thereof: But by a man of understanding *and* knowledge the state *thereof* shall be prolonged.” The NET Bible translates this verse as: “When a country is rebellious it has many princes, but by

¹⁴ David Tsumura further indicates that the “office of a judge was never hereditary like the priestly one. When Gideon was requested by the people to rule over them, he turned down that request, saying ‘I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you. The Lord will rule over you’” Ibid., 243.

¹⁵ For the sake of this paper, only few leaders will be assessed.

someone who is discerning and knowledgeable order is maintained.” In other words, a wise leader will maintain the order in a chaotic country. What are certain characteristics of the leaders that God had appointed over His people? It is vital at this point to note the characters of different leaders, the reason why they were appointed and what did they accomplish at the end of their term, because not every leader has the similar ability of another to guide people.

Moses

Moses was one of the unique leaders that God had appointed in the Old Testament History. Beegle says that: “No portion of the Bible is more complex and vigorously debated than the story of Moses.” The chaotic situation was true when Moses went up to meet God on Mount Sinai. People chose to do what was right in their thinking and brought dishonor to God, who had brought them out of bondage. But to bring them out of bondage, God used

Moses.¹⁶ There were times when Moses was discouraged (Exodus 4-6), when he fetched excuses that he was not fit for the work that God has called him for (Exodus 3:1-10). Interesting point is that Moses did not notice initially that God has not told him to “go” but He said, “come,” a Qal Imperative. In other words, God was with Moses from the time He called him to accomplish His purpose.

Imagine what would have happened to the people of Israel if God did not call Moses and if Moses did not use the leadership abilities that God has given him. Moses impressed the people of Israel when they heard that he was confronting Pharaoh for their freedom from bondage. He also influenced them because of his step of faith and bravery. Moses not only impressed and influenced the Israelites, but he also invested his time in mentoring

¹⁶ Moses means, “to draw out;” See, Dewey M Beegle, "Moses (Person)," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 909-11.

Joshua, who led the Israelites to the promise land.¹⁷ What lessons can be learned from the leadership of Moses is that he delivered God's people from the Egyptian bondage was his *obedience, faith* and *bravery* and also his commitment in obey God's call and following His plan. Blackaby states:

Arguably the greatest leader in Old Testament history was Moses. However, he could not attribute his success to his own leadership abilities, for he was not naturally gifted as a leader. By his own admission, he was a poor public speaker (Exod. 4:10); he was inept at delegating (Exod. 18:13–27); he had a temper problem (Exod. 32:19; Num. 20:9–13). Worst of all, he was a murderer. Nevertheless, Moses' accomplishments as a spiritual leader came from the depth of his relationship with God, not from the strength of his personality.¹⁸

Joshua

Joshua was appointed as a leader after Moses. His job was to lead the people to the promise land, since Moses could not. One might wonder what would have made

¹⁷ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Most Powerful Minutes In A Leader's Day* (Nashville: Nelson Business, 2000), 208-09.

¹⁸ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2001), 94.

Joshua receive the privilege of leading the people of Israel after Moses. He could have rejected the offer, but he did not. Besides God's appointing Joshua to lead, it could be said that Moses faithfulness to God and to his calling have led Joshua to accept the great responsibility to guide the Israelites. John Maxwell says that Moses has mentored Joshua well. In other words, Moses was committed to raise another leader.¹⁹ He further states three summary points that: (1) Moses gave Joshua experience and application, (2) Moses gave Joshua encouragement and affirmation, and (3) Moses gave Joshua power and authority.²⁰

Even if a person is given all these such as experience, application, encouragement, affirmation, power and authority, that person may not have the ability or enough courage to surrender to the call. Ultimately, it is God-given ability and an act of obedience through faith, in

¹⁹ Ibid., 212.

²⁰ Ibid.

accepting a call to lead people. Undoubtedly, one can note that Joshua's faithfulness to Moses led him affirm and commission the next leader after him. He was also one of the "choice young men" of Moses.²¹ Deuteronomy 31:7 states, "And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it." (cf. Joshua 1). In Deuteronomy 34:9, the Scripture states: "And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses."

Joshua was also *faithful* to Moses (Numbers 11:24-30). Not only was he faithful, but also he was obedient to

²¹ New English Translation version renders מִשְׁעָרַת מִשְׁעָרָה as "one of his choice young men."

God., and faithful in his prayer life (Exodus 33:11). John Maxwell says: “From the beginning, Joshua had tried to do the right thing. He had tried to lead the people in the direction they should go.” Though initially the Israelites did not respect Joshua as their leader, yet Joshua tried and trained himself to be a person who stood strong to accomplish his goal, no matter what pressures he had faced from his people.²² Repeatedly, God has told Joshua to “be strong and of good courage” (Deut. 31:6, 9, 23; Joshua 1:6, 9, 18). Joshua’s courage and faith was portrayed several times when he was at war with his enemies. His courage was nothing but faith in action. He “always valued what was right over what was popular.”²³ The lessons that can be learned from Joshua are that a leader should be *faithful* to God and should have *courage* to carry on the

²² John C. Maxwell says that this probably is because of his tribal background, that Israelites did not really like or respect Joshua; See John C. Maxwell, 25.

²³ *Ibid.*, 26.

responsibility that God has appointed him to do. Joshua accepted the commission by faith, by bravery and by trusting that God was with him to lead His people to the promise land.

Joseph

Chapters 37-50 in the book of Genesis are intrinsically tied to the account of Joseph. One should not overlook the qualities of a leader in Joseph. Though the account includes many incidents such as Joseph being brought to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, and Joseph being arrested and sent to the prison. Many leadership qualities can be learned from the study of the character of Joseph. One of the essentials of this account is that Joseph dreamed a dream at the very young age (Genesis 37:5-10). His brothers hated him because of his vision and also because of their father's love toward him (Genesis 37:5), and his father rebuked him for sharing his dream with him (Genesis 37:10).

Can one find hope in a person who was rebuked by his family, and more significantly by his father who loved him dearly? Joseph may have been discouraged, but he did not lose the sight of his dream. He may have not known or understood the dream completely, but he understood in God's timing that his dream was about his future. Joseph was a long-term planner; he lived by faith (Heb. 11:22). He maintained his integrity, which was evident when he refused to obey his master's wife, when she asked him to lie with her a multiple times, and by fleeing from her presence (Genesis 39:7-9).

Unlike Moses, Joseph did not influence others; he faced many obstacles and trials in his life. But, he eventually became a leader. How did this happen? Before Joseph became a leader, he was *prepared* to become the leader he was. It took time for Joseph to mature, and this occurred in the most unlikely place-prison (Genesis 39:22-23). But, throughout the process, God was with him (cf.

Genesis 39:2). John Maxwell says: “Over the years, Joseph experienced betrayal, and he learned lessons in human nature, relationships, and leadership. The process molded his character. He developed patience and humility. And he began to recognize that God was his source of blessing and power.”²⁴ He was a handsome man (Genesis 39:6). God had blessed him in a way that he enjoyed a luxurious life while he was in Potiphar’s house. Though he enjoyed his life with great blessings, Joseph’s character was put to test; he faced critical situation where he needs to make a quick situation (Genesis 39:7). At this crucial moment, Joseph portrayed his real character. He showed his integrity.

John C. Maxwell states: “Only in testing do people discover the nature and depth of their character. People *can* say anything they want about their values, but when the pressure is on, they discover what their values really are.”²⁵

²⁴ See John C. Maxwell, 40.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

This is true in Joseph's situation. One may ask, what qualities of leadership can be learned from Joseph story? His story teaches that a leader should have a dream or a vision to fulfill, and it should be carried out through integrity and faithfulness, having his assurance in the Lord, who is the ultimate provider, leader, guide and strength.

Samson

Samson was one of the intriguing characters in the Bible. He was so blessed with might and strength! Yet, his life's ending was very weak and clearly had a disastrous culmination. One might ask: Why should his life end in such a way? Does he not have any character or leadership qualities? If he had, did he lose them eventually? Samson was a blessed child. Judges 13:5 indicates that the angel of the LORD said, "For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." Samson

portrayed his power and strength at several occasions: He killed a lion with a bare hand; he struck a thousand men with a donkey's jawbone (Judges 15:16). He terrified many Philistines, and he judged for twenty years (Judges 15:20). Though the beginning of his account was outstanding, he did not maintain that till his death. This outstanding personality lost his persona because he did what was right in his own eyes, just as the Israelites were doing. "He blindly went into bondage with foreigners."²⁶ Soon he became the foil instead of protagonist.²⁷

The issue with Samson was his character. His ill relationships with women, and his unhealthy relationships with his fellow people had affected his life's course and his leadership. Samson lost trust from his people. John C.

²⁶ Instead of Samson, Delilah became the protagonist; See Michael J. Smith, "The Failure of the Family in Judges, Part 2: Samson," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, BSAC 162:648 (Oct 2005), 433, (accessed through Galaxy Software Electronic Publishing on 8.20.2012), <http://pbcweb.pbc.edu:2052/article/5861?highlight=Samson%20and%20Leadership>

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 434.

Maxwell states that “His despicable character made him untrustworthy, and that destroyed his leadership.”²⁸ He did not learn from his mistakes, rather he continued in doing wrong, knowing that he was doing wrong, and assuming that he would stop what he was doing.

A leader cannot assume that he can resolve his personal problems eventually, as the days go by; he needs to resolve issues that will hinder him to be a strong leader, immediately. Samson drifted away from God because of his wrong desires and motivations. His life was filled with crooked thoughts and directions. He could have turned back from his filthy ways, but he did not. Instead, he hiked in his own ways. He took the abilities and gifts that God has given him for granted, which is a vital issue in a leader’s life. A leader cannot take the gifts that God has given him, carelessly. A leader should not lose sight from God’s agenda and move toward his personal agenda.

²⁸ See John C. Maxwell, 84.

Instead, a leader must acknowledge that God gave him the gifts for a reason, and that is for His purpose. Samson, interestingly, never indicated that God was his strength.²⁹ From Samson's account, one can learn that a leader cannot be disobedient to God; he cannot take God's gifts for granted; his lifestyle should not be immersed in filth and sexual relations, nor seek his own direction and will. He must, rather, seek God, His direction to guide God's people, and build trust with the people that God has placed under him.

Nehemiah

For one hundred and twenty years, the people of Jerusalem did not do anything regarding the wall that was destroyed by the Chaldeans (later called Babylonians).³⁰ When Nehemiah, the governor of Judah during the Persian

²⁹ See John C. Maxwell, 90.

³⁰ Richard S. Hess, "Chaldea (Place)," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 886.

period (mid-5th century),³¹ heard from his brother, Hanani (Nehemiah 1:2) that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down and its gates were destroyed, he wept and mourned for days, continuing in fasting and praying to God (Nehemiah 1:4). One might think why would the people of Jerusalem did not take any form of action to rebuild the temple? The reason could be that it might have been impossible task from their point of view to rebuild it or that they do not have any motivation, or there was no one to motivate them to rebuild the wall! This gives the notion that they need a leader who could motivate them and lead them to this great task! Nehemiah was self-motivated, and had a great vision that this task, in deed, can be done! His great *vision* made him see what others cannot see; he saw the accomplishment of the rebuilding the wall. Though he

³¹ Mark A. Throntveit, "Nehemiah," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 957.

faced many problems in the process of accomplishing the task, by God's help, he accomplished it.

Most significant element in Nehemiah leadership is that he did not seek his own ability to restore the wall; rather, he sought God's help in fasting and praying. He then was motivated to restore the wall. Nehemiah was a leader with *vision*; he was a man of prayer. When Nehemiah heard from his brother, he was burdened, and instantly he prayed! The burden he had for his people, gave him the vision to rebuild.³² He later shared his vision with the people in order to take further step. People who understand the burden of a leader and help the leader can certainly see the results. The leadership of Nehemiah teaches that a leader should first seek God; he must have a prayerful life, and he must have a *vision*. Warren Weirsbe states:

The Book of Nehemiah starts and ends with prayer. And in between, Nehemiah often sends up quick prayers to heaven and asks for God's help. Nehemiah was the royal governor of the province,

³² See, John C. Maxwell, 54-55.

with all the authority and wealth of the king behind him; but he depended solely on God to help him finish the work. The Christian worker who can get along comfortably without prayer isn't getting much done for God and certainly isn't threatening the enemy too much. "To be a Christian without prayer," said Martin Luther, "is no more possible than to be alive without breathing."³³

Though he has never been to Jerusalem, he "envisioned a wall around Jerusalem," and "his vision became the first step in that wall becoming a reality."³⁴

The Personality Traits of A Leader

Regarding the personality traits, Peter Drucker states:

A single universal 'leadership personality' or set of 'leadership traits' simply does not exist. Name a leadership trait that seems "absolutely essential" to being an effective leader, and someone else can name ten situations of effective leadership where the leaders don't have those personality traits. Effective leadership is best understood not by focusing upon personality traits in the leader, but

³³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Determined*, (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1996), 151.

³⁴ See, John Kramp, *On Track Leadership: Mastering What Leaders Actually Do* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 15.

upon the relationship between the leader and those being led?”³⁵

While it is true that an effective leader should be evaluated based on the relationship between him and his people, personality traits do exist. This is simply because God did not create human beings with equal qualities or abilities. In other words, not everyone has similar capabilities as others.³⁶ One can say that there are some basic traits that a leader *should* have in order for people to follow him. After all, a leader’s goal should be to guide his people. If there is no one to follow a leader, can he be a leader in the first place?³⁷ Therefore, one can argue that

³⁵ “Effective Leadership in the Church: A training tool to help congregations, pastors, and other church leaders effectively work together to accomplish God’s mission,” (Kalamazoo Avenue SE Grand Rapids, MI 49560), accessed on 5/8/2012 http://www.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/spe/spe_effectiveleadership.pdf, 18.

³⁶ See John Kramp, *On Track Leadership: Mastering What Leaders Actually Do*, 105.

³⁷ See, Henry Blackaby, and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 86.

there are certain basic traits that one should have in order to become a leader.

Character

Character is one of the essential traits that a leader should have. One can notice in the life of Samson that his character was corrupt and pervert. He had anger issues, he was not teachable, and he had many sexual relationships. He did not build relationships with people based on trust, because, one should notice that “Leadership is ultimately based on trust.”³⁸ For one to be a leader, he must have a character that resembles godliness. A leader’s failure is often related to a character flaw. One can gain respect from others or some level of trust based on their positions. But this trust or respect that is gained based on the positions cannot last for a long time, unless and only if the character is “flawless.” It is true that every human was and is born in

³⁸ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 104.

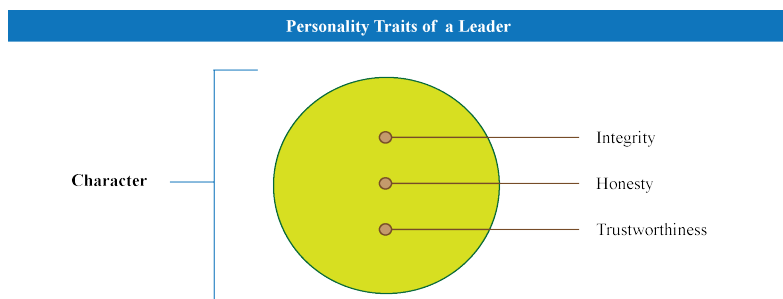
sin nature, but at the same time, God, through His word, gave the necessary guidelines for a leader to follow (1 Timothy 3:1-7). Blackaby states: “Today most leadership experts agree that character, or integrity, is foundational to business and leadership success.”³⁹

In today’s generation, many follow a leader because of the leader’s promises and commitments, and most importantly, his character. Character is like a body that has many members. Character, according to Oxford Dictionary states that it is “the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual;” it is a “person’s good reputation.”⁴⁰ In the secular world, politicians will work hard in gaining peoples trust. They do so in making oaths and commitments. If they fulfill what they have promised for, then people would always want to elect the same person. But, in the spiritual

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), n.a

world, it is different. Unlike the secular world and secular leadership, spiritual leadership is distinctive because of an important Person that is involved in it: God. People respect their leader or pastor, because of the office he is holding to, and also because of his character. If a pastor is noticed with flaws in his character, undoubtedly, members will, either seek to speak with him or walk away from that Church. With the trait of character, a leader, if he possesses it, will build trust with his people by having integrity, by being honest.



Lacking one of the elements in the character will cost a leader in losing his people, whom God has placed under him. Therefore, character is essential.

Attitude

With character comes attitude. In other words, if one's character is right, based on his walk with the Lord, then his attitude toward them that are under him will be right as well. If a leader succeeds in his role accomplishes his vision, he must not boast in it, thinking that it is his "own" accomplishment. Rather, he must acknowledge that he was successful because of the blessings and help that he received from his authority: Jesus Christ. A leader should submit to Christ as his authority. He must notice that a person to become a leader cannot be achieved on his own, but that it can only be achieved through submission to Christ, and thus receiving guidance and help from God. People not only notice the character of a leader but also his attitude toward God and toward his flock. A leader might gain much popularity or respect, but if his attitude does not match with his character, then there is a danger to his leadership role.

Leadership Distinctives

Unlike the secular leadership and its purpose, spiritual leadership is very distinctive and unique. It is distinctive and it is unique because God's involvement is the chief aspect of spiritual leadership. Therefore, spiritual leadership is distinctive in its influence, in its position, in its Source, in its ambition, in its motivation and in its nature.

Distinctive As To Its Influence

Leadership can also be defined as *influence*.⁴¹ But the question is: What is that a leadership role ought to influence? The response for this question is rather simple: people! Influence can be understood in two ways. A leader can influence his followers, either for good or for bad, or either with good intention or with bad intention. Blackaby states: "*The spiritual leader's task is to move people from*

⁴¹ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Most Powerful Minutes In A Leader's Day* (Nashville: Nelson Business, 2000), 136.

*where they are to where God wants them to be.*⁴² But what does this mean? There is a plan that God has for His people, and the calling of a leader is absolutely to accomplish God's plan by His help. In the story of Exodus, Moses was called by God to accomplish His plan. He was called to bring God's people out of bondage. Moses influenced his people in a right way. In today's world, believers are in need of spiritual leaders who can teach them the truths from the Scripture and move them toward God's purpose by their influence.

Many churches do lack spiritual leaders who would guide them in a right direction, because, most leaders are influencing their congregations with much of unnecessary church politics, or Church growth programs,⁴³ instead of

⁴² Emphasis original; See, Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 20.

⁴³ There is nothing wrong in Church-growth programs as long as the Church is spiritually growing and heading toward God's purposes. Pastors and members should witness, win people to Christ and bring them to Church for edification, but leaving aside the necessary things, one should not seek to grow his Church. There is always a danger for such activities; for instance: what if a Church of fifty members add

influencing people with God's purpose. Blackaby states: "The greatest obstacle to effective spiritual leadership is people pursuing their own agendas rather than seeking God's will."⁴⁴ Only when a leader perceives that spiritual leadership is distinct in its influence, then only would he be able to accomplish his call and vision in moving people from where they are to where God wants them to be, with a right influence.

Distinctive As to Its Position

One cannot assume that a leader is in the highest position of all. A true-humble leader will acknowledge that Christ is the highest position of all, because the Scriptures states that "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers:

another fifty, and only later the newly added fifty members came to know that there is no proper leadership in that Church?

⁴⁴ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 23.

all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col. 1:16-17).

John 13:13 states: “Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.”⁴⁵ Here, Jesus Christ commends His disciples for acknowledging Him as Master and Lord. The phrase ὑμεῖς φωνεῖτέ με· ὁ διδάσκαλος, καὶ ὁ κύριος, “You are calling me *the* Teacher and *the* Lord,” not only states that the disciples called Him the Master/Teacher and *the* Lord, but Christ Himself is indicating the *certainty* that, in deed, He is *the Master, the Lord*, by a Present Indicative verb. Christ is also the “head of the Church.” In Ephesians 4:15, the Scripture indicates that Christ is “the head.” This headship includes the authority of Christ and also requires the submission of the Church to its authority (Eph. 5:24). A leader should also

⁴⁵ The noun διδάσκαλος is translated as Master in King James Version; it should be rendered as “teacher.”

acknowledge that he is not in control of situations, but Christ is, and he must be submissive to Christ.

Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians indicated that his authority is Christ: “For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.” The noun “*παραγγελίας*” translated as “commandments,” has connotation of carrying a message. Spicq states: “According to its etymology, the first meaning of *parangelo* is “announce from one to another,” hence, pass the word within the group, give a password, pass along a notice, communicate a message.”⁴⁶ Horst says that the noun *παραγγελίας* with the verb *ἔδώκαμεν*, from *διδωμι*, which is a Hellenistic paraphrase, “used together to intensify the statement.”⁴⁷ Therefore, the statement Paul made to the Thessalonian Church indicates not only that he gave them commandments, but also that it

⁴⁶ See Spicq Ceslas, *Theological Dictionary of New Testament*, trans, James D. Ernest (Electronic Text by OakTree Software, Inc, 1994), 3:9.

⁴⁷ Robert Balz Horst, and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 17.

was “through” Jesus Christ, specifying His authority.

William Lawrence states: “Paul’s ability to lead grew out of his submission to Christ as Leader.”⁴⁸

People notice a leader’s path based on his walk with the Lord. A Christian leader should acknowledgment that Christ is in the highest position and should be submissive to His Word, which being one of the essential steps to be a great leader. Therefore, Spiritual leadership is unique and distinct in its position, because *Christ* is its *authority*.

Distinctive As to Its Source

One might ask: What is the source of leadership? Are leaders born or made? How can one become a leader? The statement that leaders are both born and made is mostly held today. But this is doubtful. There are certainly some characters in the Bible that indicates the gift of

⁴⁸ William D. Lawrence, “Distinctives of Christian Leadership,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144:575 (Jul 1987), 318, <http://pbweb.pbc.edu:2052/article/5237>, accessed 5/8/2012, under “Theological Journals.”

leadership, but are they *born with* the leadership ability is in question.⁴⁹ Joseph was one of the leaders who had a *vision* in his early age. He had a dream from God that he would, one day lead his ten brothers (Gen. 37:5-11). Similarly, about Samson, another leader in the Old Testament history was told that he would deliver Israelites out of bondage from the Philistines, by an announcement made by an angel, before his birth (Judges 13:5). Regarding these examples, one can argue: since *God*, according to His plan, has appointed Joseph and Samson to accomplish His purposes, He gave them the ability to lead. Therefore, to argue that a person is *born with* the ability to lead is still a question.⁵⁰

Another interesting character in the Old Testament history is Nehemiah. One could ask: Was Nehemiah gifted

⁴⁹ See, Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, 31.

⁵⁰ Blackaby states that “Religious leaders are seeking the answer” to such questions; Ibid.

with leadership or did he *learn* to lead through his experiences? Certainly, the Scriptures did not indicate that Nehemiah took time to learn nor did the Scriptures mention that God gifted the leadership competence. But Scripture stated that Nehemiah had great relationship with God. The first thing he did was he wept and prayed to God, by showing his complete dependence on God (Nehemiah 1:4). It could be argued that God might have given him the vision to accomplish the rebuilding of the wall. Therefore, one can say that Nehemiah was neither gifted (initially) nor was born as a leader. But, it is evident from the Scriptures that his source was God. If a leader's source is the leader himself, there can be a danger of self-boasting and disastrous ending, just as Samson's leadership was. Undoubtedly, in Nehemiah's leadership role, his authority was God. Therefore, a leader's *source* should be God or from God.

From the New Testament perspective, Scriptures clearly indicates that the *source of gifts* is God. 1 Corinthians 12:7 states: “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” It indicates that the *Holy Spirit* manifests the gifts. Thiselton states that the “present passive indicative δίδοται,” in “ἐκάστῳ δὲ δίδοται ἢ φανέρωσις τοῦ πνεύματος πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον,” is “**given**, presupposes the agency of God.”⁵¹ It reflects “both a continuous process of giving, and the sovereignty of God in choosing and in freely giving.”⁵² The term “φανέρωσις” means to display, manifest or an active exhibition. It could also mean, “public manifestation,” or “becoming visible,”⁵³ and it modifies “πνεύματος,” the Spirit. Therefore, it is

⁵¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 936.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ See, Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1915.

evident based on the Scripture that gifts are given by the Holy Spirit. Blackaby states: “*Spiritual leaders depend on the Holy Spirit*. Spiritual leaders work within a paradox, for God calls them to do something that, in fact, only God can do. Ultimately, spiritual leaders cannot produce spiritual change in people; only the Holy Spirit can accomplish this.”⁵⁴

In Romans 12:6, the Scripture states: “Having the gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, *let us prophesy* according to the proportion of faith.” The phrase “ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα,” is translated as, “having different gifts,” with a Present Participle, which indicates the *certainty* of “having gifts.” In other words, believers are given gifts, but not necessarily all are given the gift of leadership. Morris Leon states: “*Different* brings out the truth that God does not make

⁵⁴ Emphasis original; See, Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 21.

Christians into a collection of uniform automata. They differ from one another both in their native endowments and also in the gifts that God gives them through the Spirit. The differences are not arbitrary but *according to the grace given us.*⁵⁵ One should acknowledge that the *source* of the leadership gift is the Holy Spirit.⁵⁶ Peter was bold and *fearless* when he proclaimed Christ according to Acts 4:8-12. Therefore, he was a leader by virtue of boldness. Wisdom can be noticed from the speech given by James in Acts 15:12-21; therefore, James was a leader by virtue of wisdom. Paul was a leader by the virtue of his intellectual ability as can be noticed from his epistles, and Timothy by the virtue of his service according to Phil. 2:20. All these leaders have virtues but they are not identical, and they all

⁵⁵ Emphasis original; In the footnotes, Morris states that “διάφορος can have the meaning “excelling, excellent”, but here it has rather the primary meaning of ‘different’” See, Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 440.

⁵⁶ This is not to say that the Holy Spirit does not give other gifts.

claim that their source is God. Unlike the secular leaders whose source can be secular leaders or secular books, the *source* of spiritual leadership is God. Therefore, it is distinctive and unique as to its *source*.

Distinctive As to Its Ambition

Oxford Dictionary defines ambition as: “a strong desire to do or achieve something or a desire and determination to achieve success.”⁵⁷ Having ambition is a necessary thing in a leader. It is an essential aspect of leadership, which will *drive* a leader in his course. William Lawrence states that ambition “is the *fuel* of leadership.”⁵⁸ If there is no ambition or a strong desire to achieve what the leader had a vision for, then the leaders will not see the results. Blackaby indicates that a leader who is on a new position “must ask themselves: Where should this

⁵⁷ See, Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), n.a.

⁵⁸ See William D. Lawrence, 321.

organization be going?” He further states that “this question may see ridiculously simplistic, but it is amazing how leaders become so focused on the journey they lose sight of the destination.”⁵⁹ Every leader *must* have a clear goal to be an effective leader and in order to lead his people. For instance, one can notice from the leadership of Nehemiah that he did not visit Jerusalem before he began the task, but he knew that the task would be completed. He saw what others did not see, his final goal or his sight of the destination was unwavering, though some rulers troubled his desire and goal. When he spoke about his vision, he made it clear that his goal was to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Not only did he share his vision, but also his vision and goal was with a right aim.

Even in academic settings, a professor prepares a class syllabus and notes, considering the end result that a

⁵⁹ See Blackaby, Henry and Richard Blackaby. *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 120-21.

student would learn certain subject when he successfully finishes his course. Therefore, one can notice the ambition of a professor is to help a student reach the goal, by setting a goal to the course. William Lawrence states that “there is no problem with ambition in itself; the problem with ambition lies in its aim, not in its strength and its presence.”⁶⁰

For instance, Mark 10:35-45 gives a clearer picture of an ill ambition. When the disciples, James and John came to Jesus and asked Him to make them sit one on the right and one on the left, Jesus did not rebuke them. But he answered that they do not know what they were asking, and pointed out that their aim was not right. Their ambition was ill because their question to Jesus has a connotation of a “specific request” that they have in mind; their request

⁶⁰ See William D. Lawrence, 323.

brought discredit upon them.⁶¹ This is evident by the aorist tenses used in this verse: “αἰτήσωμέν and ποιήσης.”⁶²

William Lawrence states: “This passage shows ambition at its worst and its best. In James, John and the other disciples, all of whom sought the highest position for themselves, ambition is seen as self-centered, competitive, assertive, thoughtless, arrogant, proud and blind.”⁶³

Many leaders today set goals and rush toward that goal. What destroys a leader is leaning more or looking forward to *end results*. Leading an organization or a congregation is not as simple as turning the power switch on and off. It is a step-by-step process. If a leader focuses more on the results, then his leadership role will always remain weak, and there will be no guarantee that the leader

⁶¹ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 378.

⁶² Edwards, James R. *The Gospel According to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Apollos, 2002), 321.

⁶³ See William D. Lawrence, 323.

will achieve his goal. Even the secular leaders realize, says Blackaby, that “organizational leadership involves far more than merely reaching goals.”⁶⁴

The aim of a spiritual leader should not be looking for end results, but it is to lead step-by-step process and by building relationships, so that they can “take people from where they are to where God wants them to be. God’s primary concern is not results but relationship.”⁶⁵ Paul, according to Romans 15:20 states that his ambition was to “preach the gospel.” His utmost desire is to share the good news in the places where Christ was never heard! Paul wants to share the gospel and have a relationship in Christ with the people. If a leader wants to be successful in his leadership role, he must maintain the relationship with

⁶⁴ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 121.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

people. Results will come when relationships are right.

Results will develop when his aim is appropriate.

Distinctive As to Its Motivation

Motivation and ambition are not synonymous.

These two are different aspects in a leadership role.

Ambition is a desire to achieve something, where as motivation is the “reason for doing something.”⁶⁶ One

might ask: What is the motivation of a certain leader?

Many, in the secular world might have a motivation to rule

over his fellow workers or people. But, a spiritual leader’s

motivation should not be likewise. He should be motivated

by love and concern. Only then a leader can effectively

lead. For instance, if a leader accepts a position to run an

organization, having set goals for that organization, the

results may not occur because of the mishandling the power

and authority. The “do-what-I-say” attitude will not

⁶⁶ See Oxford Dictionary, na.

encourage or help any organization or a Church to grow or to travel towards the right path. It will destroy the Church or the organization.

In Romans 12: 8, the Scripture states: “Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, *let him do it* with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.” Speaking of spiritual gifts, Paul indicates clearly that the one who rules should rule with diligence. The term, “προϊστάμενος” means the one that is leading, ruling, directing. It also means, to precede, to stand before, to have interest in, to show concern for, to care for and to give aid.⁶⁷ But, based on the context, it means that the one who is in an office of leadership.⁶⁸ Douglas Moo states:

The word may denote a person who presides over something or a person who comes to the aid of

⁶⁷ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), n.a.

⁶⁸ Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 157.

others. Noting that Paul sandwiches this gift between two others that refer to giving, some commentators argue for the latter meaning. But the meaning “give aid” is not well attested for this verb, and Paul does not appear to use the verb with this meaning elsewhere. Probably, then, we should translate “one who presides.” But presides over what? Paul does not say, and this leads a few scholars to think that Paul may intend to denote any person who is in a position of leadership, whether that be in the home or the church. Others try to do justice to the context by arguing that Paul is referring to those persons who presided over the charitable work of the church.⁶⁹

More interestingly, this verb is used six times in the Pastoral Epistles. Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 and 1 Timothy 5:17 uses this verb to clearly denote the *leaders* of the local church.⁷⁰ It should also be noted that the verb προϊστάμενος in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 is not referring to the *rank* or *authority* but the efforts of the leader toward those that follow him. Therefore, a leader’s motivation to lead

⁶⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 768.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

others should be consisted of love and concern for the *better* of his people.

Distinctive As to Its Nature

This distinctive is rather difficult one in the leadership role. Both secular and Christian leaders struggle with this aspect. Spiritual leadership is distinct in its nature because, a leader should have a *servant* attitude in order to lead his followers. Blackaby states: “Perhaps the greatest Christian influence on leadership theory has been in the area of “servant leadership.”⁷¹ One might say: If a leader must have a servant attitude, how then, can he lead his people? A servant is lower in rank than his authority; a servant cannot commit his work or plans according to his will, but only rely on his authority or master for all of his situations. It is true that a servant is lower than his authority in position, therefore, he must do what he was commanded

⁷¹ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 164.

to do. In spiritual leader's role, his authority is ultimately Jesus Christ! A leader should and must do the will of Christ. He must obey what Christ has commanded him to do. A leader must also acknowledge that Christ Himself was indicated as "servant" in Phil. 2:7. In fact, one of the best chapters that portrayed the true servant leader is John 13:1-17, where Jesus Himself washed the feet of His disciples. In Mark 10:45, Jesus Himself said: "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to *minister*, and to give his life a ransom for many" (emphasis added). Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:5 states: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." The term "servant" or "δούλους" in figurative sense "designates the individual in his or her *relationship of dependence and service* toward God, the absolute Lord." It also means the one who *serve* Christ (especially in 2 Cor. 4:5). But, Paul clarifies that the "we" are your *servants* "for" *Jesus' sake*. Therefore, Paul

emphasizes that the nature of their leadership resides in the authority was Christ!

Does not the term “servant” give a notion that is undignified? Certainly! But when one is in the service of the Lord, and acknowledges the nature of his service, then they would understand that a leader’s position is a position of honor. A servant leader is not someone who will do what the followers want him to do for them, but what Christ wants the servant leader to do for the sake of Christ.

William Lawrence gives the definition of a servant as follows: “a servant is someone under the authority of another who voluntarily serves for that one’s benefit with a spirit of humble dependence and who finds his freedom, fulfillment, and significance in the limits of his service.”⁷²

If a spiritual leader’s attitude toward his call and his people is filled with arrogance, would he be able to lead?

Definitely not! No Church or an organization wants

⁷² See William D. Lawrence, 327.

someone as a leader who could show his *superior* attitude toward them. Instead, they want a leader who will humbly look after them, exemplifying Christ in and through him.

A true leader is someone who will love his people with Christlike love. This love will place trust in people's heart and make them follow their leader. Blackaby states: "the love Jesus showed his disciples (even Judas, whose feet he washed as thoroughly and lovingly as the other eleven) that brought him lifelong loyalty from his followers. Because of Jesus' *unfathomable* love for his disciples, the eleven would eventually follow Jesus unwaveringly, even when such loyalty was rewarded with *martyrdom*" (emphasis added).⁷³ Therefore, spiritual leadership is unique in its nature.

⁷³ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 165.

The Purpose of Leadership

If there is no purpose, then what is the leader called for? Is there anything for a leader to accomplish, if there is no purpose? Or will there be any leader called to lead, if the purpose does not exist? Certainly, a leader who is called to lead should have a purpose so that he can lead. The reason why God would call someone to lead His people is to accomplish His plan.

From the very beginning of the history of mankind there was a need for a leader. After mankind had sinned against God, He did not abandon them; rather, he appointed leaders to lead them, by calling men from Abraham's descendants,⁷⁴ because God knew what He had to do for a scattered and a perplexed people. Throughout the Scriptures, the necessity of leaders is evident. But for God to appoint the leaders and called them to accomplish what

⁷⁴ The genealogies that were given in the Scriptures have a reason; beginning from the Abraham's descendants, God has called many leaders to lead His people to accomplish His plan.

He called them for, there must be a plan! Ephesians 1:11 certainly gives one, a perspective of why one needs to consider the fact that God has a plan: “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the *purpose* of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (emphasis added). This passage helps one perceive the inclusiveness of God’s plan and that He is working out His plan! The author of the book of Hebrews states that God has spoken to the mankind in many ways, and at many times through prophets, and in the last days that He has spoken by His Son, according to Hebrew 1:1-2⁷⁵. This indicates that God has a plan and that He shared His a plan through many means!

One might ask: What is God’s plan? Certainly there are some mysteries only God knows (Deut. 29:29). He

⁷⁵ “GOD, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”

revealed what mankind needs to know. His ultimate plan, as the Scriptures reveal, is to redeem mankind, who are made in His image, from the bondage of sin, so that He can be glorified (John 17:4-5). His plan is not only to redeem men from sin, but also that people would turn from their self-centered programs toward God-centered programs. Blackaby states: “*Spiritual leaders work from God’s agenda*. The greatest obstacle to effective spiritual leadership is people pursuing their own agendas rather than seeking God’s will. God is working throughout the world to achieve his purposes and to advance his kingdom. God’s concern is not to advance leaders’ dreams and goals or to build their kingdoms. His purpose is to turn his people away from their self-centeredness and their sinful desires and to draw them into a relationship with himself.”⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 23.

When Jesus Christ came into the world, He did not have a set plan, His agenda was to do the Father's will. He was not astonished at the world and the wickedness that was in the world, and therefore planned accordingly. Rather, He simply sought to fulfill the Father's will. He knew about the sin and the sinful nature of men, and what it takes to lead them to heaven. Luke 2:52 indicates that Jesus "increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." He developed His relationship with the Father and with the people around Him. He devoted His time to train His disciples and so that the disciples can carry out the His mission: spreading the gospel.⁷⁷ According to Matthew 28:19-20, Christ commissioned His disciples to "teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

⁷⁷ Mark 1:37-38 states: "And when they had found him, they said unto him, All *men* seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth."

What one should comprehend is that Jesus came to this world *only to accomplish Father's will!*

Therefore, the purpose of leadership is that God would ultimately redeem those that believe in Him, and move His people from their own agendas to God's agendas, so that He will receive the glory.

CONCLUSION

Spiritual leadership is a gift given by God to accomplish His purposes! A spiritual leader understands that God is his Source and that He is the *ultimate leader*. He understands that the role of spiritual leadership is unique and distinctive from secular leadership because he accepts God's mission and make it as his mission. He surrenders his life to God, and move along with God's agenda. His priorities will be accomplishing the purpose of God, which is the reason why God calls out leaders.

Blackaby states:

The key is not for leaders to develop visions and to set the direction for their organizations. The key is to obey and to preserve everything the Father reveals to them of his will. Ultimately, the Father is the leader. God has the vision of what He wants to do. God does not ask leaders to dream big dreams for him or to solve the problems that confront them. He asks leaders to walk with him so intimately that, when he reveals what is on his agenda, they will immediately adjust their lives to his will and the results will bring glory to God.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*, 29.

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