

QUESTIONS CHRISTIANS ASK

WILL YOU LEAD OR LAG?

EXODUS 18:1-27; 1 CORINTHIANS 14:33



The Heart of the Matter

The ministry of a local church resembles an iceberg, not because it's cold and clumsy but because much of what goes on happens beneath the surface, away from public awareness. Every significant ministry survives because of faithful, consistent, dedicated servant-leaders. While some of the leaders have highly visible positions, known and seen by many, most do their work behind the scenes, seldom recognized or applauded by the public.

Just as an iceberg reveals only a tenth of its mass above water, so the visible leadership of a church only comprises a small portion of its ministry. Whether or not you fill a visible role, God cares about good leadership—the kind mentioned in Scripture, modeled by men and women who served their generations with integrity and refused to lag behind because of pressure, demands, or ingratitude. God still requires the same kind of leadership today to sustain His ministry. Strong and determined yet gracious and godly are the qualities we witness in those we will study in this lesson.



Discovering the Way

1. Statement of What Pleases God (1 Corinthians 14:33)

God is pleased when things are handled according to good organizational principles. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul attempts to correct the disorder and confusion that had stifled the first-century church at Corinth. Let's learn why confusion displeases God and why He prefers order.



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2. Principles for Good Leadership (Exodus 18)

Moses is one of the most visible leaders in the Old Testament. In fact, four books trace his career: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And one entire chapter in Exodus focuses on his leadership style. In this chapter, we see Moses's need for organization and how God used a wise man to teach Moses some important principles for good leadership, such as:

- One person, no matter how gifted, can't do a big job all alone (nor should he or she try).
- Highly visible leaders are still needed, but their role must be limited.
- Accomplishing a big task is a job for many . . . but each person should be selected carefully.
- When there is proper management, leaders don't wear out and harmony prevails.



DIGGING DEEPER

*Leader as Intercessor*¹

Deuteronomy 9 recounts Israel's rebellion in spite of God's lavish provision and faithfulness to His covenant. When Aaron led the people in an idolatrous building project, God put His foot down. He intended to destroy Aaron and all of Israel, but Moses interceded. After Moses's outburst of anger toward the people, in which he destroyed the tablets of the Ten Commandments, he prayed. For forty days and nights, Moses lay prostrate before God and begged Him to show mercy (Exodus 32:11-13). And God answered Moses's prayer.

Moses modeled through prayer the Christian leader's response to disobedience and immorality both inside and outside the church. In humility, we should plead with God for justice and mercy. So the next time you get upset at the latest celebrity infidelity or church scandal, don't gossip. Instead, pray. "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed" (James 5:16).

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Starting Your Journey

God has established several leadership roles in the church. Those who fill these roles must lead effectively and must be chosen according to the guidelines outlined in Scripture. Character, not popularity, reflects God's criteria for leaders. Officers, pastors, elders, and leaders must not simply operate efficiently in their areas of responsibility; they must serve as models for the rest of us. And we must willingly follow those whom God has placed over us.

If God has placed you in a leadership role, how can you model His character to others? If you do not occupy a leadership role, how can you lighten your leaders' loads?

ENDNOTE

1. Adapted from Insight for Living, "Deuteronomy," in *Insight's Bible Application Guide: Genesis–Deuteronomy—A Life Lesson from Every Chapter* (Plano, Tex.: IFL Publishing House, 2012), 123–24.