

## Leadership Living

1. Person

2. People

3. Purpose

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West Valley Church  
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June 16, 2019

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These are real, documented names of historically verified people and the jobs that they held. Believe it or not, these are true:

- At one time, there was a commissioner of education in the Virgin Islands by the name of Mr. A Moron.
- Also, there was an archbishop of Manila who held the title of “cardinal,” and so his title and his last name was Cardinal Sin.
- There was a banker by the name of Furman Grip.
- A man was an undertaker, and his name was Groaner Digger.
- A man who ran an ice business was named IC Shivers. (I’m not making these up! I found these in the library with actual historical references for each one!)
- A firm of attorneys was named by the last names of the two partners: Lawless and Lynch.
- Also, two plumbers opened a business by their last names: Plummer and Leek.
- Mrs. Screech was a singing teacher.
- There was a detective agency went by the last name of the two owners: Wyre and Tapping.
- There was a doctor by the name of Zoltan Ovary (I’ll let you guess what kind of doctor he was).
- There were two bankers by the names of Cheatham and Steale.
- There was a dentist by the name of Dr. Gargle,
- and, there was listed over 50 doctors with the last name, “Doctor.”

I would think that if you were born with the last name “Doctor,” you probably had a sense that you actually could or should be a doctor some day. Often our names help determine who we become. In the Bible, people were often named to represent their character. Long before Duane Johnson took the name “the Rock” as his professional wrestling persona, a fisherman by the name of Simon made a great profession of faith declaring that he recognized Jesus as the Son of God, to which Jesus said:

“Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.”  
(Matthew 16:18, nlt)

Jesus named him “Rock” not because he was a good wrestler, but because that profession was the solid rock foundation of the Christian faith. He went from being a hard head to the Rock, and Peter would go on to become the first preacher and

leader of the Christian Church. Wishy-washy, unreliable Simon would become solid as a rock Peter.

How about Saul of Tarsus – a pious, radical terrorist Jewish religious zealot, who God got ahold of by literally kicking him off his high horse in Acts 9, who then became “Paul.” Paul is a Greek name for this devout Jew, because God was sending him to reach the Greeks and Romans with the Great News that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had sent his one and only Son to die for them, that they could be in relationship with God as his children. Speaking of Abraham, God changed his name from “Abram,” which means “exalted father,” to “Abraham,” which means “Father of many” because from Abraham God would create a world-wide family of faith.

So what does this have to do with you? When you become a believer in Jesus, you have a name as well. Jesus said in John 10:3 that:

“[God] calls his own sheep by name...” (John 10:3, niv)

...and through Isaiah God says:

“I have engraved your name on the palm of my hands...” (Isaiah 49:16, niv)

God has a name that destines *you* for great things, and that name, as a re-born child of God, is “Christian.”

Why am I telling you this? Because last week God was present in powerful ways as we praised him and prayed to him for his Holy Spirit filling us with more and more of himself. Today we want to see what that means for our lives – what the trajectory of your life will now be because of God’s presence in your life. And, on this day that we celebrate the graduates and Father’s Day, I think this is a good message for our grads and dads as they think about what’s ahead. Normally as you know, I’ll preach from a main passage of Scripture, and we’ll do that starting in July with our series “Summer in the Psalms,” where we’ll learn more about the depth and richness of prayer. But for today, I believe God wants us to consider carrying out “Leadership Living.”

I would never say I’ve arrived as a leader, but I would say that I’m always trying to be a good learner of leadership. I have literally hundreds of books on leadership in my library. I attended a three-year course through Asbury Seminary called the Institute for Advanced Church Leadership. My second master’s degree was in Missional Leadership. The book I’m trying to write is about leadership lessons from one of my favorite books of the Bible – Nehemiah in the Old Testament, which is a great lesson on what to do and what not to do. *And I firmly believe that every single Spirit-filled believer in Jesus is a leader.* Maybe you’ve bought into the world’s and business’ definition of leadership and so you think you are not a leader; you might think because you are an introvert you’re not a leader, or because you aren’t an up-front person you’re not a leader, or because you aren’t the boss you’re not a leader. You are using the wrong definitions. Today we’re going to look at a good definition that is consistent with what the Bible says about you.

There are lots of ideas of what leadership is. If you Google the word “leadership” you’ll get 5,010,000,000 entries. If you enter “leadership books” in Amazon’s search you’ll get over 60,000 books you can buy.

According to Webster’s dictionary, leadership is:

1. the act of someone in the office or position of a leader who leads a group, or:
2. the capacity to lead a group, or:
3. the act or an instance of leading a group.<sup>1</sup>

If you look up other leadership traits, you’ll find things like being outgoing, charismatic, a zest for change, a visionary mindset, and social intelligence, among other things.<sup>2</sup> And I won’t argue with all those – *if* you are leading a group or an organization. But that’s not what we’re talking about today. Those kinds of leadership can quickly become self-serving and manipulative if they are not surrendered to the Spirit. In fact, one definition of leadership says, “The art of leadership...consists in consolidating the attention of the people against a single adversary and taking care that nothing will split up that attention.”

That was Adolf Hitler, and we sure don’t want to follow his definition.

So what is a good definition of leadership? John Maxwell, one of the leadership gurus of our day says, “Leadership is influence.” I think he’s right – leadership in its most simple form is influence. And that includes everyone who is “named” Christian. That’s right – when you become a believer in Jesus and God’s Spirit resides within you, your name is “Christian,” or “Christ-like,” or even “little Christ,” and you become a person of influence. Your purpose from then on in this world is to be an influence in the world for God’s Kingdom in Christ.

I’ve said this before, but there is something I have continually told our sons, and even though they’re adults I still say it (and graduates listen to me): you are here in this world to make a difference for Christ with your life. It doesn’t matter what career or vocational path you choose: your career is either *how* you make a difference (teacher, counselor, first-responder, pastor, etc.), or your career provides you the *resources* so that you can make a difference (you earn money or skill that you can give away, you gain the time and freedom to volunteer, etc.). Either way – you are a leader because you are to be an influencer.

But I want to take that simple definition and expand it a little bit so that we can better understand what it means:

***A leader is a person who influences people to accomplish a purpose.***

That’s it, and that’s what we’re going to dissect this morning, and I’m praying it will send you out of here with a deeper sense of calling and direction as you follow the Holy Spirit from here into our community.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/leadership>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/leadership>

If our name is “Christian,” then clearly our example, the one we set our sites on, the one the Holy Spirit is helping us to have the character of, is Jesus Christ himself – and he’s our model for this definition and our lives.

So let’s start with the obvious, that a leader is a...

## 1. ***Person***

Of course a leader is a person, and that’s exactly what Jesus is, too. I think that even people who’ve been Christian for a long time are prone to think about that fact that Jesus is God, but at the same time, they forget that he is also human. One of the basic tenets of our faith is that Jesus is fully God and at the same time fully human. He’s not 50% God and 50% human; somehow he is 100% of both at the same time. I can’t wait until I get to heaven and can learn about his DNA and how that works. The Bible tells us clearly:

“For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.” (Colossians 2:9, nlt)

But what *kind* of person is Jesus? Well certainly he is a person of ***integrity***. His character and nature is genuine, authentic, and always consistently the same. He didn’t have a public persona that was different than what he was in private. He didn’t have a chameleon character; he was consistently the same, always truthful. In fact, he clearly said about himself that:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6, niv)

In the Gospel of John alone, on at least 28 occasions he’s quoted saying, “I tell you the truth...” One of the things that the Holy Spirit helps us with in our lives is for us to *be* truthful – to be authentic and consistent; not one way at church or with our Christian friends and something else at home or with or non-Christian friends.

And the character or nature that Jesus has, and that we are to have if we are going to live up to our names as Christians and be leaders, is ***love***. The Bible reminds us that:

“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8, esv)

...and that...

“We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.” (1 John 4:16, nlt)

God *is* love, and Christ *is* God, therefore Christ *is* love. Love isn’t something Jesus only does; it is something he *is*. It is his lifeblood, it is his mind, it is his heart; love is everything he is. And we are to be, according to the Bible just the same:

“In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5, ncv)

This is why Jesus charges us with the greatest command of all:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37-39, niv)

So as Spirit-filled and led Christians, we are leaders, which means: you are to be a person of integrity and love. Now keep that in mind, because it has everything to do with the next part: A leader is a person who influences...

## 2. *People*

In 1995 a book was published that set the gold standard on business leadership, written by two guys, James Kouzes and Barry Posner. It came as the result of thousands of hours of research and millions of data points that determined several key components of strong leaders. We don’t have time to go into all the details, but one of the things that seemed to surprise everyone and revolutionized business leadership was one character trait that showed up time and again in successful business leaders: that the healthy and successful leader was also one who practices **servanthood**. And everyone in the business world was shocked – up until then, the common thought was that a leader should be ruthless. But servanthood is a biblical principle – no wonder it works!

You see, here is one of the big differences between the world’s definition of leadership and a Christian: outside of God’s Kingdom, leadership is about getting other people to do things – even things that maybe they didn’t originally want to do, in order to accomplish what the leader wants done. Now, sometimes those kinds of leaders have altruistic motives, but given that all of us have sin ruling over us, especially if we’re not Christians, then the tendency of *that* kind of leadership is always toward being manipulative and coercive. It’s trying to get someone to do something, even if it’s against his or her will. That’s the kind of leaders the military creates; boot camp, training, ranks, all those things are built on this kind of leadership. I’m not saying that’s a bad thing – especially if it’s for our good or for a just cause. So don’t misunderstand me. But that’s why character in leadership is so important in business and government and non-profit leadership; we should only be willing to follow if we can trust their motives, or if they align with our values. But that kind of leadership is different than the kind of influence a Christian has in this world.

Jesus talked about this difference in leadership when he said:

“You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28, nlt)

Leadership influence as a Christian is not about manipulation or coercion. John Stott was an Anglican priest and theologian, and he very wisely said:

“The authority by which the Christian leads is not power but love,  
not force but example,  
not coercion but reasoned persuasion.  
Leaders have power,  
but power is safe only in the hands  
of those who humble themselves to serve.”

Peter – the same one we talked about earlier who had power problems himself until he was filled with the Holy Spirit, had this great advice for pastors in the church, and I think it applies to all of us:

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them— not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2-3, niv)

Think about it: all abuse, in whatever form it takes, is always about control. It doesn’t matter if the abuse is emotional, physical, sexual, political, or spiritual: abuse is always about one person controlling another person for his or her own selfish or perverted or sociopathic reasons. That’s why far too many churches and pastors and even Christians are guilty of spiritual abuse. Cults are spiritual abusers. Legalism is spiritual abuse; that’s why the Pharisees and Sadducees made Jesus so angry; they were controlling people whom God loves, and doing so for their own political, financial, and power-hungry gain.

Folks, as Christians we have a life-giving Gospel – the Good News of God’s love that transforms us and our world through Christ – and it’s our job to share that message! Now, there are two delivery styles that people and churches choose: one is to say, “You *should* become a Christian,” or “You *should* do this or that.” The other method, which I believe is the right style, is to say, “You *can* become a Christian,” or “You *can* live an abundant life” or “do this or that.” In the words of Brennan Manning, a hero of mine, whenever someone used the “you should” method on him, he would say, “Don’t should on me!” In fact, he had a sign on his desk that said, “Today I will not should on myself.”

Only Jesus has the authority to control, and he serves! We are not here to control people! That’s why the very first line of our mission statement is that we are here to “introduce people to Jesus Christ.” We don’t *make* anyone a Christian; Jesus does that! It’s our job to introduce people to him, tell them all about him, and in fact *show people* what he is like by loving them and serving them, just like Jesus did for us – and then he’ll save them; but they were introduced to him *through us*.

That’s the last part of our definition of leadership: a leader is a person who influences people to accomplish a...

### **3. Purpose**

Here again is the difference between most definitions of a leader and what a Christian leader is. We’ve already talked about the purposes of typical leaders – to

get people to do something in order to achieve some bigger plan. Sometimes that bigger plan is a good thing, sometimes not. But because we are sinful people – especially when we are without Christ, then even in the best of human plans, the allure of power and greed can take over and sometimes without our realizing it, and we begin leading for wrong reasons. We see this all the time in our government. Someone gets elected because we agree with their goals, then after they get elected and get guaranteed income and they find out from lobbyists and special interest groups that their vote is power, and that power results in *more* money and power... well, then you have a career politician who votes in ways you didn't vote them in for.

(Wow, that was cynical, wasn't it? Sorry about that! But that proves my point: without the Holy Spirit, even as Christians we can be guilty of the same thing. We must continually submit to the Holy Spirit).

So what is the purpose that Christians are trying to accomplish? It's really very simple to answer but is the hardest thing you'll ever work toward, and it's found in Jesus' teaching on prayer. Those of you who can remember the Lord's Prayer, let's recite it together:

“Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.” (Matthew 6:9-13)

Your kingdom come, your will be done. Your kingdom come, your will be done. Your kingdom come, your will be done. Our purpose is found simply in being the answer to that prayer: advancing the Kingdom of God: bringing the Kingdom of heaven here on earth. And the language, the culture, the character of the Kingdom of Heaven is love and service. And the interesting thing about love and service is you can't force anyone to do that; they can only choose that for themselves. If your name is Christian, *you've* chosen the Kingdom of God. *You've* chosen a life of love and service. And the Holy Spirit – the personal presence and character of Jesus Christ – *is in you*. So your purpose that you are trying to accomplish is to have the character of Jesus, to live like Jesus, to BE Jesus to everyone in every situation. That's how you introduce people to Jesus: *they meet him in you*, as you love and serve people. And when they ask you “why” – which they will, believe me – sooner or later they will – when they ask you “why” then you can tell them *why*: because Jesus has changed your life, and then you can tell them *how*: because he died on the cross for you and rose from the dead.

*That is a Christian leader: a person (of love and integrity) who influences people (through love and service) to accomplish a purpose (to bring the Kingdom of God into the world).* (Repeat)

Let's be leaders who live it out.

Let's pray about that.