

## God's Leadership Ideal

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### Module Objectives:

1. To study key biblical texts on leadership.
2. To identify ideas central to understanding leadership.
3. To inspire participants to formulate a personal definition of leadership.

### Module Outline:

1. The search for a definition.
2. Leadership lessons from creation and the original communities
3. Leadership lessons from Babel
4. Leadership lessons from the last Adam and the new community
5. Finding a definition
6. Testing the definition against Jesus' leadership
7. Following Jesus in his leadership

One of the first steps in the study of leadership is to discover a biblical definition of what leadership is. Although the value of accurate definition is obvious, the discovery of a truly biblical definition of leadership is a daunting task. James MacGregor Burns in his landmark book, *Leadership*, observed, "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth."<sup>1</sup>

Scores of writers have offered definitions of leadership, Christian authors included. Former Trinity Western University Vice-president Dr. Guy Saffold, in a class on the Theology of Leadership, offered a collection of approximately one hundred secular and Christian definitions of leadership. These definitions range from offering little help to being of great assistance in understanding leadership.

Leith Anderson, for instance, instructs us: "Leadership is figuring out what needs to be done and then doing it."<sup>2</sup> What this definition gains in simplicity, it loses in meaningful content. Making a meal or putting together a new piece of Ikea furniture requires figuring out what needs to be done and doing it, but neither of these is leadership. John Maxwell, enamoured with James C. Georges' definition, "*Leadership is the ability to obtain followers*," offers his own as well, "*Leadership is*

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<sup>1</sup> Blackaby, Henry and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People On To God's Agenda* (Nashville: Broadman and Homan Publishers, 2001), p.16.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, Leith, *Leadership That Works: Hope and Direction for Church and Parachurch Leaders in Today's Complex World* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1999), p.51.

*influence.*”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, this definition too falls short. Influence is surely a means of exercising leadership, but it is hardly the essence of leadership. Sue Mallory describes servant leadership: “Leaders demonstrate humility, authenticity, accountability, and genuine care of people, and they equip others to use their gifts in the body of Christ.”<sup>4</sup> Henry Blackaby and his son Richard call for a new definition: “*Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God’s agenda.*”<sup>5</sup> This definition, although general, comes closer to grasping the goal of leadership as moving people to attend to God’s priorities. It offers, however, no help about how leadership does this. Bobby Clinton views biblical leadership in more detailed terms: “*A leader...is a person with God-given capacity and with God-given responsibility to influence a specific group of God’s people toward God’s purposes for the group.*”<sup>6</sup>

Even though establishing the definition of leadership is a first step, with some surprise, after many years of ministry, I found myself as a leader facing this question as though for the first time. While studying leadership intensively at university, I found I needed to rework my whole view of leadership, including its very definition. I had to go back to the beginning.

I had not been prepared for the beginning of my pastoral ministry years earlier by explicit leadership studies. My school, like most at the time, assumed that training in theology, Bible, languages, administration, homiletics, hermeneutics, and personal evangelism would produce leaders. For that reason, after a few years of ministry and learning too many leadership lessons the hard way, I decided to do more reading on leadership from an evangelical Christian perspective. I remember how deeply impacted I was by John Maxwell’s focused definition: “*Leadership is influence.* That’s it. Nothing more: nothing less.” He went on to give very helpful advice about how to influence others beyond the people-follow-because-they-have-to level. I taught those concepts again and again to our leaders. After a while I realized I needed more help with leadership than informal reading was giving me and so I enrolled in formal leadership studies at university.

<p>What has influenced your understanding of leadership? An experience? A respected leader? A good book?</p>
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<sup>3</sup> Maxwell, John, *Developing the Leader Within You*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1993), p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Mallory, Sue, *The Equipping Church: Serving Together To Transform Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), p.198.

<sup>5</sup> Blackaby and Blackaby, p.20.

<sup>6</sup> Clinton, J. Robert, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1998), p. 202.

And then, a year and a half into those studies, something monumental happened. Our professor in a course on the theology of leadership challenged us to question the raw-influence definition of leadership. The illustration he used didn't prove the point, but it was sufficient to make me question the sufficiency of an amoral definition of leadership as influence. He asked us to substitute "fathership" (not a word) for "leadership" and to imagine two fathers. One father sexually abuses his young daughter. Because of his crimes, his daughter is taken away and placed in a home with loving parents. The second father is a good man who loves and cares for the little girl. We would say that this man was "more of a father" to her than her biological father. Her new dad is a better example of "fathership" than the man who begat her but was no father to her. It was this illustration that forced me back to the beginning.

The beginning is a very good place to go for basic definitions. When we go back to the very beginning, we find but one reality—God. All definitions derive from him. "In the beginning God..." When we look more closely we discover that this God is triune, three persons in one being. Furthermore, we perceive within the triune community both love (1 John 4:8,16) and holiness (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). Before God had created anything at all—angels or humans or worlds—there was already a loving and holy community—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Since leadership is best exemplified by God and all human leadership derives from God, we discover three things about leadership without going any further than "In the beginning God..." Love, holiness, and community are integral to leadership.

But the beginning takes us further: "In the beginning God created... Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:1, 26-27) When the triune "Divine Community" decided to make an image of themselves, they created another community—a human community. The triune Divine Community charged the progenitors of this human community with the responsibility of enlarging their community, not just for numbers' sake, but for the purpose of filling the whole world with the image and likeness of

<p>How important is the idea of community to leadership? Why?</p>
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God. And he commanded them, as their community grew, to subdue and rule the earth and its creatures. He made them stewards to care for and creatively develop their environment. In short, by going back to the beginning, we discover that since the purpose of the human community is, as loving, holy community, to image God, leadership must be defined in terms of facilitating these purposes. And leaders may be judged to be more or less a leader by how well they collaborate with those they serve to fill their corner of the earth with such loving, holy community and by how well that community creatively develops its surroundings.

Unfortunately, we soon discover that the human community went terribly wrong. Adam and Eve did not follow God's leadership; rather than be his brother's keeper, Cain murdered Abel; and "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." What followed were the flood and a whole new beginning.

<p>How does sin complicate the task of leadership?</p>
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This new beginning also offers invaluable lessons about leadership. Although Genesis 11 describes the post-flood human community without any explicit reference to leadership, we can safely assume that Babel's leaders played key roles in the decisions of the community. The disastrous directions taken at Babel tell us more about what makes a professed leader more or less of a leader. Clearly, God did not consider Babel's leaders legitimate leaders whom he could bless. At Babel, we learn that a leader who is legitimate in God's sight is one who fulfills God's purposes rather than his or her own. God's purpose was to fill the earth (Genesis 1:28; 9:1) with his image and likeness, that is, with his love and holiness in human community. The purpose of Babel's leaders was "not [to] be scattered over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4)—the exact opposite of God's purpose. To the extent that a leader deviates from God's purposes, he or she is less a leader. We see these leaders' deviant purpose even more clearly in their drive to make a name for themselves (11:4). To the extent that we lead for God's glory, we are more a leader; to the extent that we lead for our own renown—or the renown of the group led—we are less a leader. Pastors, politicians, and business leaders beware! Of course, a good reputation is an asset and even a prerequisite to leadership (Proverbs 25:10; 1 Timothy 3:7), but one who qualifies as a

leader in God's sight must use this reputation as a means to the greater end of the glory of God.

We also see in Babel's failure the supreme importance of leading a community in a true and growing knowledge of God. Babel's tower was probably a religious edifice. Shinar (11:2) refers to the area of Babylon, a location also suggested by the name Babel. Early Babylonian records refer to Babylon as a celestial city constructed in heaven by the gods, each brick bearing the name of the god Marduk. The name Babylon means "the gate of God." The Babylonian step-like, temple-topped ziggurat was said to have its top in the heavens. Babel's tower, then, seems to have been the seat of false knowledge—the centre of false worship of false gods. No wonder God was concerned! A leader—whether a business leader, an educational leader, a family leader, or a church leader—is more a leader in God's sight when he or she assists others to know and love God and less a leader when this aspect of leadership is neglected or twisted.

Finally, the Babel disaster speaks to leadership and sexual morality—and by extension, other moral issues. The instruction of Exodus 20:26 may be rooted in Babel's bitter experience, "And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it." Fallen humans are always trying to look up someone's skirt. So much false religion has been bound up with immoral sexual practice. And not just religion! Sexual immorality is wreaking destruction and death everywhere we turn. We can say, then, that a leader is more a leader in God's sight when he or she supports others in righteous living and less a leader when God's moral values are ignored or desecrated. This speaks volumes to the debate about whether the sexual immorality of U.S. presidents John Kennedy and Bill Clinton mattered to their leadership!

What a bitter disappointment Babel's new beginning was. Babel demonstrates that turning over a new leadership leaf does not work. Babel leaves us looking for a different sort of new beginning that *will* work.

The new beginning that does work is the advent of the last Adam, God incarnate, Jesus Christ. "He is the image of the invisible God." (Colossians 1:15) He perfectly reveals God's image and likeness: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being...." (Hebrews 1:3) Flawless holiness, startling love, timeless truth and emerging community mark his leadership. His life and leadership reveal what these qualities actually look like

in action. He prepares the apostles for leadership by teaching them to follow, by demonstrating self-denial, and by loving service. His ministry is about relationship: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3) It is about relationship with God that blossoms into community with one another, community marked by holiness, truth, and love: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth... that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.” (John 17:17, 21)

Clearly, the Son of God’s new beginning makes possible a new beginning for us. His crucifixion and resurrection transform those who, trusting in him alone for relationship with God, define themselves in Christ. We become new creations, who “have taken off [the] old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” (Colossians 3:9,10) By the Holy Spirit’s power, God’s glorious image is renewed in us, enabling us to fulfill God’s original design for leadership—to exhibit the image and likeness of God in loving, holy community that creatively cares for its environment.

This brings us full circle. For myself, having been forced back to the beginning, I was no longer able to accept an amoral definition of leadership that is drained of its primary content and reduced to mere influence. Furthermore, defining leadership as influence is not actually value-free, but elevates influence as the primary value. Yet, as we’ve gone back to the beginning, we’ve seen that God’s definition of leadership elevates other values. God sees true leaders as those who accept responsibility and take initiative. He sees true leaders as those who pursue relationship with him, while assisting others to relate to him. And he sees true leaders as those who support others in developing a community of love and holiness that reflects God’s image and likeness and creatively develops its environment.

A business leader whose company develops its environment while performing a service for profit, but does so while disregarding love and holiness, is, to that extent, less a leader. An educational leader who gives her students tools to get along with others, but does not seek to move them closer to relationship with God is, to that extent, less a leader. A church leader who nurtures others in their relationship with God but neglects the development of community between fellow believers who lead together is,

How does Jesus’ leadership fulfill God’s ideal for leadership evident at creation?

What do you think?  
Can we evaluate all leaders by these standards? Why? Why not?

to that extent, less a leader. A leader in any field who assists a community to exhibit the image and likeness of God's character is, to that extent, more a leader.

All who would be more a leader, not less, must set aside definitions of leadership drained of their content in order to seek God's empowering to live out the fullness of God's ideal. While we have discovered some things about God's leadership ideal, we have not yet attempted to craft a manageable definition of that ideal in a single sentence. At the university, I realized that God had been bringing me over time to such a definition. For the decade prior to my studies in leadership, I have followed a vision for myself as a leader that God impressed upon me during a week spent mostly in solitude in his presence. I was alone in a strange city, except for the company every evening of my first-year-university son with whom I had a very fragile relationship. In years previous, we had both hurt each other very deeply. God used that time of prayer, reading, soul searching, vulnerability and deep conversation to begin a process of healing and to clarify what my life as a husband, father, pastor, and human being was all about. I concluded: "My mission is to cooperate with God to empower others, including my family, to know and serve God together in a way that transforms us into godly wholeness."<sup>7</sup> Although I was unaware of it at the time, this personal mission statement came close to being a well-rounded definition of God's ideal for leadership.

Fast forward one decade. While immersed in studying leadership literature, I began to scour God's word for insights into his heart about leadership. We've already looked at some of the passages I found, starting with the Old Testaments beginning and new beginnings and moving into the radical new beginning of the New Testament. One particular New Testament passage, however, helped me more than any other in refining my understanding of God's leadership ideal. Its human author was Peter, a seasoned and effective leader who was mentored by Jesus himself. Its real author, of course, was God himself. The apostle Peter, offered the following instructions to local church leaders:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory: <sup>2</sup> Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but

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<sup>7</sup> Personal Mission Statement, London, Ontario, November 1994.

because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve;<sup>3</sup> not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.<sup>4</sup> And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5:1-4)

It is instructive to note the single noun and two verbs that Peter chooses to identify local church leaders. “Elders,” the single noun, suggesting maturity, those who have come to be trusted and respected because of who they have become. “Be shepherds” translates a single verb that implies responsibility for a flock, for a group of people requiring care. “Serving as overseers” is also a single word, a verb that means “to look upon, inspect, oversee, look after, care for.”<sup>8</sup> Overseers take responsibility to see that things and people are as they should be.

Having learned through bitter experience, Peter underscores that leadership in the local church is not about gaining personal advantage or power—“not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.”<sup>9</sup> It is not about ordering people about or controlling their lives; it is about showing care and being an example. Nor is it about mere duty, but it is undertaken out of a desire to serve—“not because you must, but because you are willing.”

In addition, we should note that the leader in the local church is one who has been entrusted with his or her responsibilities, rather than one who has assumed authority. The flock is God’s flock that has been entrusted to the leader’s care. Furthermore, the leader is an under-shepherd who will one day be rewarded by the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Good Shepherd that suffered greatly as he gave his life for the sheep (1 Peter 5:1,4; John 10:11,14).

In summary, Peter’s exhortation to elders addresses the issues of personal initiative, loving relationships, godly character, partnership with God, and impact upon others. Taking these concepts, along with my personal vision statement and the other passages of scripture we have explored, I crafted a personal definition of leadership: *Leadership is taking the initiative, in cooperation with God*

Does this definition contain all the essentials in God’s ideal? Are there some ideas included that are unnecessary?

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965), p. 242.

<sup>9</sup> See the chronicle of Peter’s personal struggle, along with his fellow apostles, with power and privilege, recorded in Mark 8-10.

*and for his pleasure, to empower others through loving relationships to know and serve God together in a way that transforms us into godly wholeness.*<sup>10</sup>

This proposed definition calls for closer analysis. it undertakes to define *leadership* rather than *Christian leadership*, because the Creator defines all leadership, not just the leadership of those who acknowledge him. The leadership of both secular leaders and Christian leaders in secular settings must be evaluated by the same criteria as Christian leadership in the church, namely by God's ideal.

Further, leadership *is taking initiative*. This notion opens the way for us to recognize leadership in any member of a team who takes initiative. In Genesis 1, we discover that God, having made humans in his own image and likeness, male and female, blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground (Genesis 1:28). Everyone, both male and female, is called to lead.

Leadership is taking the initiative, *in cooperation with God and for his pleasure*, because much of what leaders must achieve cannot be accomplished by mere human effort, nor is its ultimate objective mere human satisfaction. In our fallenness, we struggle with loving relationships, for example. Even as redeemed saints, we are incapable, without God's aid, of bringing others into relationship with God or causing deep healing and transformation in their lives or even our own. We must see ourselves as "God's fellow workers" (1 Corinthians 3:9) "Fellow workers" translates the Greek *sunergoi*, those who work with or collaborate with God. From *sunergoi* we get our word synergy. The idea of being in synergy with God is mind-boggling. The almighty God wills to accomplish more through joint action with us than through the sum of his actions and ours when acting separately! Yet, this is the privilege of being a leader in God's service. And leadership in God's service is for his pleasure. In fact, Revelation 4:11 informs us that everything that exists does so for God's pleasure: "For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created."<sup>11</sup> All leaders, then, were intended to lead for God's pleasure. And *for his*

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<sup>10</sup> My definition of leadership has been massively impacted by Dr. Guy Saffold's definition: "Christian leadership is taking the initiative to know God, to reflect his holy character, and through loving relationships, to draw others together in fulfilling his purposes in the world."

<sup>11</sup> *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

*pleasure* also introduces the moral element. God will take no pleasure in anything that is immoral whether in method or goal.

Furthermore, I assert that leadership is taking the initiative, in cooperation with God and for his pleasure, *to empower others*. Here I agree with Wilfred Drath who writes that leadership "...will be understood not as a possession of the leader but...[instead] will be framed as a communal capacity and a communal achievement."<sup>12</sup> Leadership in every human community is about empowering others to achieve their fullest potential. Ronald A Heifetz tells us why this is so vital: "The lone-warrior model of leadership is heroic suicide. Each of us has blind spots that require the vision of others. Each of us has passions that need to be contained by others."<sup>13</sup> We empower others so that they can achieve their potential for the good of the entire community. At the church where I was serving during my studies, we identified Empowering Leadership as one of our eight Core Success Factors, a quality that we evaluated annually.<sup>14</sup>

How do we empower others? *Through loving relationships*. As we've seen, even before creation, the triune Godhead modeled loving relationships (1 John 4:8, 16). Jesus identified love of God and love of neighbour as the two greatest commandments.<sup>15</sup> He challenged his apostles to show they were his followers by loving each other as he had loved them.<sup>16</sup> On the night of his arrest, "he...showed them the full extent of his love"<sup>17</sup> by serving them as a slave who washed their feet. As believers, we are a community in which we are called to "be devoted to one

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<sup>12</sup> Wilfred Drath, *The Deep Blue Sea: Rethinking the Source of Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), xvi quoted in Guy S. Saffold, "The Godly Leadership Community: Developing a Community of Committed Servants, Leaders and Followers." Unpublished. 2002. p. 8 (Course Pack, p. 430).

<sup>13</sup> Ronald A Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge Ma: Belknap Press, 1994), 268 quoted in Saffold, *ibid*.

<sup>14</sup> Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: How your congregation can develop the eight essential qualities of a healthy church* (Winfield, BC: The International Centre for Leadership Development and Evangelism, 1998). Christian Schwarz's initial research project was conducted by Germany's Institute for Natural Church Development from 1994 through 1996 and involved 1,000 churches from 32 countries on 6 continents. Schwarz identified eight quality characteristics of a healthy, growing church: Empowering Leadership, Gift-oriented Ministry, Passionate Spirituality, Functional Structures, Inspiring Worship Service, Holistic Small Groups, Need-oriented Evangelism, and Loving Relationships. We have taken these quality characteristics as our Core Success Factors. Since 1996 Schwarz's research has multiplied many-fold.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 22:37-30.

<sup>16</sup> John 13:34-35

<sup>17</sup> John 13:1

another in brotherly love.”<sup>18</sup> Again, we see that leadership is something that happens in community, a community of loving relationships, a community of people functioning together. Saffold challenges us, “Leadership is not something an *I* does to a *you* but something that a *you* and *I* do together.”<sup>19</sup>

Leadership is taking the initiative, in cooperation with God and for his pleasure, to empower others, through loving relationships *to know and serve God together*. As Peter declares, elders shepherd God’s flock. King David identified the members of God’s flock as those who can say, “The Lord is my shepherd.”<sup>20</sup> Jesus himself explained that his sheep listen to his voice, know him, and follow him.<sup>21</sup> Through Jeremiah, the LORD underscored that the only thing worth boasting about in life is understanding and knowing the LORD.<sup>22</sup> A primary task of leadership is to help others know God—so that they can serve him.

The apostle Paul defined himself as a servant of God: “whose I am and whom I serve.”<sup>23</sup> He exulted that the Thessalonians “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God....”<sup>24</sup> Scripture identifies that service to God includes focusing attention on him,<sup>25</sup> helping his people,<sup>26</sup> doing good to unbelievers,<sup>27</sup> and caring for God’s physical creation.<sup>28</sup> We do not serve as isolated individuals, but as interdependent collaborators in community.<sup>29</sup> Yet serving God does not stand alone as our ultimate pursuit. Serving is doing. Doing flows out of being. This makes the last phrase of our definition vital.

Leadership is taking the initiative, in cooperation with God and for his pleasure, to empower others through loving relationships to know and serve God together *in a way that transforms us into godly wholeness*. The apostle Paul identified God’s ultimate good purpose for us in all the things he works together in our lives: “...to be

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<sup>18</sup> Romans 12:10

<sup>19</sup> Guy S. Saffold, “The Godly Leadership Community: Developing a Community Committed Servants, Leaders, and Followers,” Unpublished, 2002, p. 7 (Course Pack, p. 429).

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 23:1

<sup>21</sup> John 10:27

<sup>22</sup> Jeremiah 9:23-24

<sup>23</sup> Acts 27:23

<sup>24</sup> 1 Thessalonians 1:9

<sup>25</sup> Acts 13:2 “Worshipping” translates *leitougeo*, a word that originally meant to serve the state at one’s own expense. See Thayer, p. 375.

<sup>26</sup> Hebrews 6:10

<sup>27</sup> Galatians 6:10

<sup>28</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”<sup>30</sup> As we enjoy relationship with God and serve him by loving and serving others and caring for the world he has created, he works in our lives to renew the image of his glory in us.<sup>31</sup>

The One identified by Peter as the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the perfect example of the leadership just described. Despite all authority in heaven and on earth having been given to him,<sup>32</sup> he does not lord it over but is an example to his flock and those who shepherd it.<sup>33</sup> In his earthly ministry, he consistently took initiative, even in such unusual measures as laying down his life and taking it up again: “I lay down my life—only to take it up again.”<sup>34</sup> Again and again, he declared and demonstrated his collaboration with the Father: “...the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.”<sup>35</sup> The Father testified to his pleasure in the Son’s leadership: “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”<sup>36</sup> To the twelve who were most empowered by the intensive, practical training he gave them, he explained their interdependence with him, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”<sup>37</sup> He demonstrated and mandated love: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”<sup>38</sup> His glory was bringing fallen humans back into relationship with God: “Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”<sup>39</sup> He schooled his followers in serving God, offering himself as the ultimate example of such service: “...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served,

What aspects of this ideal do you think you find the hardest to live up to?

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<sup>30</sup> Romans 8:29

<sup>31</sup> Ephesians 4:22-24

<sup>32</sup> Matthew 28:18

<sup>33</sup> 1 Peter 5:3

<sup>34</sup> John 10:17-18

<sup>35</sup> John 14:31

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 3:17; 17:5

<sup>37</sup> John 15:5

<sup>38</sup> John 13:34

<sup>39</sup> John 13:1-3

but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.<sup>40</sup> He personally modeled the fulfillment of all righteousness,<sup>41</sup> and nurtured a longing for righteousness among his followers,<sup>42</sup> urging them to make righteousness one of life's highest pursuits: "...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness...."<sup>43</sup> Thus, our definition of leadership is consistent with the example of the greatest leader the world has ever known—our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Indeed, at Ross Road Community Church, our mission is to help people find and follow Jesus. An implication of this mission is that we help people lead like Jesus led. To do so, we ourselves must first follow Jesus in his approach to leadership. When we follow Jesus, we all learn to lead.

I've just shared with you my personal experience of formulating convictions about God's leadership ideal, that is, leadership's true definition. While God's ideal does not change, no one individual will perfectly capture its essence and no two individuals may prefer to express it in exactly the same way. All leaders, regardless of the arena of their leadership, would do well to grapple personally with the definition of leadership, ultimately writing or choosing a definition that inspires them to seek to fulfil it.

As you begin to think about your personal definition of leadership, what ideas are important? Can you support your definition as biblical? Does it apply to all leadership?

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<sup>40</sup> Matthew 20:26-28

<sup>41</sup> Matthew 13:15

<sup>42</sup> Matthew 5:6

<sup>43</sup> Matthew 6:33