

# **CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP**

**by Robert C. Walton**

**Grades 9-12  
Year 4  
Quarter 2**



# **THE LEADER AS SERVANT**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students see the difference between the Bible's definition of leadership and that espoused by the world.

## **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:1** - "Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task."

## **Lesson Background**

In this quarter's lessons, we will be dealing with the matter of Christian leadership. You may wonder how such a study could be appropriate for your students. Obviously, not all of them will ultimately assume leadership positions in the church. Yet an understanding of Christian leadership will be beneficial to them whether they go on to become leaders themselves or not.

In the first place, both the qualifications and characteristics of Christian leadership do not consist generally of things that set leaders apart from other Christians. As we will see when we study these qualifications and characteristics, they simply describe what every Christian ought to be. A leader is thus one who lives a Christian life consistently rather than one who possesses superior abilities.

Secondly, your students will all be in a position to help choose leaders even if they do not assume leadership positions themselves. They will be able to make much wiser choices if they choose on the basis of biblical qualifications rather than those commonly used by the world around us. Too many churches

suffer at the hands of leaders who may be skilled in the ways of the world, but are utterly unqualified according to Scripture.

In the third place, while worldly leadership skills are often detrimental to the church, biblical characteristics of leadership may readily be useful in the outside world. One who knows how to lead by serving will be a valuable asset in a family or business as well as in the church. This brings us to the subject of today's lesson. The most important aspect of Christian leadership is servanthood. Unlike the "Gentiles" whose leaders lord it over them, Christian leaders are to serve those over whom they have been placed. Jesus Himself provided the greatest example of this.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the lesson by asking the students what they think makes a good leader. When they vote for class officers or the president of the Student Council at school, what do they look for? They will probably suggest characteristics such as organizational ability, popularity, intelligence, or experience. Then ask them if their list would look different if a pastor were being chosen instead of a class officer. They may cite I Timothy 3, but press them to explain how a Christian leader is chosen on a different basis than a secular one. Then tell them that today's lesson will focus on the supreme example of a Christian leader - Jesus Himself.

### **1. Leading by Serving**

Have the class read John 13:1-17. In this familiar story, Jesus washes the feet of the disciples on the night before His death. Foot-washing was a matter of common courtesy, but the task was normally performed by a household servant. Jesus took the place of that servant.

In verses 12-17, Jesus applied the lesson He had just finished teaching the disciples. While the conversation with Peter in the earlier verses related to the salvation and sanctification of Christ's followers, these words speak of their service for the Master. When Jesus told His disciples to follow His example and wash one another's feet, what was He telling them to do? Did He mean that they should hold periodic foot-washing services, as some churches do? Did He mean that the leaders of the church should periodically wash the feet of some lowly beggar as a symbol of their humility, as the Pope does?

Hopefully, your students will realize that both of these examples miss the point Jesus was communicating. He was speaking, not of some symbolic action, whether performed by the leaders of the church or by the whole congregation. Instead, He was speaking of an entire way of life. Christian leadership is intensely practical. Leading by serving often involves the mundane tasks that have to be done, but that no one really enjoys doing. Ask your students to suggest some tasks today that might be equivalent to the foot-washing performed by Jesus. Some ideas might include cleaning the church, providing transportation, making food for someone who is ill, or visiting those who are unable to get out.

Next, ask your students why servanthood marks a person as a leader. What is the relationship between doing such deeds and providing leadership in the church? First of all, they should note that a person who does such things reveals much about his own character. A leader who cares only about himself is a wolf rather than a shepherd, but one who is humble will gain the respect of those he leads. Secondly, a servant establishes relationships as he serves. One who serves others grows close to them, and they trust him to provide the leadership they need.

## **2. Serving by Sacrifice**

Now have the students turn to Mark 10:35-45. Ask them what misunderstanding James and John had about the nature of Christian leadership. They should note that, first of all, Christian leadership is not something obtained by asking for it. In today's world, people often seek leadership by self-promotion, most notably in the political arena. The one who can keep his name before the public eye and do things that capture attention can often win election to public office.

Jesus, on the other hand, refused to get involved in cheap publicity stunts (Matthew 4:5-7; John 7:1-9). In fact, He often did things that were decidedly unpopular. He knew that those who followed for shallow reasons became shallow followers who quickly turned away in times of crisis. For instance, many of those who hailed Jesus as King of the Jews on Palm Sunday were probably in the crowd howling for His blood the following Friday morning.

What Jesus did was to serve those under His care through the sacrifice of Himself. He gave His life as a ransom for His people. As the Good Shepherd, He laid down His life for His sheep. Furthermore, He told His disciples that the only way they could find their lives was to lose them. Sacrifice of time, energy, money, and personal interests on behalf of others is the path of Christian servant leadership.

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by noting that the principles of servant leadership contained in this lesson apply both to formal and informal leadership. While they certainly should be true of elders and deacons in the church, they also ought to characterize fathers and mothers in the home and supervisors on the job as well. God's principles for leadership may not be the same as those espoused by the world, but they are as effective in the world as they are in the church. God's ways are always the right ways. Challenge your students to go out of their way to serve others in practical ways in the coming week. Such service will earn them the respect necessary for effective leadership.



## FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

## THE LEADER AS SERVANT

1. List the characteristics that people look for in a political leader. Do these characteristics really help a person to get elected? to lead effectively?
2. What did Jesus say was the most important task of a leader in His kingdom? How did He model His own description of leadership?
3. Give examples from the Old and New Testaments of men who illustrate the type of servant leadership that Jesus spoke about to His disciples.
4. How does serving others put a person in a position to exercise leadership?
5. How does leadership itself involve serving others?
6. What are some ways that you can be a servant to others this week? Think especially of ways you can serve those who in one way or another look to you for leadership.





# **THE CHARACTER OF A LEADER**

## **Lesson Aim**

To teach students the importance of good character as a foundation for Christian leadership.

## **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:2** - “Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach . . .”

## **Lesson Background**

We noted last week that the qualifications for church leadership given by Paul in I Timothy 3 are for the most part things that should be true of all Christians, and that the man who is qualified for leadership is simply the one who lives consistently in the way a Christian should live. Consequently, we will spend the next three weeks studying these qualifications, not only to see what makes a good leader, but also to help your students to understand the type of life after which each of them should be striving if they profess to be Christians.

Today’s lesson deals with the character of the Christian leader (I Timothy 3:2-3). It is interesting to note that Paul devotes most of his time in the section on qualifications for the eldership to the character of the man who is to hold the office. We tend to focus more on gifts than on character. In fact, Paul mentions only one gift - that of teaching - as being necessary for the eldership. The discussion of love in I Corinthians 13 underscores the priority of character over gifts. No matter how great a person’s gifts may be, he will not be an effective leader if he lacks the virtues of Christian character.

This truth is an important one for your students to grasp. They may some day be called upon to evaluate the qualifications of prospective leaders in a church. Even now, however, they must learn how to look at themselves. It is easy for those with lesser gifts to think that they have little to offer in God's work. What they must realize is that a person of godly character is more valuable to a church than the most gifted man whose life is inconsistent. Your students must therefore learn to cultivate good character, which will then express itself through whatever gifts God has given them.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin by asking the class to describe the personality of a good leader. Like last week, start in the political realm, asking about a good senator or president. What aspects of politicians' personalities do their public relations people try to emphasize? Is the candidate tough, decisive, clean-living? Does he fight for what he believes is right, is he a good compromiser, does he shake hands and kiss babies? What is the popular image of a good politician?

Move on next to the pastorate - what is the ideal personality for a good pastor? Should he be friendly, able to get along with all kinds of people? Is it important for him to be a good preacher, a good counselor, one who can encourage those who are suffering? Have the students list, in order of priority, the three most important character qualities of a good pastor. Then compare lists and write the results on the board. Then have your students turn to I Timothy 3. Read the first three verses, and compare the list the class has compiled with the description of the character of the elder given by Paul in these verses. Were they similar? In what ways did they differ? What did Paul consider important that the class overlooked? What did the class consider important that Paul left out? Our task today is to examine the character qualities that Paul lists in the light of the requirements of Christian leadership and Christian living.

### **1. No Skeletons in the Closet**

The first character quality listed by Paul may be viewed as a summary statement for which the rest of the list gives specific examples. The man who would exercise leadership in the church must be one at whom no serious criticism could legitimately be directed. Why is this important? One who leads others must have their respect. Nothing can tear a congregation apart faster than a leader who does not have the respect of the people he is trying to lead. In recent years, we have seen political leaders who have lost any opportunity for public service because of their involvement in scandalous behavior in their private lives. Similarly, and sadly, prominent preachers have fallen when scandals in their past have been uncovered. One who leads must have respect; without respect, leadership is impossible.

### **2. A Good Track Record in the Home**

One of the key elements of a good reputation is a good track record in the home. Human beings are sexual creatures, and as such are subject to great temptations in this area. One who would lead others must show himself able to overcome these temptations. On the positive side, as we will see next week, the effective leader must have a home life that is an example to those he wishes to lead. How can a man hope to counsel others when his own home life is a shambles? This is particularly important in our own day when marriages are crumbling on every side. With so many families falling apart, a Christian leader must set an example of stability and faithfulness in opposition to the cavalier attitude toward marriage and families so common in society today.

### **3. Not Given to Extreme Behavior**

A Christian leader is to have character, not be a “character.” We all know people who are so extreme in their ways that they separate themselves from others. A person who is extreme in his behavior to the point of being bizarre will be unable to identify with others, and thus will be incapable of leading them. When Paul describes the Christian leader as “temperate,” this is what he has in mind - a “normal” person, not one whose behavior puts him on the lunatic fringe of society or the church.

### **4. Keeping Himself Under Control**

It is possible for a person to be extreme in several ways. When Paul said that a leader should be temperate, he meant that he should not be extreme in the behavior he chose. When he speaks of self-control, he has in mind the fact that a leader should not be extreme in the sense that he loses control of himself. In what ways could such lack of self-control manifest itself? One way is through radical mood swings. A person who goes from “wild and crazy” abandon to deep depression on a regular basis will lack the emotional stability needed to lead others. In the next verse, we will see other specific areas where self-control is important.

### **5. Having Good Standing in the Community**

The way a person is perceived by others contributes to his ability to lead. No matter what a person may be like, if he has a bad reputation, he will not be able to lead others. Paul thus says that a leader must be “respectable.” He must live in accordance with community standards in such a way that others will look up to him. Christians are called “peculiar people” by Peter (at least in the King James Version), but this does not mean they are supposed to be weird.

### **6. Reaching Out to Others**

One who leads must be concerned with the needs of others and must be willing to share what he has with them. One of the most basic ways in which this appears is through hospitality - his willingness to share his home with others. In the first century, this was very important because itinerant preachers (like Paul himself) depended on the hospitality of other Christians to provide for their needs as they traveled from place to place. In our own day, hospitality has a different function. It is a way of getting to know people better and sharing your life with them. It helps to build the kind of relationships that are important for effective leadership.

### **7. A Good Teacher**

This is the only qualification listed by Paul that relates to a spiritual gift. An elder must be able to teach effectively. He must know the Word of God and be able to communicate it well and apply it accurately to the lives of the people to whom he ministers. This is the only gift that sets the elder apart from the rest of the congregation. Everything else on Paul’s list should be true of every believer.

### **8. Able to Control His Appetites**

Paul now returns to the matter of self-control. No character flaw can discredit a leader faster than the inability to control his own appetites. Paul specifically mentions wine in this passage, but any other addiction fits his intent equally well. A drunkard cannot lead a church effectively, but neither can a man who

cannot control his appetite for food, entertainment, or sexual gratification. One who gives such gods control over his life is not qualified for Christian leadership.

## **9. Able to Control His Temper**

Another aspect of self-control that is very important for a leader in the church is control over his emotions, particularly his temper. A Christian leader is often called upon to mediate disputes. He cannot be a peacemaker if he himself cannot control his temper, nor can he set an example for those around him. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, and one that a Christian leader must manifest at all times if he is to lead others effectively.

## **10. One Who Does Not Seek Arguments**

We have all at one time or another encountered a person who loves to argue. Whatever anyone else says, he immediately must take the opposite position. He shows off his intellect and erudition by making others look foolish and delights in demonstrating his superiority. Christian leaders must not be like this. They should be known for their ability to get along with others, not their love for debate. Disputatious people may help the church to clarify certain issues, but they do not make good leaders.

## **11. One Who Does Not Seek Money**

After the financial scandals that have ruined the ministries of many preachers over the years, we should need to say little about Paul's final character qualification. Greed is completely out of place in the life of a Christian leader. Those who engage in full-time professional ministry rarely receive high levels of compensation for their efforts (those who do are often rightly viewed by the world as hypocrites and charlatans). A good leader does not constantly complain about his financial condition. While the Bible teaches that the laborer is worthy of his wages, the Christian leader should recognize that the primary compensation for his efforts will not come in the form of dollars and cents.

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by encouraging the students to measure their own lives against the character qualities Paul lists in I Timothy 3:2-3. Are they the kind of people who have the respect of others, and are thus in a position to minister to them? Is it possible that God may some day use some of them in an official leadership capacity in the church? Be sure to remind them that, while these characteristics should be prominent in the life of a Christian, striving after these things does not make one a Christian. Your non-Christian students should understand that God does not demand a good life. Instead, He requires faith and repentance. The good life is a gift of His grace.

## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **THE CHARACTER OF A LEADER**

1. List the eleven character qualities given by Paul in I Timothy 3:2-3. Why is each one of these important for a Christian leader to possess?
2. How are these qualifications different from those most people associate with leadership?
3. To what extent are these qualities to be found in the life of every Christian?
4. How may a Christian who possesses these qualities expect God to use them in his or her life?



# **THE FAMILY OF A LEADER**

## **Lesson Aim**

To impress upon students the connection between the private and public lives of Christian leaders.

## **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:3** - “. . . not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.”

## **Lesson Background**

In recent years, representatives of the media have taken the attitude that every aspect of the lives of public figures is fair game for investigative reporting. They argue that the more we know about the private lives of those we choose to lead us, the more intelligently we may decide for whom to vote. At times, such an approach has uncovered shameful behavior that rightly disqualified the person in question from holding a position of public trust. At other times, investigative reporting has become an excuse to smear political opponents through the use of bias and innuendo. Despite its sometimes questionable uses, however, the basic principle under which the media embark upon such investigations is both sound and biblical. A person's private life does reflect upon his ability to lead others. In I Timothy 3:4-5, Paul indicated the same thing. He instructed Timothy to use a person's family life as an indicator of his fitness for church office. The way a person manages his home tells much about how he will exercise leadership within the church.

Your students are not presently parents, nor are they candidates for church office. But it is important for them to realize that there is a connection between a person's public life and his private conduct. The

purpose of today's lesson is to get the students to think about their private conduct and what it says about them as people. It is simply not true that what goes on behind closed doors is nobody's business.

## **Lesson Procedure**

In years past, most of the states in our country had laws against adultery, fornication, homosexuality, and other sinful sexual practices. Recently, however, such laws have either been repealed or generally ignored. People now profess to believe that anything that goes on between consenting adults is beyond the reach of the law. In other words, a person's private life is his or her own business. It becomes the business of the government only when it affects other people. Ask your students if they think this is a legitimate principle. Hopefully, they will recognize that there is no such thing as behavior that has no effect on other people; "victimless crime" is a myth. Furthermore, the rightness or wrongness of an action is not decided by its effect on others. Behavior is right or wrong depending upon whether or not it measures up to God's standard.

In Jesus' day, the Pharisees insisted upon being judged by their outward behavior according to a standard they themselves had devised. They insisted that others meet the same standard. Jesus, on the other hand, rebuked the shallowness of such an approach and taught that men were to be judged by the root cause of their behavior - their hearts. He spoke of a day when hidden things would be revealed.

It should come as no surprise, then, that when Paul gave instructions for choosing church leaders, he indicated the importance of looking at a person's private life. By definition, no one can observe the behavior of another person when that person is alone. Under what circumstances, however, is a person most likely to "be himself"? In public, all of us wear masks to one extent or another. We act in a way that others expect us to act; we try to impress them or make them like us. Ask your students under what circumstances they feel most free to "let down their guard." Most will probably say that they can "be themselves" most easily at home. Face it, our families see us at our worst. With them, we make much less of an effort to hold back our feelings. They see us when we are grumpy and irritable, and we do far less to mask our innate selfishness at home than we do when we are among outsiders. Thus when Paul wanted Timothy to look at the private lives of those who were being considered for church leadership, he told him to look at their family lives.

### **1. The Leader and His Spouse**

As we saw last week, the primary quality Paul singles out about the relationship of a leader to his spouse in I Timothy 3:2 is faithfulness - he is to be a "one-woman man." This relates closely, of course, to what Paul says in Ephesians 5:25-33, where he emphasizes the responsibility of the husband to love his wife and give himself for her. While it is true that every husband should love his wife as Christ loves the church, it is doubly true for leaders. No relationship requires more consistent self-giving than marriage. A man who is unable to give himself exclusively to his wife over a long period of time will certainly not be able to bear the burdens of church leadership, which involve service to others in ways and at times that are often inconvenient. Only a man who has shown himself able to give to others in his own home is fit to exercise a leadership position in the church that requires constant giving to others.

It is important to note that Paul sees a relationship between the behavior of a Christian leader in his home and his behavior in the church. Too often, home and church responsibilities have competed with one another in the lives of church leaders. The Roman Catholic Church has long considered the two responsibilities incompatible, since they require priests to remain unmarried. Among Protestants, too many wives of pastors have experienced neglect as their husbands pour themselves wholly into the work of the



church. Paul sees no contradiction, however. As far as he is concerned, only the man who is able to give himself to his wife is qualified to give himself in service to the people of the church.

## **2. The Leader and His Children**

Another characteristic of the leader's home life is that his children will be respectful and obedient (verse 4). A church leader is often called upon to exercise discipline within the church. How can he do this if he is unable to discipline his own children? Furthermore, one who cannot gain the respect of his own children is unlikely to be respected by the people of the congregation. It is also important that a man have firm control over his children because others in the church look to their elders as examples. This does not mean that an elder's children must be "little angels" - if that were the case, people would know something was wrong!

Ask your students to consider the similarities that exist between the church and a family. How do the skills developed as a parent carry over into the tasks of managing a church? Why is an ineffective parent not likely to make an effective church leader? What does a person's track record as a parent reveal about that person that is likely to indicate how he would function in a church leadership position? Have each one think of the best parent he or she knows aside from his own. What makes that person a good parent? Why would these same qualities help that person to exercise leadership in a group of adults?

## **3. The Leader and His Home**

Paul also says in I Timothy 3:4 that an aspiring church leader "must manage his own family well." Ask your students what things are involved in managing a family. They should suggest things like financial oversight, discipline, scheduling, division of family responsibilities, care for the family's possessions, and planning for the future. The church, as God's family, requires the same sort of management. Elders handle discipline, dividing responsibilities, scheduling, and future planning, while deacons deal with finances and the care of the church's possessions. The same skills that go into managing a home are needed by those who lead the church.

In the parable told by Jesus in Luke 19:11-27, He indicated that the way a person deals with small responsibilities will dictate whether or not he is given greater ones. For this reason, a person's success in managing his own household should determine his suitability for church office (among other things, of course). He who is faithful in a little will be entrusted with much.

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by reminding the students that the way they conduct their private lives today is preparing them for their future roles in the world and, if they are Christians, in the church. Challenge them to examine their behavior at home (or, in the case of some teenagers, among their friends - wherever they consider that they can most easily "be themselves"). If someone were to examine them when they were "being themselves," would that person trust them with leadership responsibilities? The way they treat their parents will say a lot about their attitude toward authority in general (including God's authority), while their treatment of their brothers and sisters indicates the reality of their professed desire to love others. The family is a training ground. This is true for church leaders, whose exercise of authority in the home indicates their fitness to exercise it in the church; but it is also true of young people, who learn what it means to love and serve in the place where those things are sometimes hardest to do - among those who know us best.



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **THE FAMILY OF A LEADER**

1. In what way is a person's private life related to his public life? What does one tell us about the other?
2. Why is a person's attitude toward his wife and children a good indicator of his ability to provide leadership for the church?
3. What common skills are required by family and church leaders?
4. In what ways does your attitude and behavior within your home reflect what you are really like inside?
5. In order to be the kind of person Christ wants you to be, what things about your family life should you try to change? How can you show greater love and respect for your parents and siblings?



# **THE EXPERIENCE OF A LEADER**

## **Lesson Aim**

To help students understand that a leader is only able to teach to others those lessons he has first learned himself.

## **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:4** - “He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.”

## **Lesson Background**

As any baseball fan knows, Ernest L. Thayer’s poem, *Casey at the Bat*, is based on a faulty premise. The poem describes the following situation: The home team is behind by two runs in the bottom of the ninth, with two outs and runners on second and third, and their slugger, the mighty Casey, approaching the plate. Under such circumstances, what would any self-respecting manager do? He would walk Casey intentionally, of course, setting up a force play at any base and giving his pitcher the chance to face a weaker hitter. Even if Casey had gone hitless in the game prior to the ninth inning, his reputation was such that the opposing team would respect him and avoid facing him in such a crucial situation.

Many things in life are influenced by people’s reputations. Often this is unjust because reputation does not always correspond to reality. Yet reputation is important in the effectiveness with which a person performs his job, whatever that job may be. I know, as a teacher, that having an established reputation in the school makes my job easier, since each new group of students who enter my class have already heard the horror stories from those who have gone before them, and they come in prepared to work - or else. For anyone in a leadership position, a good reputation is particularly important, since people will be more willing

to follow someone they respect. Paul recognizes this truth, and in his description of the qualifications for church office in I Timothy 3, he also includes stipulations concerning the reputation of the potential office-holder.

In the same way that a reputation grows out of a person's experience, a reputation also reflects that person's experience. In today's lesson, your students should be confronted with the importance of a good reputation, not only for church leaders, but also for all Christians. They not only should be able to see that others need good reputations, but also that they should be in the process of building good reputations for themselves.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Andre Dawson is given five consecutive intentional walks in one game; Michael Jordan gets away with moves on the basketball court for which any normal player would be whistled for walking; a hockey "enforcer" like Dave Schultz draws a penalty before he even drops his gloves. What do these three examples have in common (besides the fact that all three athletes have long ago retired)? Your students should recognize that the people involved are being given special treatment on the basis of their reputations. While reputations in sports may help or hinder an athlete's performance - in the above examples, preferential treatment by the referees undoubtedly helped Jordan, but the special attention given to Dawson and Schultz proved a hindrance to their efforts - a leader in the church must have a reputation that enables him to do his job more effectively. Have your students turn to I Timothy 3:6-7 and note the importance of reputation in the area of church leadership.

### **1. Experience in the Church**

The first point that Paul makes is that a church leader should not be a new convert. Several illustrations should demonstrate the importance of this restriction.

#### **A. The Lawyer**

Cyprian lived in the city of Carthage, in North Africa, during the great persecutions of Christians in the third century. He was one of the most prominent lawyers in the city. He became a Christian in his early forties. His talents were so obvious to everyone in the church that he was chosen to become the bishop of Carthage only two years after his conversion. While Cyprian made many positive contributions to the life of the church and eventually died a martyr's death, his insistence upon his own episcopal authority caused a rift between the churches of Rome and Carthage, and his obstinate stand against those who had given in under persecution split the North African church.

Cyprian is a good illustration of the danger of pride in a new convert. He was so jealous of his authority that he fought openly with the bishop of Rome, and his treatment of those who had succumbed to the terrors of the persecutions showed a lack of compassion on his part for the weaker brethren - especially since he conveniently left the city and hid out in the mountains during the worst of the persecutions.

#### **B. The Bureaucrat**

Ambrose lived about a century after Cyprian, after the persecutions were over and Christianity had become the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. He was an effective politician who had gained appointment at an early age to the post of governor of Northern Italy, with his capital in the city of Milan.

The church in Milan at that time was badly divided between those who affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity and those who denied it. When the bishop died, both sides wanted one of their own persuasion to become the new bishop, and a riot almost broke out. When Ambrose went to the city's largest church to calm the disturbance, the crowd suddenly began crying out that Ambrose himself should become the new bishop - despite the fact that, though a recent convert, he had not even been baptized yet! He agreed to assume the post, and was quickly baptized and ordained to the priesthood before taking the office of bishop.

Ambrose, in fact, turned out to be an excellent church leader. He supported the doctrine of the Trinity and exercised tough discipline when it was needed, even against the emperor himself. The fact that he succeeded as a new convert does not invalidate Paul's teaching, however. The church chose him for all the wrong reasons, but God overruled their foolishness to accomplish His own purposes. The fact that new converts occasionally succeed in positions of leadership does not justify ignoring the precept Paul sets forth in I Timothy 3:6.

### **C. The Radical**

A more recent example is that of Eldredge Cleaver, a former Black Panther (a radical black supremacist group that advocated violence in the sixties) who underwent a much-publicized "conversion" to Christianity in the late seventies. Before long, he was appearing on talk shows and being interviewed for articles in Christian magazines, and his schedule was soon filled with speaking engagements in churches and Christian conventions. The wisdom of placing such a person in the public eye became evident, however, when he joined the Moonies - the Unification Church of Korean "messiah" Sun Myung Moon.

What is the point of all this? A person must have a reputation within the church before he is set aside to lead the church. A reputation as a good lawyer, a capable politician, or a celebrity of some other kind is simply not good enough. If a person has not established a solid reputation within the church for doing the sorts of things that a leader is expected to do, he should not be placed in a position of leadership. Pride is a seductive temptation for all of us, but especially for a young Christian. One who exalts a novice is setting him up for a great fall.

This is a real indictment of the way in which church leaders are often chosen today. When young men take it upon themselves to go to seminary, then go out seeking pastoral responsibility without ever having proven themselves in a church, they program themselves for failure, and often bring disgrace on the church. The church has the responsibility of developing leaders by giving them the opportunity to use their gifts under the supervision of the church leaders, so that those with leadership qualifications may gain the experience needed to equip them for pastoral ministry. Only then will the church be able to avoid the problem of calling inexperienced men to positions of church leadership.

As far as your students are concerned, help them to see the importance of gaining experience in the church through service. Whether or not they aspire to church leadership, they can only establish reputations as they involve themselves in the work of the church. A reputation grows out of activity. Your students should be involved in service now so that God can prepare them for greater service in the future, whether as leaders in the church or in some other capacity.

Of course, for some of your students, inexperience is not the point. One cannot gain Christian experience until one becomes a Christian. Conversion is clearly the first step, and your unsaved students should be challenged to make sure of their spiritual standing.

## **2. Experience in the World**

One need only mention the names of Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart (disgraced televangelists) to recognize the need for Christian leaders to have a good reputation in the outside world. If the Christian church existed only for its own sake, the reputation enjoyed by its leaders outside its walls would be of little significance. But one of the purposes for which the church exists is to proclaim the Gospel to those in the outside world - to draw the world into itself. Such a purpose is clearly hindered by those who have reputations associated with evil or hypocrisy. While Paul makes it clear in I Corinthians 1 that God chooses and uses the people the world considers weak and foolish, there is a big difference between weakness and sin and hypocrisy. When church leaders disgrace themselves, they also disgrace the church, and, what is far worse, they disgrace the Lord whose name they profess. Consequently, if a Christian is badly spoken of among non-Christians, it should be because of the good that he does, and not because of sinful behavior on his part.

What does this mean for your students? At this point, it means that they should be people who have a good reputation among unsaved neighbors, relatives, and friends. If they speak of themselves as Christians, people are watching them. What they do reflects on the church as a whole, and on Christ Himself. While many of your students may never become church leaders, they should all be good examples - people who have a good reputation in the world, and thus bring honor to the name of Christ.



## FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

## THE EXPERIENCE OF A LEADER

1. What is a reputation? How does a person get one? How may it be lost?
2. Is it harder to get a good reputation or to lose one? Is it harder to get a bad reputation or to lose one?
3. Why is it important that a person who wants to become a church leader be an experienced Christian? Why is it unwise to put a new convert in a position of church leadership?
4. Why is it important for a church leader to have a good reputation among non-Christians? How can a leader with a bad reputation hinder the work of the church?
5. Is it possible for a Christian to get a bad reputation for doing what is right? How? Is this what Paul is speaking against in I Timothy 3:7?



# **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER**

## **CHOSEN BY GOD**

### **Lesson Aim**

To help students see from the example of Moses that God chooses whomever He wants to become a leader of His people.

### **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:5** - "If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?"

### **Lesson Background**

In the remaining weeks of the quarter, we will focus our attention on Moses as an example of biblical leadership. In fact, when the author of the book of Hebrews wanted to underscore the superiority of Christ as the leader of His people, he compared him to Moses as the greatest example of leadership known to his readers. There are many valuable lessons your students can learn from his life.

In our democratic society, we have become accustomed to the practice of people choosing their own leaders. Often we naturally assume that the church should operate in the same manner. While in fact the church does play an important role in choosing leaders, we must first recognize that leaders are chosen by God. The role of the congregation is to recognize the choice that God has already made.

The account of the birth of Moses serves to illustrate this principle of divine choice. As you and your students think about the implications of Moses' miraculous preservation from death, take special note of the

way in which God uses the experiences of early life to prepare people for His service. A particularly important application for your students is found in the truth that God can bring good out of evil. Some of your students may come from less-than-ideal home situations. What they view as a handicap may be God's way of preparing them for the work He has for them to do.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin by asking the students whether they think popular election is the best way to choose leaders. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of choosing leaders by popular vote. For instance, they should note from their own experience of elections at school that such things often turn into popularity contests in which the most highly qualified people are often overlooked. On the national level, public office tends to be restricted to those who have the financial means to publicize themselves. Public relations experts present carefully-crafted "images" that often bear little relationship to the actual characters of the candidates. While popular election has its flaws as a method of choosing leaders, of course, it is generally superior to the alternatives - dictatorships in which the strong seize power for themselves or hereditary monarchies in which rulers are born to their positions, despite all-too-frequent lack of qualifications for rule.

How may this whole issue be applied to the leadership of the church? Should elders and deacons be elected by the congregation? Should they be appointed by some outside party (such as a bishop or a denominational board) or by those who are already officers in the church? While all of these methods have been used at one time or another in the history of the church, the basic fact is that church leaders are appointed by God. In Acts 20:28, Paul addressed the Ephesian elders as heads of the flock "over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers." Whether they had been appointed by the apostles or elected by the congregation, they had been chosen by God for the positions in which they served.

During the remainder of this quarter, we will be studying different aspects of Christian leadership as they are illustrated by the life of Moses. This great man of God certainly illustrates our first truth about leadership. He was chosen by God for the task he was to perform (in fact, as we will see in next week's lesson, the people as a whole didn't even want him to be their leader). At this point, have your students turn to Exodus 2:1-10 and read this familiar passage together.

### **1. A Sovereign Choice**

Israelite male babies were being slaughtered by the score as a result of Pharaoh's edict. Though the Jewish midwives refused to cooperate with the king's dreadful order, many must have been killed, although the people still increased in number. Among the many who died, one baby survived. Why? Clearly this child survived because God had a task for him to perform. God could have chosen any of the baby boys who escaped Pharaoh's nefarious scheme. For that matter, He could have preserved any child He chose to use. Yet God's choice fell upon one particular Israelite child.

When we ask ourselves why He chose this particular baby, we have no answers to give. Certainly God did not choose Moses because of something Moses had done, because he had not yet done anything. Some would suggest that God chose him because He knew what he was going to do, but that begs the question - Moses would have accomplished nothing had not God chosen him, prepared him, equipped him, and worked through him. The only answer remaining is that God chose Moses because God wished to deliver His people through this particular human being. The reason for the choice lies hidden in the mind of God.

Thus God chooses leaders for His church in the same way He chooses people for His church - through His sovereign good pleasure. Just as no man may stand proudly and presume to enumerate the good qualities for which God incorporated him into His kingdom, so no man may look with pride on a set of reasons why God has made him a leader in the church. A person becomes a leader because God chooses him for that purpose, and he is qualified to lead because God equips and prepares him to carry out his responsibilities. Leadership in the church is a manifestation of the sovereign work of God. Those who lead may claim no credit or praise for what God has made them.

## **2. A Choice Using People**

Next, have your students think through the passage and make a list of the people God used to preserve the life of Moses and sustain him through his early years. The list would include his parents, his sister, and Pharaoh's daughter. What did each contribute to making Moses the leader he was to become? His parents and sister played a key role in Moses' preservation. Miriam's quick wit brought about the unusual situation in which Moses' mother was being paid by Pharaoh to raise her own son while other Israelite mothers were forced to hide theirs from the authorities. Moses' mother gave him a firm grounding in the religion of his people in his early years (unlike our own day, a child was often nursed by his mother until he was about four years old, which would have given Moses' mother sufficient time with her son to introduce him to the faith of his fathers) - grounding that sustained him during the years in Pharaoh's court, where he received the best education in the world of that day, pagan though it was.

Thus we may see that God's choice of Moses was carried out through the people who surrounded him in his early years. Ask your students to think of the people who have influenced them the most as they have been growing up. They should recognize that God has been using these people, with all their strengths and weaknesses, to shape your students into the kind of people God wants them to be. How often do they complain about those closest to them instead of recognizing the formative role played by these people in their lives?

## **3. A Choice Using Circumstances**

The story of Moses' early life could easily be subtitled, "From the Outhouse to the Penthouse." No rags-to-riches story can match the drastic changes experienced by Moses during his childhood. While he would have been too young to recognize the danger to which he was exposed in infancy, he surely would have been aware of the great alteration in his life when his mother turned him over to Pharaoh's daughter and he was brought to live in the palace. Yet the change from rags to riches was also accompanied by the emotional upheaval of being separated from his biological parents and sent to live with strangers. No matter what the benefits of life in the palace must have been, it must have been a wrenching experience for Moses to be taken away from his parents, or, worse yet, to get the impression that his parents were giving him to someone else. Sigmund Freud would have a field day analyzing the negative psychological impact of such an experience on a child such as Moses.

In a day of family instability such as the one in which we live, it is probable that at least a few of the students in your class have known family upheaval not unlike that experienced by Moses. A large percentage of the children in our country know firsthand what it is like to be separated from one or both of their parents - the sense of rejection, the feelings of guilt, the sense of loss, the emotional adjustments. Children who experience such things are often scarred by them. They become bitter and angry, and proceed to ruin their own lives because they never are able to overcome the experience of family dissolution. It is vital to note at this point that Moses' unusual (and certainly difficult) family situation was a key part of God's work in Moses' life that prepared him for leadership. Encourage your students to view their own circumstances in the same light. God carries out His choice through circumstances, though sometimes unpleasant ones.



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER CHOSEN BY GOD**

1. How does God go about choosing leaders for His church?
2. Why does God choose the people He chooses for leadership positions?
3. How did God use the people around Moses to bring about the desired developments in his life?
4. In what way did God use unpleasant circumstances to shape Moses into the kind of person He wanted him to be?
5. What people and circumstances in your life might God be using right now to shape your character?





# **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER**

## **PREPARATION BY FAILURE**

### **Lesson Aim**

To impress upon students the way in which God uses failures to strengthen those who are to become leaders.

### **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:6** - "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil."

### **Lesson Background**

Nobody likes to fail. In fact, failure is so unpleasant that most of us go to great lengths to avoid it if at all possible. The truth, however, is that failure is a great teacher. After Thomas Edison had tried over a thousand different ideas for producing light from electricity using an incandescent bulb, he claimed that he was not discouraged because he now knew over a thousand methods that would not work. If Edison had given up in despair, I might be typing this lesson at my computer terminal by candlelight!

The ability to learn from failure without being discouraged is particularly important for leaders. Because those who lead others cannot afford to give up, and must set an example for others to follow, a positive response to failure is essential. As we examine the Scriptures, we find that God often taught the hard lessons of failure to those He intended to use in great ways. David spent years in the wilderness fleeing for his life from Saul before he became king. Thomas doubted Christ and Peter denied Him, but both went on to become great preachers of the Gospel. Moses, too, provides a good example of a man who learned to lead

through failure. He did not deliver the Israelites from Egypt until he was eighty years old, and all those years of training were certainly less than spectacular. From rejection by his own people to fleeing for his life from Egypt to the barren life of a shepherd in the wilderness in which the Midianites roamed, Moses knew failure and emptiness. Yet during all that time, God was teaching him lessons that would be invaluable when he led the nation of Israel out of Egypt and throughout the wilderness wanderings.

The main points of application for your students today relate to their responses to failure. Make sure they understand that failure is only beneficial when one responds to it rightly. They need to see the ways in which God can use failure in their lives and be encouraged to persevere rather than giving up when they fail at whatever it is they are attempting.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the class by asking your students what the following men have in common: John McGraw, Casey Stengel, Walt Alston, Sparky Anderson, Gene Mauch, Tom Lasorda, and Tony LaRussa. The boys in the class, at least, should recognize the men on the list as successful managers in major league baseball. What they may not recognize is that each of these men had either very brief and undistinguished major league playing careers, or else spent all of their time in the minors and never made it to the majors at all. Why is it that poor or mediocre players often make the best coaches? Why is it that Charlie Lau, one of the best hitting coaches in recent years, had such a poor lifetime average as a batter? Why do so few star players ever become successful managers? After discussing this for a while, your students hopefully will come to the conclusion that, for a star player, the game is just too easy. He has such great natural ability that he never really has to think too much about what he is doing, and thus is incapable of teaching it to someone else who has lesser skills. The man who can teach others effectively is the one who has struggled through repeated failure to learn how to do something. He is not only able to sympathize with a person who is struggling, but is able to help the person analyze his problems and make the necessary corrections. One who has never known failure has no conception of the hard work needed in order for most people to achieve success.

What is true in sports is also true in life. We learn from failure. God often teaches us the most important lessons of our lives through the failures we experience. If this is true for all Christians, it is doubly true for those God calls to lead.

### **1. The Formula for Failure - Overconfidence**

Our lesson today is taken from Exodus 2:11-25. Have your students turn to the passage and read over it together. Moses must have gotten some idea (probably from his parents) that God intended him for great things. But in these verses, we find three failures from which Moses was to learn important lessons he would use later in leading the people. His first failure stemmed from overconfidence.

Moses had every reason to be sure of himself. He had grown up in the palace and had been given the best education Egypt could provide. He surely had access to great wealth, and some have even suggested that he may have been heir to the throne (Ancient Egyptian records indicate that the pharaoh of the Exodus - Moses' contemporary - had a dream in his youth that he would be pharaoh some day, which seems to imply that he was not the primary heir to the throne. Could he have displaced Moses as a result of the incident in this passage? We have no way of knowing for sure.). As he grew to manhood, he naturally took an interest in the affairs of his people, who were suffering under Egyptian bondage. When he saw an Israelite being beaten by an Egyptian overseer, Moses stepped in and killed the Egyptian, then hid the body.

What does this incident indicate about Moses' attitude toward leadership? For one thing, it shows that he felt he had the natural right to step in and impose his will on others, even to the point of death. This attitude was certainly characteristic of the pharaohs, but was hardly one suitable for leading God's people. Secondly, he assumed that his position automatically qualified him as deserving of respect in the eyes of his people. As he soon found out, their response was one of suspicion - they thought that he was an Israelite on the outside and an Egyptian on the inside. After growing up in the palace, how could they expect him to be different from their other oppressors?

How many leaders, especially those who are young and inexperienced, fail because they try to impose their wills on others? How many assume they deserve respect when they have done nothing to earn it? For a Christian leader in particular, humility is an essential component of leadership. We have already talked about the necessity of a servant attitude toward others. We must also now note that dependence upon God is essential for effective Christian leadership. A leader who believes he has what it takes to guide the church successfully is sadly deceived. In the same way that Moses' efforts ended in failure and personal disaster - he lost his comfortable home, lost contact with his people, and probably never saw his parents again - those who do not depend upon God to give direction to their leadership usually lead their people astray. Fortunately, Moses learned his lesson. When God finally does call him to lead Israel, he is no longer the arrogant young prince, but "more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3).

## **2. The Flight from Failure - Discouragement**

After his failed attempt to lead Israel in his own strength, Moses had to flee the country. His own people spread the word about what he had done, and it came to the ears of Pharaoh. The king decreed that Moses must die, and the young prince had to flee for his life. He wound up in the desert, among the nomadic Midianites. There is no indication at this point that Moses entertained any notions of again attempting to lead Israel. He seems to have taken his failure as final. Like Elijah after the incident on Mount Carmel, where his great success only motivated Jezebel to put a price on his head and he became so discouraged that he asked God to take his life, Moses was ready to give up.

Ask your students how they respond to failure. Is their motto, "If at first you don't succeed, quit?" Use the example of Thomas Edison from the Lesson Background. Failure is intended to teach us important lessons about ourselves and about our work. A person who is discouraged clearly is not learning what God intends him to learn. While failure almost always produces an emotional letdown, it need not result in the kind of discouragement that leads a person to quit. Too many Christians read failure as "God closing the door" and decide that God's will is for them to do something else. They have nothing of the spirit of the great saints who have seen obstacles as stepping stones rather than stumblingblocks.

## **3. The Fear of Failure - Inactivity**

After failing in his efforts at leadership and being forced to leave Egypt, Moses got married and settled down to the peaceful life of a nomadic shepherd. Marauding desert tribesmen and wild animals were insignificant compared to the obstacle of Pharaoh and the world's greatest empire. Had Moses remained in the desert for the rest of his life, we would never know his name today. In fact, that probably is exactly what would have happened had not God intervened. Moses' response to failure is one to which all of us are tempted. He simply sat back and enjoyed the peace and quiet of a life without challenges. One who does nothing cannot fail, but he can't succeed, either. One who vegetates does not become a leader. Conclude the lesson by sharing an experience from your own life where God has taught an important lesson through failure, and encourage your students to seek lessons in the struggles they experience now, both at home and at school.



**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

**MOSES: THE PROFILE  
OF A LEADER  
PREPARATION BY FAILURE**

1. How do failures help to shape the character of a leader?
2. Why is someone who has experienced failure often a more effective leader than one who has only known success?
3. What mistakes did Moses make that led to his failure in Exodus 2?
4. What lessons can we learn from the way Moses responded to failure?
5. If you have failed repeatedly at a particular task, how can you know whether you should keep trying or give up? [Think about it; there is no one right answer to this question.]



# **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER**

## **THE CALL OF GOD**

### **Lesson Aim**

To communicate to students how God sets aside for His work those He intends to use in positions of leadership.

### **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:7** - "He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap."

### **Lesson Background**

Today's lesson is a difficult one in the sense that the call of Moses as described in the third and fourth chapters of the book of Exodus is anything but typical. Unfortunately, too many people today view it as typical in the sense that they perceive inner conviction as definitive in determining whether or not a person has been set aside by God for a position of leadership. Consequently, the first part of today's lesson will be devoted to discussing what we are *not* intended to learn from the passage in question. Students should realize that the voice of God today speaks through His people. Those who are called by God to lead the church are set apart as their calling is recognized by the members of the church. We should not seek voices or visions, and inner conviction must always be subject to the confirmation of the congregation at large.

That having been said, we should also note that the description of Moses' call has much of a positive nature to teach high school students today. Moses, in this passage, learned the lesson that God equips the one He calls. This lesson is important for your students to understand. It matters little what abilities they

may or may not have at this point. If God wants to use them in positions of leadership, He will equip them with the skills they need. Moses' excuses were nothing more than a mask for his lack of confidence in God. His faith needed strengthening. As we will see next week, God did strengthen his faith - through the experience of exercising leadership in a very difficult set of circumstances.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the lesson by asking your students how a person knows that God has called him to a position of leadership. The suggestions they bring out will probably include such things as gifts, experiences, and internal conviction. Next ask them how Moses knew that God had called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Hopefully, they will remember the incident of the burning bush in Exodus 3. Have them turn to that passage and read the first ten verses.

### **1. The Uniqueness of Moses' Call**

Obviously, those called by God to positions of leadership today should not expect to find themselves confronted with burning bushes in their back yards. Moses experienced a unique call to a unique responsibility. Unfortunately, too many who aspire to leadership in the church today expect some similar experience, whether it be a voice from heaven, a vision, or some inner sense of divine vocation. But Moses' experience is no more a model for God's call to ministry than is Gideon's fleece a model for biblical decision-making. If Moses' call is not to be a model for us, then of what value is this account?

### **2. Lessons from Moses' Call**

The important lessons to be learned about the call to leadership from this passage come from the conversation between Moses and God that follows the incident of the burning bush. In this conversation, which takes up the remainder of chapter three and most of chapter four, we find Moses responding to God's call with questions, objections, and excuses, and God reassuring him that He was not making a mistake. Your students should note the following:

#### **A. The Value of Humility**

Moses' first question, recorded in Exodus 3:11-12, is a very healthy and legitimate one. It shows that Moses recognizes his own weakness and inability to perform the job to which God has called him. Such humility is essential for effective Christian leadership. Anyone who thinks he is able to lead the church effectively either misunderstands the nature of the task or else overestimates his own ability, and probably both. Moses knew he was unequal to the task, but God encouraged him by painting a picture of a scene that took place after the deliverance of Israel from Egypt had been accomplished. As far as God was concerned, the job was as good as done.

Ask your students why humility is so important for a Christian leader. Hopefully they will be able to see that only a leader who depends upon God rather than himself can hope to succeed. Though it took Moses eighty years to recognize his own weakness, God clearly had taught him that lesson well. Moses was now ready to depend upon God instead of the strength of his own arm.



## **B. Knowing God**

Moses' second question takes up the remainder of the third chapter of Exodus. Moses rightly realizes that the Israelites will not follow a God unless they know who that God is, so he asks God to identify Himself. In doing so, God uses the name YAHWEH, an obscure form of the Hebrew verb "to be." God thus identified Himself as the self-existent One. He also spoke of Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - the same God worshiped by the patriarchs of the nation of Israel. He then gave Moses instructions about approaching the elders of Israel and laying their demands before Pharaoh. He warned Moses of Pharaoh's stubbornness and the plagues that would follow, and encouraged him by speaking of the ultimate success of his work.

The important lesson to be learned here is that a person cannot lead God's people unless he knows the God in whose behalf he leads. Moses could not lead Israel unless he knew who God was. The same is true of church leaders today. Those who do not know God cannot hope to lead His people. Thus those who aspire to positions of Christian leadership must first be sure of their own relationship to God and pursue ever-increasing knowledge of Him in their daily lives.

## **C. The Recognition of God's People**

At this point, Moses moves from legitimate questions to excuses that demonstrate his lack of faith. In Exodus 4:1-9, Moses asks a question that God has already answered. In 3:18, God had already told Moses that the elders of Israel would listen to his words. Moses now questions God further on this point. God graciously reassures him by giving Moses signs that will enable him to convince skeptics of the legitimacy of his call. It is interesting to note that the only ones for whom Moses had to use the signs were Pharaoh and the members of his court, who did not believe him anyway (4:29 says that Moses performed the signs for the elders of Israel, but gives no indication that it was necessary for him to do so). The elders of Israel accepted Moses' word, while the unbelievers refused even the evidence of the signs.

The significance of this section for your class lies in the fact that Moses recognized the importance of having the support of the people he had been chosen to lead. If those over whom a person exercises authority do not recognize his authority or respect his leadership, he will be incapable of leading. Thus it is not enough for a person to be sure that God has called him to lead. That call must be recognized and confirmed by the church. Without the church's acknowledgment of a person's gifts and calling, that person will not be able to lead God's people.

## **D. God Equips the Ones He Chooses**

Moses' final objection (4:10-17) also shows a lack of faith on his part. He had already acknowledged his own weakness, but he seems to lack confidence in God's strength. Like many who have stood before God's people in the intervening years, Moses lacked confidence in his speaking ability. He clearly forgot that God had made him the way he was and could also give to him whatever he needed to complete the assigned task. At this point, God became understandably frustrated at Moses' recalcitrant attitude. He then gave him Aaron as a spokesman, though such a step was clearly unnecessary. Sometimes God gives us what we want even though we would be far better off trusting Him for what He has promised to accomplish. Our methods are simply not as good as those God has already chosen.

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by reviewing the basic elements of God's call to Christian leadership, including both what that call involves and what it does not. Encourage them to seek in their own lives for the roles God would have them play in the church.

**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

**MOSES: THE PROFILE  
OF A LEADER  
THE CALL OF GOD**

1. In what sense should the call of Moses in Exodus 3 not be considered a model for the way God calls a person to Christian leadership today?
2. How does God call a person to leadership in His church today?
3. Which of Moses' questions in Exodus 3-4 were good ones, and which were not? Why?
4. What good characteristics of leadership are displayed by Moses in these chapters?
5. In what ways does Moses show lack of faith in his conversation with God at the burning bush?



# **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER**

## **PREPARATION BY EXPERIENCE**

### **Lesson Aim**

To demonstrate to students how God uses the experiences of our lives to prepare us for the work He has for us to do.

### **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:8** - “Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain.”

### **Lesson Background**

Those who enter the job market for the first time often face frustration in seeking employment. It seems that everyone is looking for people with experience. But how is a person to gain experience if no one will hire someone who lacks it? Leadership, like many kinds of employment, requires experience. A leader in the church is not to be a novice. How, then, is the necessary experience to be gained? We may rest assured that God will shape the circumstances in the life of one He calls to be a leader so that he is able to gain the requisite experience.

Moses arrived at the burning bush with some important experiences already under his belt. These included the years in the Egyptian court, which provided him with a fine education and an intimate knowledge of the language and customs of the Egyptians that would stand him in good stead in his contest with Pharaoh. The years in the desert with the Midianites provided him with a knowledge of the territory through which the Israelites would later wander for forty years. Though the knowledge he had gained in these areas was important, he still had not learned to lead. In fact, his only effort to do so was a miserable

failure (the killing of the taskmaster), and he arrived at the burning bush with a humility so profound that it bordered on inferiority - he certainly did not think of himself as a leader.

At this point, God was ready to build his leadership skills. The only way for Moses to learn how to lead was by practice. Exodus 5-11 records for us the baptism by fire through which Moses was transformed from a timid shepherd into a bold leader capable of shepherding a multitude of people through the desert for forty years. This was on-the-job training at its most demanding. Like the child who is taught to swim by being thrown into the deep end of a swimming pool, Moses began his leadership training by confronting the most powerful man in the world of his day - the Egyptian Pharaoh. Through the series of conflicts that followed, God shaped Moses and prepared him for an even harder job, that of leading a refractory people through the desert on their way to the Promised Land.

The point of this lesson for your students is that God prepares those He calls. Anyone who is called by God to a position of leadership in the church will first be prepared for the work he is to do by means of the experiences of life through which God brings him. Even now, some of your students may be going through that preparatory stage in which God is equipping them for leadership in the church in the future.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the lesson by asking your students why some instructors (or parents, as the case may be) try to teach a child to swim by throwing the child into the deep end of a swimming pool. Such parents obviously have the philosophy that the only way to learn something quickly is to be forced to do it. They believe that the child will overcome his fear if he is placed in a situation where he must literally sink or swim.

Moses' response to God's call was one of fear, compounded by a feeling of inadequacy. While God mollified his fears somewhat by giving him miraculous signs to show to his own people and providing Aaron as a mouthpiece, the Lord basically took Moses, threw him into Egypt, and told him to swim. In the process, Moses learned much about the foolishness of his own fears in the face of the power of God.

Have your students turn to Exodus 5-11. These chapters dealing with the plagues should generally be familiar to your students, so very little time need be spent on the actual content of the chapters. Instead, divide the passage among your students, assigning a chapter to each person or group, and have that person or group look for ways in the assigned chapter that God used Moses' experiences to teach him lessons essential for effective leadership. Then have the groups report back and share their findings. They should come up with some of the following ideas:

### **1. Group #1 - Exodus 5**

Moses learned several important lessons right away. The first is that God's word means nothing to an unbelieving world. Christian leaders today often face the problem of justifying their actions to a world that rejects the basis for their decisions. In the same way that the word of God meant nothing to Pharaoh, it carries no weight with the decision-makers in society today.

Secondly, Moses discovered the fickle nature of popularity, even in the Christian community. He was hailed by the Israelites as a deliverer until his confrontation with Pharaoh produced more hardship for the people. The short-sightedness of the Israelites, who were willing to forgo freedom if only their bondage could be made marginally tolerable, is too often characteristic of the attitudes against which leaders in the church must struggle. The leader must be able to take the long-range view of things even if his people are unable to see beyond their noses.

Thirdly, Moses learned the necessity of prayer for effective Christian leadership. It didn't take him long to find that he couldn't handle the job on his own. This time, he didn't kill any taskmasters; instead, he turned to God.

## **2. Group #2 - Exodus 6**

Though this second group has a chapter that consists partially of a genealogy of Moses, they should be able to find a couple of lessons of value in it. First of all, they should note that God keeps His promises. A leader must have confidence in God even when he has little confidence in himself. Secondly, a leader is sometimes susceptible to the discouragement of his people, which can be contagious. The extra burdens were making it hard for the people to take the idea of freedom seriously, and their depression discouraged Moses and Aaron as well. Moses was reluctant to go to Pharaoh again, since even his own people refused to respond to his words. Even though Moses was discouraged, however, he did the right thing - he turned to God rather than slinking away into a corner and sulking.

## **3. Group #3 - Exodus 7**

Three lessons stand out in this chapter. The first is that the leader of God's people bears an awesome responsibility because he represents God Himself before the congregation. This does not mean that the leader is perfect, or to be obeyed without question, but it does mean that the leader stands in an exalted and fearsome place. One who aspires to Christian leadership should not do so lightly (see James 3:1).

The second lesson is that God gives power to perform any task He assigns. The common shepherd's staff became in the hand of Moses a great sign of the power of God. Some of your students may be familiar with the song written about Moses by Ken Medema, based on the call of Moses in Exodus 3-4, which captures beautifully the fact that God is able to turn very common things (and people) into instruments of great power when they are offered to Him.

The third lesson here is that the power of God is hidden from the eyes of the world because of Satan's ability to counterfeit God's work. While it may seem perfectly clear to Christians that God is at work in a certain area, the world will not be able to see it, because to them what is happening is no different from the things they are able to do.

## **4. Group #4 - Exodus 8**

The first lesson Moses learned in this chapter was that God's people should not put their confidence in the world to produce justice. Too many Christians today think that the solution to the problem of abortion will come about through political means. As many are finding out, however, applying political pressure only works as long as the pressure continues to be applied. When the plagues were removed, Pharaoh hardened his heart. When the threat of losing an election is removed or comes from the other side, many politicians change their convictions.

Secondly, Christian leaders must recognize that Satan's power only extends so far. The magicians of Egypt could mimic the plagues up to the point of actually creating life. This they could not do. Satan's power is great, but it is limited. Christian leaders should never get discouraged by the seeming successes of Satan's representatives.

The third lesson here is that God does distinguish between those who belong to Him and those who do not. While it may sometimes seem, as it did to Asaph in Psalm 73, that the righteous suffer while the

wicked prosper, God knows those who belong to Him. Christian leaders must always encourage their people with this, despite appearances.

## **5. Group #5 - Exodus 9**

This chapter merely intensifies some of what we have already seen. The only point to be noted here is the wisdom Moses had clearly gained through his experience in that he did not believe Pharaoh, even when the monarch confessed his sin and begged for intercession. Discernment is an important characteristic of a leader, who cannot afford to be taken in by those who would “get religion” for their own purposes.

## **6. Group #6 - Exodus 10**

The major lesson of this chapter is that leaders will often be tempted by compromise, especially in the course of long and difficult battles. In the same way that Pharaoh tried to get Moses to leave the women and children behind, and later the livestock, so that the people would continue to have ties in Egypt, Christians today are often tempted to compromise principle in order to gain a partial victory (again, the abortion controversy comes to mind; why should abortion be permitted in cases of rape and incest if the baby in the womb is a human being?). Christian leaders must know biblical principles well enough that they recognize when they are being compromised and are able to avoid such compromises.

## **7. Group #7 - Exodus 11**

The final lesson that leaders must understand is that when God’s victory comes, it is complete. The Egyptians suffered horrible losses, and not only let the Israelites go, but also sent them away with great wealth. God will ultimately glorify Himself and bring shame and defeat to His enemies. Only a leader who has confidence in this truth will be able to stand before his people and encourage them when times are tough.

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by summarizing and reviewing the lessons God taught Moses. Note that Moses made use of these lessons during the wilderness wanderings, as we will see in future weeks. Furthermore, all Christians, whether they are leaders or not, need to understand these things in order to serve God in a world no less hostile to God’s truth than that over which the Egyptians ruled.



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER PREPARATION BY EXPERIENCE**

Turn back to the passage we considered at the beginning of the quarter - I Timothy 3:1-7. How did God use the experiences of the first eleven chapters of Exodus to develop in Moses some of the qualities listed by Paul in this passage? Take each characteristic and match it with an incident described in Exodus that could easily have helped Moses to develop that quality. Then explain how the experience may have helped to prepare Moses for his leadership responsibilities.



# **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER**

## **LEADERSHIP CONFIRMED BY POWER**

### **Lesson Aim**

To demonstrate to students how God uses those He chooses by exercising His power through them.

### **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:9** - "They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience."

### **Lesson Background**

One would think the plagues would be enough. After God had visited ten devastating plagues on Pharaoh and the Egyptians, resulting in the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt with wealth beyond anything they could have imagined, Moses should have been the man of the hour. How could anyone question his leadership again after the way God had worked through him in Egypt? Yet within days of the beginning of the Exodus, the Israelites were accusing Moses of trying to lead them to their deaths. Why did they have no confidence in this man?

When God chooses a person to lead His people, He displays His power through that person. In Moses' case, this was true not only through the plagues, but also through the deliverance at the Red Sea. Yet the fact that God used Moses in such clear and obvious ways did not make his leadership task any easier. In the same way that Jonathan Edwards was voted out of his pulpit after leading the greatest revival in American history, Moses drew criticism almost as soon as he led the Israelites out of Egypt. God's power certainly reassured Moses, but the people seemed to take the attitude, "What have you done for me lately?"

Your students need to learn three lessons from today's session, which focuses on the account of the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14. In the first place, they should realize that God uses those He chooses. Secondly, the fact that God uses someone by exercising His power through that person serves as a confirmation of that person's leadership to those he is responsible for leading. And thirdly, even if those under the leader fail to recognize the divine appointment (as many of the Israelites did), the fact that God works through a person certainly encourages the leader by giving him confidence in his divine calling.

## **Lesson Procedure**

The life of a professional athlete is in some ways not an easy one. Despite the good money they make, they are subject to the whims of fickle fans who treat them like heroes one day and like bums the next. Mike Schmidt, perhaps the greatest third baseman in the history of baseball, was often booed unmercifully by the notoriously critical Philadelphia baseball fans. Those in the public eye must suffer the pains of public scrutiny. The same is true of leaders in the church. Because many of their actions and decisions are made in full view of the congregation, they are often subject to criticism. Moses was no exception. Have your students turn to Exodus 14 and read over the familiar story of the crossing of the Red Sea. As has been the case throughout the quarter, we will be looking for lessons about Christian leadership that may be derived from this passage and from the example of Moses.

### **1. The Leader and the Power of God**

Ask your students the question, "In this passage, how did God demonstrate that Moses was the man He had chosen to lead the Israelites?" They should be able to isolate several things, including the fact that God spoke to Moses and communicated to the people through him and the fact that God used Moses as the channel through which He exercised His power. Then ask the students why God did these things through Moses rather than simply carrying them out Himself. They should be able to conclude that, while God does not need human beings in order to accomplish His work, He chooses to use them. In particular, He sets aside leaders who become His spokesmen.

What should this tell your students about Christian leadership? First of all, they should realize that God will use the people He chooses to do His work. One who claims a calling from God but shows no indication of divine power in his ministry is fooling both himself and others. If there is no sign of God at work, the "leader" in question has not been chosen by God. Of course, it is important to note that a leader chosen by God may not always be used by Him immediately. Moses was set aside by God, but did not actually lead the people until he was eighty years old. David was anointed king by Samuel, but spent years fleeing from Saul in the wilderness before he ascended the throne.

Secondly, point out to your students that a leader chosen by God will minister in such a way that God gets the glory. Several times in this passage God speaks of bringing glory to Himself. Moses led the people, but not in a self-aggrandizing way. He was doing God's work, and God received the glory for it. A true Christian leader will not seek praise for himself, but will act in such a way that those under him understand that the power flowing through him comes from God.

### **2. Confirmation and Criticism**

One of the reasons God works through human leadership is to confirm that He has indeed chosen that person to be a leader of His people. Ask your students to find the verse in Exodus 14 that illustrates this truth (if they start at the beginning of the chapter, it will take them awhile, since such confirmation is found

in the last phrase of the final verse of the chapter). God equips people and places them in positions of leadership because he intends His people to place their confidence in those He has set aside as He continues to work through them. While that confidence is never to be absolute (after all, the Bereans were praised for checking up on Paul's expositions of Scripture), proven leaders deserve the respect of God's people.

Your students should also note from this passage that the praise of man is fickle, even for those whose lives clearly demonstrate the power of God at work through them. No sooner did Moses lead the Israelites out of Egypt than he was being criticized for leading them into an early grave. They saw the advancing Egyptian army and feared instant death. Even slavery would have been better than this! Like professional athletes, leaders often must suffer with the fickleness of their followers. Ask your students why people often turn against their leaders. In this case, the reason appears to have been fear (note that the disciples did the same thing when they found themselves in the middle of the Sea of Galilee during a storm, asking Jesus whether or not He cared if they died). Other reasons include false expectations or personal disappointments and disagreements. Anyone who serves in a position of leadership will quickly learn that it is impossible to please everyone all the time, and also that there are some people that he will be unable to please anytime. One of the great burdens of leadership is the temptation to become discouraged when faced with the criticism of those one is trying to serve. Leaders must learn the hard lesson that their sense of well-being and satisfaction cannot be derived from the responses of those around them.

### **3. Confirmation and Encouragement**

Because of the discouragements faced by Christian leaders, the exercise of God's power is intended to benefit them as well as communicate something to the people under them. If Christian leaders depend upon the praise of their people to keep them going, their lives will be like roller coasters. As people's attitudes change, the leader will climb the heights of joy and sink to the depths of discouragement. A leader cannot function effectively under such circumstances. If he depends upon the response of his people as the source of his confidence, he will become their follower rather than their leader. This is why God Himself acts to give His chosen leaders confidence. As those leaders see God working through them, they have no need of the kind of stroking that comes from human approval. The smile of God means far more than the praise of men. A wise leader is thankful when his people show their appreciation for him, but he is not fooled into thinking that their approval is the source of his happiness.

In the passage before us, God not only encouraged Moses by making him the channel through which He exercised His power, but even prodded Moses to take a little bit of initiative (see verse 15). Having received from God the knowledge of what he was to do, Moses should have had the confidence to do it. Dependence upon God means being willing to step out in obedience once His way has been made clear. As the account of Israel in the wilderness continues, we will see Moses developing the kind of confidence that comes from knowing that God is at work in one's life and ministry.

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by reminding the students of the relationship between God's power and the work of a Christian leader. Not only does God exercise His power through human vessels, but He does so in order to confirm His choice of that person to those with whom he has been entrusted, and also to encourage the leader himself in the face of criticism and discontent that are sure to come. Encourage your students to show appreciation for their leaders in the light of the burdens they bear in ministering in God's church.



**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

**MOSES: THE PROFILE  
OF A LEADER  
LEADERSHIP CONFIRMED BY POWER**

1. Why does God do His work in this world through people rather than simply doing it Himself?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How does the exercise of God’s power through a Christian leader affect the people over whom that leader has been placed?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. When God exercises His power through a person, what effect is that intended to have on the person himself?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Why do people often criticize their leaders?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. To what extent should a leader pay attention to the criticism of those under him? What are the values and limitations of such criticism in the life of a Christian leader?





# **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER**

## **PRAYER, THE KEY TO LEADERSHIP**

### **Lesson Aim**

To help students see the necessity of constant dependence upon God in the life of a Christian leader.

### **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:10** - "They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons."

### **Lesson Background**

Only a person who bears the weight of responsibility is able to gain a true measure of his own weakness. Christian leaders are confronted almost daily with their inability to meet the demands placed upon them. Where they are unable, however, they have learned that God is able. For this reason, prayer plays an important role in the life of any Christian leader. It is through prayer that he acknowledges his dependence upon God, and by means of prayer that he cries out to God for the help he needs to fulfill his responsibilities.

Today's lesson is drawn from the two narratives contained in Exodus 17. Here we find Moses facing challenges he simply cannot handle - one from within and one from without. He responds to both in the same way - by going to God in prayer (most commentators agree that the raised hands during the battle with the Amalekites symbolize the prayer through which a believer seeks the aid of the Lord). Your students need to learn the important lesson that a Christian leader's strength lies in trusting God rather than himself. Moses was not weak because he could not handle the crises he faced, but rather wise because he brought them to God.

## **Lesson Procedure**

The President of the United States is a lonely man, especially in times of crisis. Though he is surrounded by advisers of all kinds, in the end the tough decisions, in which the fate of millions sometimes hangs in the balance, belong to him alone. Harry S. Truman kept a sign on his desk that said, “The Buck Stops Here.” While it is comforting to have a leader who is willing to take responsibility without trying to “pass the buck,” this is not the pattern of leadership after which the Christian leader should model himself. To see that dependence, not independence, is the proper model for the Christian leader, we again turn to the example of Moses, this time as illustrated in Exodus 17. Have your students read over the chapter and make sure they understand the basic elements of the two incidents described there.

### **1. A Christian Leader Depends Upon God**

Ask your students to find the different ways in which the incidents in this chapter reveal Moses’ dependence upon God. They should quickly realize that both crises caused Moses to turn to God in prayer (though perhaps not all will recognize the upraised hands during the battle as a symbol for prayer). Then ask them why it is important for a Christian leader to pray. As they bring out ideas, make sure the following are noted.

First of all, prayer reminds the leader of the true source of his strength. Egotism is a terrible temptation for anyone in a position of authority. It is far too easy for someone who has seen God work through him in the past to begin to think that he can do it on his own. As we will see in the last lesson of the quarter, Moses himself ultimately succumbed to this temptation. But prayer keeps the leader’s mind on God. The more he prays, the easier it becomes to remember the source of his strength.

Secondly, prayer is an outlet through which the leader can express his frustrations. As we see in verse 4 of this chapter, Moses vented his frustrations before God in a way that he could never do before the people. God’s ears are open to the cries of His people, and those cries in themselves have therapeutic value. Like a caring Father, God invites His children to pour out their fears before Him.

Thirdly, Christian leaders need to go to God because He is the only One who can deal with the problems they face. Whether Moses faced a rebellious people or a hostile enemy, he knew he was confronted with more than he could handle. God, however, could solve the problems very easily. Both the miraculous water and the miraculous victory came directly from God.

Christian leaders today must also seek God for help in dealing with the problems they face. Ask your students what kinds of problems leaders in churches today must confront. They should include doctrinal and practical issues, interpersonal conflicts, and marriage and family problems in their list. Wisdom is needed to interpret and apply God’s Word rightly, and this wisdom only comes from God. Leaders must therefore seek Him in order to obtain that wisdom. Furthermore, God has the power to change hearts and change situations in a way that mere men could never do. The leader must therefore turn to God regularly if he is ever to lead the church effectively.

### **2. A Christian Leader Depends Upon Others**

A leader is often pictured as a lone hero on a white horse leading the charge against the enemy. In fact, the biblical model involves not a lone figure, but a leadership team. Ask your students how the team concept of leadership appears in the incidents of Exodus 17. They should recognize that, in both cases, the elders of Israel provided Moses with support. In the first case, their presence provided support when he

moved away from the people and struck the rock from which God gave them water. In the second case, Aaron and Hur held up Moses' arms when he got tired, enabling Joshua to conclude the battle successfully.

One of the things that made Moses' task as leader of the Israelites so difficult is that he constantly faced rebellion among the people he was supposed to be leading. For this reason, it was doubly important that he received support from the leaders of those same people. While we will be looking at this issue more carefully next week (and comparing it to the eldership structure mandated by the New Testament), have your students come up with other examples of biblical leaders who learned the importance of human support in their work of leadership. The list would include Paul and the numerous helpers he had in his ministry, the kings and the prophets, Elijah and Elisha, and even Jesus and the disciples.

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by encouraging your students to support the leaders of the church, both with their prayers and with their presence.



**FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

**MOSES: THE PROFILE  
OF A LEADER  
PRAYER, THE KEY TO LEADERSHIP**

1. Why is it important for church leaders to pray regularly?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What kinds of problems do church leaders face that necessitate prayer?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why should a church leader not be a loner who bears all the responsibility of leadership by himself?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Why is the support of others in the church necessary in order for a leader to fulfill the role to which God has assigned him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What are some ways in which you can support the leaders of your church as they carry out their responsibilities?



# **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER**

## **THE WISE USE OF AUTHORITY**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students the difference between a leader and a dictator by demonstrating the importance of delegating responsibility and sharing the burdens of leadership.

### **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:11** - "In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything."

### **Lesson Background**

"If you want something done right, do it yourself." This familiar expression conveys the frustration felt by anyone in a place of authority who gets subpar work from someone to whom he had delegated a task. But it also communicates the egotism to which those in authority are often subject - the feeling that no one else is capable of doing anything right. An old Amish proverb contains the same kind of thinking: "The whole world is crazy but for me and thee - and sometimes I wonder about thee."

As we saw last week, leaders constantly face the temptation to be loners, bearing their burdens apart from God and aloof from those over whom they rule. God clearly never intended His chosen leaders to act independently from His guidance. But He also never intended them to function without human help. We saw last week the importance of giving support to those in positions of leadership, as the elders of Israel accompanied Moses when he went to strike the rock from which God provided water, and as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands while Joshua was fighting the Amalekites. This week, we will focus on the fact that God deliberately designed the leadership structure in His church to be plural rather than singular. Since

every leader has strengths and weaknesses, no one person is capable of leading a church alone. God intended for churches to be led by leadership teams - men who would be able to complement one another's strengths and compensate for one another's weaknesses. Any man who tries to lead alone quickly becomes the victim of "burnout."

Moses found out about burnout shortly after the Israelites left Egypt. The people made constant demands on his time, and the resulting pressure wore Moses out and frustrated the people who were unable to get to him with their problems without an enormous amount of waiting. Somewhat surprisingly, it was Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, who proposed the solution to the problem. He advised Moses to create a network of lesser judges to assist him in handling disputes. God obviously approved of the arrangement (Exodus 18:23), and the result was more effective leadership for the nation.

The main point to be conveyed to your students today is that plural leadership is God's design for His church. We will look at both the example of Moses and at the plural eldership established in the churches of the New Testament. Help your students to understand the value of a leadership team. In the same way that the church is described as a body, the leaders of the church function as an organism, each performing different tasks according to their varied gifts, with each compensating for the weaknesses of the others through exercising his particular strengths.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the lesson by having your students look up Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, and 24:6. What do these three verses have in common? Why is it important for kings and military leaders to have numerous advisers as they rule and plan for battle? In what way can a multitude of counselors make the difference between defeat and victory?

The lesson of these verses is one Moses needed to learn if he was going to be an effective leader of the nation of Israel. God taught it to him in a somewhat unexpected way, through a person one might not have anticipated. Have your students turn to Exodus 18 and read through the chapter.

### **1. Moses and Jethro**

After reading through the chapter, ask the students to describe Moses' typical work day in the wilderness. Why was this procedure a poor use of Moses' time? Why did it frustrate the people? Why did it contribute to injustice? Remind your students that at this point there were tens of thousands of Israelites - far too many for Moses to oversee personally. He could devote very little time to each individual case, and some were surely slighted in the process. Furthermore, the amount of time it took to get to see Moses must have been unbearable, and justice delayed is justice denied. Jethro's suggestion was an excellent one - in essence, he advised Moses to set up a bureaucracy. This freed Moses for spending time with God and allowed him to concentrate his attention on the most difficult cases, giving them the time they needed and deserved.

Ask the students if they remember who Jethro was. Obviously, he was Moses' father-in-law, but we also know that he was the priest of Midian (Exodus 3:1). In short, the man was a pagan religious leader, though he obviously had great respect for the God of Israel (Exodus 18:9-12, 21, 23). Like many men of his day, he believed that there were many gods, and that each tribal god had jurisdiction over his own people and their land (this belief is known as *henotheism*). The fact that he was a pagan did not mean that his advice was bad advice, however. Jethro told Moses to implement the plan only if God approved (verse 23), and the fact that Moses did institute the bureaucracy indicates that God did indeed favor the idea.



Have your students consider how the new plan proposed by Jethro would have helped the various groups of people involved. Its benefits for Moses were obvious. How would it have helped the people? How would it have helped those who were chosen to serve as judges? What would the nation as a whole have gained from the implementation of the plan? Besides noting the benefits for the nation of Israel, also point out to the students in passing the fact that God can occasionally communicate wisdom to His people through those who are not believers. Just because an idea comes from a pagan source does not automatically mean it is a bad idea. God's Word provides the standard by which all truth is to be evaluated, but there will be times when concepts originating from pagan sources pass the test of truth, and may thus be used with great benefit by God's people.

## **2. Leadership in the New Testament Church**

Next, have the students turn to Acts 6:1-7. How is the situation described in these verses similar to that in Exodus 18? As in the problem faced by Moses, the leaders of the early church were not able to carry out their duties effectively because too many demands were being made on their time by a group of people too large for them to handle. The solution - delegation of responsibility - was just about the same as that employed by Moses. It allowed the apostles to devote their time to prayer and teaching, while others who were equipped to deal with practical concerns concentrated on them. A good leader thus delegates responsibility in a way that allows him to concentrate on his primary tasks without distraction, while others deal effectively with other matters of concern.

The New Testament also shows us that plurality of leadership involves more than delegating lesser responsibilities to others. Have the students read the following passages: Acts 11:26; 13:1; 14:23; 15:2; 20:17; Philippians 1:1. What do all these references have in common? They should notice that all refer to churches being led by a group of elders rather than a single pastor. [In the unit on the history of the church - Year II, Quarter 2 - we saw how church leadership had changed in the early years from the plural eldership of the New Testament to the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.] In the same way that the church functions as a body (I Corinthians 12) with each part complementing and serving the others, so the leadership team of a church is intended to operate in a complementary way. With a single leader, no matter how capable, the church will share his weaknesses. With a group of leaders, strength will result from the greater balance in leadership as men work together, combining their strengths and compensating for each other's weaknesses.

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by discussing some of the practical implications of this lesson for your church. If you operate with a plurality of elders, talk to the students about the benefits of the system for your church. If your church is too small to have more than one elder, talk about ways in which delegation of responsibility and shared authority can help provide effective leadership on a more informal level. In any case, emphasize to your students the fact that a leader is not to be a dictator or a "Lone Ranger" - God intends him to operate with the help of others. The church will only function in the way God intends when the leadership follows His designated pattern.



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER THE WISE USE OF AUTHORITY**

1. Describe the problems faced by Moses in Exodus 18 and the early church in Acts 6. How were those problems similar? How were they different?
2. How did the two groups solve the problems in a similar way?
3. How is delegation of responsibility beneficial to those in positions of leadership? How does it help those to whom responsibility is delegated? How does it benefit the group as a whole?
4. Why is a leadership team more effective than a single leader who bears full authority and complete responsibility for everything that happens?
5. In what ways do you see delegation of authority and sharing of responsibility at work in your own congregation?



# **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER**

## **CHALLENGES AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM**

### **Lesson Aim**

To illustrate from the life of Moses how a leader ought to approach the problems that inevitably accompany leadership responsibilities.

### **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:12** - "A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well."

### **Lesson Background**

A leader's greatest challenges come from among those he leads rather than from the outside. Complaints, criticisms, and even overt rebellion often mar the work of even the greatest leaders. Moses was no exception. Neither the Egyptians nor the Amalekites brought him his greatest pain. Instead, the most severe trials in his ministry came from his own people. The books of the Pentateuch are full of such trials, but today we will be concentrating on three examples of the opposition Moses encountered at the hands of his own people. These examples are found in the book of Numbers, chapters 11, 12, and 16.

The incidents with which we will be dealing this week involve complaints about food and two challenges to Moses' leadership - one from Aaron and Miriam and one from a group of aspiring priests. In each case, Moses provides a good example of how to handle such crises, since he took his case to God, continued to pray for his people even in their sin, spoke clearly to the people about the issues involved, and obeyed God in carrying out the judgment. Your students should also note how the humility of Moses shines

through in all of these challenges, as he refuses to become defensive and assert his authority. Instead, he lets God speak (and act) for him, resulting in vindication that he could never have accomplished on his own.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the lesson by asking your students what group of people generates the most problems for any leader. Is it those in the group he is leading, or those outside the group? Why is this true? They should recognize that it is those inside the group who cause most of the problems, since they are the ones with whom the leader is in almost constant contact, and they are readily susceptible to temptations to jealousy, complaint, and criticism. Every leader faces problems of this nature and must learn how to deal with them if he is to lead effectively. Again, Moses provides a good example of this type of leadership, and today we will look at three incidents from the book of Numbers that show how he handled problems of the sort we have just described. [Since we are dealing with rather lengthy passages, divide the class up into three groups, and have each group read one of the chapters. They should then describe the incident to the class when their turn comes, so that the entire class can respond to questions about the incident together.]

### **1. Complaints from the Fringe (Numbers 11:4-35)**

The first thing to notice about this incident is who starts the uproar. According to verse 4, “the rabble” - a rather colorful description of the non-Israelite hangers-on who had accompanied them out of Egypt - were the ones who raised the cry against the manna. Notice too the selective memory of these people concerning conditions in Egypt. Politicians say that people vote their pocketbooks - if the economy is good, they keep the incumbents in office; if money is tight, they want to throw the rascals out. In this case, the Israelites were “voting their stomachs.” For months now, they had been eating manna - the Lord’s miraculous provision - as they traveled through the wilderness toward the Promised Land (the incident with the spies does not occur until Numbers 13; the forty years of wandering has not even begun yet). The bland but healthful diet began to wear on some of them, and they started to complain.

As any church leader knows, the people who do the most complaining are the people who are not involved in much of anything. People who are active want to work to make things better. They chip in with their energy to bring about change. Those on the fringe, however, have the mentality that the church exists for their benefit. If they are not getting what they want, the church must be somehow deficient, and they begin to complain to anyone who will listen. Such malcontents often succeed in winning others over to their point of view, and soon the leaders of the congregation have to deal with a major uproar.

How did Moses deal with the problem of complaining in the congregation? First of all, he brought his problem to the Lord. It would have been very easy for Moses to vent his feelings before the congregation and lash out against those who were raising these unjust complaints. Instead, he maintained his composure before the people and brought his troubles before God, where he held nothing back, but let loose his frustrations in the ears of One who could not only sympathize, but also do something about the situation. God addressed the problem by giving Moses spiritual support to accompany the judicial support he had received in Exodus 18. Then he punished the people by giving them what they had asked for. He sent them meat - enough so that it came out of their nostrils. They got so greedy that the meat spoiled, and thousands died because of their greed (verse 33 could indicate either natural or supernatural means of death; in either case, it was the judgment of God against the complainers).

The main point regarding leadership that your students should glean from this incident is that frustrations should be brought before the Lord rather than before the people. If God has placed a person in a position of leadership, He will also give direction for responding to challenges to that leadership. Students

should also note that those who complain the loudest are often those who do nothing. Challenge them to avoid being among the complainers. They should strive to be those who contribute to solutions rather than those who contribute to problems for those under whom they serve.

## **2. Jealousy in the Leadership Team (Numbers 12:1-16)**

The second incident involves the complaint of Moses and Aaron about Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman. While on the surface this seems to be a case of racial prejudice (Cushites were Ethiopians, and probably dark-skinned), it was in reality a matter of jealousy, as verse 2 makes abundantly clear. This time, Moses didn't need to bring the matter before God. The Lord heard the complaints and called Aaron and Miriam into His presence. The fact that Miriam alone was punished with leprosy indicates that she was the real instigator of the trouble, with Aaron becoming a somewhat unwilling accomplice (this seems to have been a frequent problem with the rather spineless high priest - see also the incident of the Golden Calf in Exodus 32). Note that Moses then interceded for Miriam, and God responded by making her punishment a brief one.

Few leadership teams are able to function on the basis of true equality. When one person in a leadership group is the acknowledged head, it leaves room for jealousy among the others. In the same way that coups in Third World nations are often initiated by the vice-president or second in command, so those closest to the leader face the greatest temptation to jealousy. This is what happened with Aaron and Miriam. God takes such rebellion very seriously indeed. In fact, God's response was so swift that no action was required on the part of Moses except to intercede for his sister. Your students should note here that a leader prays for his people even when he has been wronged by them. He desires their good even when they desire his downfall. Only God can equip a man with this kind of selfless humility.

## **3. Ambition in the Ranks (Numbers 16:1-50)**

Sometimes the fact that leaders are chosen by God rather than on the basis of worldly qualifications generates a difficult situation. When someone in the congregation looks at the leader and thinks, "He's no better than I am," he's right! Yet the very fact that God chooses a person to lead gives that person an authority that sets him apart from others. The leader stands in a unique position, not because of his own personality, but by virtue of God's calling.

One of the distinctives of the Plymouth Brethren is that they recognize no clergy in their churches. They operate without ordained ministers because they believe that all Christians are equal before God. In their early years, however, the group went through numerous splits because some of the people among the Brethren accused others of "making themselves priests." They failed to recognize that, even though leaders are not "better" than others in the congregation, they nonetheless possess God-given authority.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram had the same problem. They aspired to the priesthood and accused the entire leadership team of "setting themselves above the Lord's assembly." They even made their cause sound pious by proclaiming that "the whole community is holy." They forgot, of course, that Moses, Aaron, and the others had not appointed themselves to positions of leadership, but had been placed in those positions by God. Moses again refrained from directly speaking out against those who challenged his authority, but brought his case before God and allowed God to judge the rebels. This time, however, God reaffirmed Moses' authority by using him as an instrument in the judgment. After the earth opened to swallow the rebels, Moses again interceded for the complaining congregation (would these people never learn?), and the priests became instruments of mercy as their incense halted the plague that God had sent among the complainers in the congregation.

The lesson for your students here is that, while leaders should love even the rebels and leave their judgment to God, they may serve as instruments of that judgment. It is right and appropriate for church leaders to take action against rebels in the congregation. As they follow biblical principles, they may become the instruments of God's judgment against those who would challenge the leadership He has established. While we do not often find the earth opening up to swallow rebels today, we do find in the New Testament the means for separating from the congregation those who would do it harm through constant stirring up of strife in the midst of God's people. Leaders must at times avail themselves of these provisions, while continuing to pray for those who are under discipline and show mercy to those who repent.

## **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by challenging the students to serve in the congregation in a way that does not cause grief to their leaders. While the lessons they learn today may be put into practice at some future date as leaders, they may be practiced today as members (or at least participants) in a congregation.



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER CHALLENGES AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM**

1. In the crises faced by Moses in this week's lesson, why was it important that he bring his complaints to God rather than voicing them before the people?
2. Why is it such a serious sin to challenge the authority of one whom God has placed in a position of leadership?
3. What causes people to complain? What is a more appropriate response for those who are dissatisfied with what is happening in their church or elsewhere?
4. Why are those closest to a leader often tempted to jealousy?
5. In America, we are used to the idea of democracy. After all, "All men are created equal." How can such a notion be abused in a way that stirs up trouble in a church? Which incident in today's lesson illustrates this danger?



# **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER**

## **THE BURDENS OF LEADERSHIP**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students the temptations that accompany leadership and encourage them to watch out for the pride that has led to the downfall of so many who have taken on the burden of leadership.

### **Memory Verse**

**I Timothy 3:13** - “Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.”

### **Lesson Background**

It would be very easy to get the idea from our studies thus far that Moses, after outgrowing his youthful indiscretions, matured into the ideal leader who never made a wrong decision. While it is certainly true that Moses provides a good model of leadership, he, like all who undertake great responsibility, had his moments of failure. His last and greatest mistake is recorded in Numbers 20:1-13. Here the Israelites were complaining again, this time about lack of water. While on a previous occasion, God had told Moses to strike a rock with his staff in order to provide water for the people, this time He told him to speak to it instead. Many commentators have pointed out that, according to I Corinthians 10, the rock was a symbol of Christ, and therefore was to be smitten only once. While this may be the reason why God told Moses to speak to the rock the second time, it is irrelevant to the purposes of this lesson. What is important is that Moses, in his anger and frustration with the people, not only spoke to them as if he and Aaron were producing the water for them, but also struck the rock in violation of God’s command. The result was that both Moses and Aaron were prohibited from entering the Promised Land.

The account of Moses' final failure as a leader provides a good opportunity for your students to review the lessons covered in this quarter, particularly those dealing with the life of Moses. In going over each story, they should recall the particular lessons about leadership that were emphasized, the positive illustrations of those truths, and then see how this final incident illustrates the same truths negatively.

## **Lesson Procedure**

Begin the lesson by asking your students to think of examples of leadership failures. The examples can be either from history, ancient or modern, or from current events. From American history, presidents such as Grant, Harding, and Nixon come to mind, or military leaders such as the incompetent Civil War General George McClellan. Your students doubtless will be able to come up with many others. While many of the examples your class compiles will involve people who were totally ineffective in positions of leadership, they may come up with a few who were generally good leaders, but suffered a single ignominious failure (some would put Nixon in this category; Grant certainly was successful as a military leader, though he failed miserably as a president). Often more can be learned from good leaders who failed than from those whose deficiencies disqualified them from effective leadership from the beginning. Today, we want to look at the final failure of a great leader - Moses, the subject of our studies this quarter. Have your students turn to Numbers 20:1-13 and read the account together.

Use today's lesson to review the positive examples of Moses' leadership that you have studied throughout the quarter. As you review each story, have your students analyze how Moses failed to do in this situation what he had done successfully in earlier crises.

### **1. Moses' Call (Exodus 3-4)**

Remind your students of Moses' attitude when God first called him at the burning bush. Moses considered himself inadequate for the task, and his questions showed a great deal of humility - even to the point where he exasperated God with his lack of faith. How did the lesson of humility escape Moses in the account in Numbers 20? Clearly, he forgot that the water came from God. He took the people's complaining as a personal affront against himself rather than recognizing it as an attack against God, and responded in anger (a product of pride in this case) rather than with humility. The result was the same kind of headstrong behavior that had gotten him into trouble with the Egyptian taskmaster so many years before. Humility is a lesson that must be relearned constantly, since pride is so much a part of us and such a great temptation for a leader.

### **2. The Plagues (Exodus 5-11)**

The main point of our study of the plagues was how God used Moses' experiences with Pharaoh to prepare him to lead the people out of Egypt and through the wilderness. Learning by experience presupposes that one will remember the lessons that have been learned. What lessons from Moses' earlier experience did he fail to put into practice in Numbers 20?

### **3. The Red Sea (Exodus 14)**

In our study of the crossing of the Red Sea, we saw that God confirms those He chooses for positions of leadership by exercising His power through them. Moses had been the channel of God's power on many occasions since then, but in Numbers 20 he evidently felt he still needed to prove himself before the people.

He neglected to leave his defense in the hands of God, and instead defended himself. The result was disaster. The minute a leader puts himself rather than God in the center of the picture, things get ugly fast.

#### **4. Enemies Within and Without (Exodus 17)**

In Exodus 17 Moses learned the importance of prayer. When we get to the account in Numbers 20, we again find him going to God in prayer, which is good. What he seems to have forgotten is that prayer is of little value unless accompanied by obedience. In Exodus 17, God told him to strike the rock, and he did so. In Numbers 20, he disobeyed God's instructions. His actions are reminiscent of those of Saul, who spared the goods of the Amalekites under the pretense of using their sheep and cattle as sacrifices (I Samuel 15). As long as Moses met the challenges of leadership with the awareness that he remained in the presence of God, he did well. But as soon as he forgot that he was in God's presence, he lost control, both of himself and of the situation. We should note in passing that, despite Moses' disobedience, God kept His word and gave the people water anyway (though Moses gave Him no glory for it).

#### **5. Team Leadership (Exodus 18)**

In Exodus 18, we saw the importance of team leadership, as Moses appointed elders to help him judge the people. Later, in Numbers 11, God provided other men in the congregation with the Spirit to enable them to give Moses spiritual support. By the time we get to Numbers 20, however, Moses seems to be making very little use of the supporters God has given him. Though Aaron was appointed by God to be Moses' spokesman, Moses seems to be doing the talking, with Aaron hanging in the background like an unnecessary appendage. Perhaps if Moses had availed himself of the help God had given him, he would have calmed down enough to avoid the tragic error that cost him the opportunity to enter the Promised Land.

#### **6. Grumblers and Rebels (Numbers 11,12, and 16)**

Last week, we saw how Moses handled the complaints and rebellions that occurred so frequently among the people in the wilderness. What did he do right in those incidents that he failed to do in the one in Numbers 20? To begin with, he vented his frustration before the people rather than before God. The fact that he went before the people in anger led directly to his failure in the situation. Furthermore, he seems to have forgotten his responsibility to love the people he was leading. He needed to leave judgment in God's hands while acting as the intercessor for the people's sins. Instead, he took it upon himself to pass judgment against them by his words, which then led to the action taken in disobedience to the command of God.

### **Conclusion**

Conclude the lesson by encouraging your students to become the kind of people that God can use as leaders. Let them know that the best way to do this is to be the best followers they can be, providing help and support to the leaders God has placed over them. As they support those in authority, they will learn the attitudes and skills needed to lead others in the future. Perhaps some of those in your class will some day be used of God to provide leadership within His church. Also be sure to remind them that a person cannot become a leader until he has become a child of God. There may be some in your class who have no part in the Body of Christ. Their first priority is to turn to Christ for salvation. Only then might He choose them for greater areas of responsibility.



## **FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT**

## **MOSES: THE PROFILE OF A LEADER THE BURDENS OF LEADERSHIP**

1. List the positive lessons about leadership that you have learned during this quarter. Which of these can you put into practice now? Which can you use to be a more helpful supporter to those over you?

2. List the negative lessons about leadership that you have learned during this quarter. What characterizes a bad leader? How can you avoid the kind of behavior and attitudes that mark the weak or worldly leader? How should you respond to those in authority over you who display these attitudes?