

What Makes a Leader a Leader?

Dub McClish

There are many books on the subject of leadership. Several companies offer special seminars on the subject. Countless words have been spoken and millions of dollars spent to discover the secrets of leadership. It is generally conceded that “good leaders are made, not born.” While some may be more naturally blessed in appearance, stature, voice or with opportunity, than others, some of history’s most powerful leaders have risen to the top without such advantages. Leadership may involve some luck (“being in the right place at the right time” or “knowing the right people”), but it will always be more a matter of skill in acquiring certain traits.

The Lord’s people ought to be keenly concerned about good leadership. No organization, including the church, can rise above its leaders. Those who would be defined as “leaders” in a local church would include its elders, deacons, and preachers, at least. Others who teach are also in a leadership role. Like many other positions, some are leaders “in name only,” while others truly are “out front.” In the interest of improving our leadership abilities, consider the following checklist:

1. **A leader provides direction.** The term “leader” necessarily implies as much. He is sure of where he is going and can provide guidance for others. He is able and willing to do what he leads others to do.
2. **A leader gets discouraged, but he keeps going.** He sees others idle who should be busy. He suffers defeats and falls short of some goals, but he doesn’t quit or give up.
3. **A leader gets exhausted, but he presses on.** In a battle, the commanding officer has to be a man who can stay awake when all others have fallen asleep. Elders and preachers and other hard workers get exhausted, but only the followers stop. The true leaders press on.
4. **A leader gets criticized, but he doesn’t quit.** Many a great project was nipped in the bud by withering criticism. Many a saint has had his zeal quenched by hypercriticism. The leader does not escape such, but he toils on in spite of it, as the greatest Leader did.
5. **A leader makes mistakes, but he learns from them, corrects them and becomes a better leader because of them.** Many people allow their mistakes to become millstones, dragging them down, but they are steppingstones to the true leader.

[**Note:** I wrote this article for and it was published in *The Edifier*, weekly bulletin of Pearl Street Church of Christ, Denton, TX, January 24, 1988, of which I was editor.]

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