

Leaders

A Bible Study on the Characteristics of Leaders

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Introduction:

What do leaders in the Christian community have to say about the character of a leader? Here's a sampling for challenge and inspiration:

"According to Scripture, virtually everything that truly qualifies a person for leadership is directly related to character. It's not about style, status, personal charisma, clout, or worldly measurements of success. Integrity is the main issue that makes the difference between a good leader and a bad one."¹ -John MacArthur

"A leader should be able to communicate in a nonargumentative, nondefensive and nonthreatening way - demonstrating gentleness, patience and teachability without compromising the message of the Word of God."² - Gene Getz

"True greatness, true leadership, is achieved not by reducing men to one's service but in giving oneself in selfless service to them." - Oswald Sanders

This study was designed for you to read each set of Bible verses and to answer the questions that follow. You are encouraged to take extra time for further study, prayer and reflection.

At the end of each week's study you will find suggestions for making it practical. It will be to your greatest advantage to select at least one and put it into practice

WEEK 1

A Person of Grace

"God saves us by His grace and transforms us more and more into the likeness of His Son by His grace. In all our trials and afflictions, He

sustains and strengthens us by His grace. He calls us by grace to perform our own unique function within the Body of Christ. Then, again by grace, He gives to each of us the spiritual gifts necessary to fulfill our calling. As we serve Him, He makes that service acceptable to Himself by grace, and then rewards us a hundredfold by grace.”³ - Jerry Bridges

Day 1 - Romans 3:21-24
How would you define grace?

What is so amazing about being justified freely by God’s grace?

Day 2 - 1 Timothy 1:12-14
What did God’s grace save you from?

How was it poured out?

How have you experienced His abundant grace in the last few months?

Day 3 - 1 Peter 5:10-11
What does God’s grace do in our suffering?

How does Peter respond to God’s grace?

Day 4 - Hebrews 4:14-16
What does it mean to approach the throne of grace?

Why can you approach confidently?

What will God give you in your time of need?

Day 5 - Jude 3-4
What are these godless men doing?

How do we cheapen the grace of God?

Day 6 - 1 Corinthians 15:9-11

Day 7 - Galatians 2:21

Making It Practical

1. Is the Christian life one of grace (something God does) or surrender (something we do)?
2. To get a fuller picture of the incomparable riches of His grace, list all the advances in your spiritual life you owe to His unmerited favor.
3. Take an extended time to boldly approach the throne of God and ask for an abundance of His grace in your life.

WEEK 2

Thirsty for God

"Nothing makes God more supreme and more central in worship than when a people are utterly persuaded that nothing--not money or prestige or leisure or family or job or health or sports or toys or friends--nothing is going to bring satisfaction to their sinful, guilty, aching hearts besides God."4 - John Piper

Day 1 - Psalm 42:1-4

What is going on inside a person when the soul is panting and thirsting for God?

How do we come to a place to desire God in this way?

Day 2 - Psalm 63:1-8

What kind of things are happening in your life when you are seeking Him?

Describe the worship of someone who is thirsty and seeking God.

Day 3 - Isaiah 26:7-9

What is key as you "wait" for the Lord?

When does the soul and spirit "long" for Him? What point do you think Isaiah was making?

Day 4 - Jeremiah 29:10-14

To whom and in what situation were these promises specifically given?

What is the difference between living for God out of required duty and out of a passionate heart?

Would you consider your relationship with God a "sacred romance?" Explain.

Day 5 - Isaiah 29:13-14

What keeps our hearts far from God even when going through the motions of worship?

How can "rules" hinder passion?

Day 6 - Habakkuk 3:17-19

Day 7 - Luke 1:46-55

Making It Practical

1. Is God creating a thirst within you for Himself? If so, what are the indications?
2. How does a passion for God change your life and how does it affect those around you?
3. Introduce a new spiritual discipline in your life that can increase your thirst for God.

WEEK 3

Lives Their Position in Christ

"When we have believed lies about ourselves that have caused deep wounds, it is always beneficial to remind ourselves of who we are in Christ. Nothing is more foundational than understanding who we are in Christ and affirming what God has done for us in Christ." Charles Richardson

Day 1 - 2 Corinthians 5:17
What are you in Christ?

What difference does this make in your view of self?

Day 2 - Ephesians 1:3-10
What spiritual blessings have you received in Christ?

How do these blessings affect your view of God?

Day 3 - Ephesians 2:6-10
In Christ, what has God done for us in the heavenly realms?

Why did He do it?

Day 4 - Colossians 2:9-12
What have you been given in Christ?

What does that mean?

What difference does this make in your life from day to day?

Day 5 - Philippians 3:7-11
What was Paul's view of his former way of life?

In Christ, what have you received that is not your own?

How are you the righteousness of Christ?

Day 6 - Galatians 3:26-29
Day 7 - Ephesians 3:2-6

Making It Practical

1. Is your identity, acceptance, security, and significance found in your position in Christ? How?
2. How does your position in Christ affect the way you approach life?
3. Renounce any lie about yourself that makes you feel rejected, unloved, abandoned, worthless, helpless, or hopeless. Give thanks to God for who you are in Christ.

WEEK 4

Humble

“Remember, it is not your weakness that will get in the way of God’s working through you, but your delusions of strength. His strength is made perfect in our weakness! Point to His strength by being willing to admit your weakness.”⁵ -Paul David Tripp

Day 1 - Philippians 2:5-8

What was the extent of the humility of Christ?

How is your attitude the same?

Day 2 - Psalm 51:10-17

What sacrifices is God looking for from you?

Why are these things important to Him?

Day 3 – Ephesians 4:1-6

How does a person live “completely humble”?

Why is humility needed to live in unity in a community?

Day 4 – 1 Peter 3:8-9

What characteristic goes hand in hand with humility?

In humility what is it possible to repay evil and insult with?

What is received when you do so?

Day 5 - James 4:7-10

What emotions are associated here with humility?

Why do you think that is so?

What does God do in our humility?

Day 6 - Matthew 23:8-12

Day 7 - Psalm 149:1-5

Making It Practical

1. What is the difference between humility and defeat, discouragement, depression, or despair?
2. When do you most often come to humility in your life? How does it change you?
3. Spend some quality time silently meditating upon God's holiness. Then ask yourself: Is there pride in my heart? Do I criticize? How am I selfish? How is God working humility in my life?

WEEK 5

A Heart for God's Word

"Unless we read the Word of God, we cannot be instructed by the Spirit, and unless we are instructed by the Spirit, we cannot become godly and effective servants. To put it another way, loving the Word, learning from the Word, and living out the Word are interlocked in God's plan for our spiritual growth."⁶ -David L. McKenna

Day 1 - Hebrews 4:12-13

As we examine God's Word what does it do with us?

What does that mean for us in a practical sense?

Why is study important for you in this process?

Day 2 - Psalm 119:15-18

What does the Psalmist say he will not do?

What causes neglect in studying God's Word?

Day 3 - 1 Peter 2:1-3

What does it mean to "crave" pure spiritual milk?

What are the benefits for you?

Day 4 - 2 Timothy 2:14-15

What did Paul have in mind when he said to present yourself to God as one approved?

What is involved in correctly handling the word of truth?

What "tools" aid you in Bible study?

Day 5 - Acts 17:10-12

What was involved in the Bereans examining the Scriptures daily?

What studies have you done in the past with great eagerness? What studies interest you for the future?

What results come from diligent study of the Bible?

Day 6 - James 1:22-25

Day 7 - John 8:31-32

Making It Practical

1. Learn the Bible study basics of observation, interpretation and application.
2. Select a topic of great interest to you and spend a week or two studying it. Record your observations.
3. Read through a book or portion every day for a month. Journal your insights.

WEEK 6

Filled With the Spirit

"Trying to do the Lord's work in your own strength is the most confusing, exhausting, and tedious of all work. But when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then the ministry of Jesus just flows out of you."

- Corrie ten Boom

Day 1 - Ephesians 5:18-21

How does being drunk and being filled with the Spirit compare?

What is the difference between indwelling and filling?

How are you filled by the Spirit?

Day 2 - Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31

How many times were the early Christians filled?

How often are you filled by the Spirit daily?

Day 3 - Galatians 5:16-18

What happens when you live by the Spirit?

How would you describe your life in the Spirit?

Day 4 - Galatians 5:22-26

What might be other "fruits" of the Spirit?

Do you obtain the fruit of the Spirit by surrender or self-effort?

Explain.

Day 5 - Ephesians 4:30; 1Thessalonians 5:19

How do you grieve the Holy Spirit?

How do you quench the Spirit?

What should you do when you grieve or quench the Spirit?

Day 6 - Luke 1:15, 41, 67

Day 7 - Ephesians 6:18-20

Making It Practical

1. Here are some things to keep in mind concerning the filling of the Spirit: (1) Embrace your need for the Spirit- filled life (2) Surrender often to His control (3) Ask for His filling (4) Confess sin that He brings to your mind (5) Live in obedience through His power.

2. Make it a habit to begin your prayer time with a season of silence before God, to reflect upon the indwelling of the Spirit and to surrender to His control. Ask for and expect His mighty working in your life.

WEEK 7

Submissive

Submission "is the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way. The obsession to demand that things go the way we want them to go is one of the greatest bondages in human society today."7 -Richard Foster

Day 1 - Hebrews 5:7-10

In what ways was Jesus reverently submissive?

How does reverent submission to God benefit you?

Day 2 - 1 Peter 5:5-7

What is God's approach to the proud?

How does a person's life look who is living in submission and humility?

Day 3 - 2 Chronicles 7:13-16

To whom and on what occasion was this promise given?

What blessings might God give us today as we live before Him in humility?

Day 4 - Ephesians 5:21

What is the motivation for living in submission to one another?

What exactly does it mean to live in submission to one another?

How do you respond if you are misunderstood or wronged?

Day 5 - 1 Peter 2:13-17

Why are we to submit to governing authorities?

To whom else does the Bible specifically tell us to submit?

Day 6 - Acts 5:27-32

Day 7 - Ephesians 5:21; Hebrews 13:17

Making It Practical

1. Begin a life of submission to others by submitting to the Holy Spirit to form kindness and gentleness in you.
2. Practice a spirit of grace toward others by saying nothing rather than demanding your way.
3. Give thanks for those in authority over you and pray for God's blessing in their lives.

WEEK 8

A Person of Prayer

"Prayer is the open admission that without Christ we can do nothing. And prayer is the turning away from ourselves to God in the confidence that He will provide the help we need. Prayer humbles us as needy, and exalts God as wealth."⁸ - John Piper

Day 1 - Matthew 6:5-8

What is Jesus saying about the heart attitude of prayer?

What are the rewards God gives for earnest, heartfelt prayer?

Day 2 - Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:3-4

How would you characterize prayer in the early church?

How does it compare to your own experience?

Day 3 - Ephesians 6:18-20

What is the context of these prayer exhortations?

What part does prayer play in spiritual warfare?

How do you "pray in the Spirit?"

Day 4 - James 5:13-18

What makes a prayer "powerful and effective?"

What kinds of things happen when a prayer is "powerful and effective?"

Is this a mark of your prayers? Explain.

Day 5 - Ephesians 3:14-19

What stands out to you about Paul's prayer?

In what ways does it challenge you?

Day 6 - 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 8

Day 7 - 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Making It Practical

1. Set a specific time and length to meet secretly with God in fervent prayer. If this is already established in your life add 5-10 minutes.
2. Begin a prayer journal. (Write out your prayers; make lists of people and circumstances; record answers; record prayer encounters with others, jot down Scripture)
3. Find a group of people who have a heart for prayer and meet together for prayer regularly.

WEEK 9

Lives by Faith

"Real satisfaction comes not in understanding God's motives, but in understanding His character, in trusting in His promises, and in leaning on Him and resting in Him as the Sovereign who knows what He is doing and does all things well."⁹ -Joni Eareckson Tada

Day 1 - Romans 1:16-17

Where does right living come from?

How do the righteous live?

What does it mean to live by faith?

Day 2 - Hebrews 11:1-6

What were the ancients commended for?

What is faith?

Can you please God without faith? Why?

Day 3 - Luke 17:1-6

How powerful is faith?

How is it increased?

Day 4 - James 1:5-8

What is someone who doubts God compared to?

What do doubters receive from the Lord?

Day 5 - Hebrews 11:32-40

What examples of faith stand out to you?

Does faith always have immediate results?

If not, why have faith?

Day 6 - Luke 7:1-10
Day 7 - Galatians 2:20

Making It Practical

1. Spend ten minutes in prayer committing yourself to live a life of faith.
2. Complete the sentence and share with someone at the church. "If I could not fail as a Christian I would attempt to..."
3. Share with a close friend what you learned from this study and how you live by faith.

WEEK 10

Committed to Community

"God's Word gives clear and distinctive direction for our life together—directions we must take seriously...if we are to tap the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit released when God's people come together as the Body of Christ:...the transforming community."¹⁰
-Lawrence Richards

Day 1 - Ephesians 4:1-6
In what ways are we "one" in community?

What efforts do you think should be made to keep the unity of the Spirit?

Day 2 - Acts 2:42-47
What kinds of things did the early church do that strengthened them in community?

Which of these do you think is most needful for us in today's church? Explain.

Day 3 - John 13:31-38
How do others know that we are Christ's disciples?

How is a deep love for one another expressed?

Day 4 - Romans 12:9-13

What "one another's" are given here?

What other "one another's" does the Bible give that help bring unity to the body of Christ?

Day 5 - John 17:20-23

What things did Jesus pray for believers?

Is the universal church living in unity? What do you think would enhance community among churches?

How do you find the balance between complete unity and not compromising truth?

Day 6 - Psalm 133

Day 7 - Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Making It Practical

1. Join a small group with whom you can pray, study, share and practice community.
2. Make a study of and a plan for practicing the "one another" passages.
3. Invite someone from your Christian community into your home for a meal or coffee.

WEEK 11

A Heart of a Servant

"The One who could have been or done anything, consciously and voluntarily, chose to be one who served, one who gave. So then, if we are to become increasingly more like Christ then we, too, are to give and serve."¹¹ -Charles Swindoll

Day 1 - Joshua 24:14-24

What was the context of this statement?

What all was involved for the people when they said they would serve the Lord?

What "gods" are in your life that keep you from fully serving the Lord?

Day 2 - Mark 10:35-45

Why did the Son of Man come?

How specifically do you see Jesus' words impacting your life?

Day 3 - 1 Peter 4:7-11

How does a person offer service that brings praise to God and at the same time avoid self-righteous acts?

What part does divine prompting play in your service?

Day 4 - 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

What was the key to the Macedonian believers service to the saints?

Is service one radical self-denial or a series of many deaths? Explain.

Do you believe you should voluntarily be willing to be taken advantage of when serving? Explain.

Day 5 - 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

What determines if your service is wood, hay and stubble or gold, silver and costly stones?

Contrast service in the flesh and service in the Spirit.

Day 6 - Galatians 5:13-15

Day 7 - Luke 4:5-8

Making It Practical

1. Approach the day with the mind set that service is wrapped up in the mundane, ordinary, trivial and unrecognized.

2. Get out of your comfort zone to serve someone you would not naturally choose to serve.
3. Determine what spiritual gift(s) you have that will allow you to most effectively serve others.

WEEK 12

A Disciple

"We never grow too old to be mentored or to be a mentor. We can look upon ourselves as middlemen. We should place ourselves under someone wiser and more knowledgeable than ourselves in order to learn from them, then be looking for those to whom we can transmit what we have learned. The torch must be passed continuously from one generation to the next."¹² -Curtis C. Thomas

Day 1 – John 20:31

What is the characteristic of a disciple given here?

As a believer in Christ how do we share the abundant life we possess with others?

Day 2 – Matthew 11:39

What is the characteristic of a disciple given here?

As a learner of Christ what rest do you find in your soul?

What have you learned of His ways recently?

Day 3- Luke 9:23

What is the characteristic of a disciple given here?

As a follower of Christ what must we do?

And what exactly does it mean to deny self and take up the cross daily?

Day 4 – Luke 6:40

What is the characteristic of a disciple given here?

As we grow to be like Christ what does our life look like?

Day 5 – Matthew 28:18-20

What is the great commission of Christ?

What does it mean to “make disciples”?

What is your part in making disciples in all the world?

Day 6 – Acts 13:49-52

Day 7 – Acts 14:21-25

Making It Practical

1. Take some time to evaluate your life to determine the kind of disciple you are and if you have the characteristics of a leader.
2. Ask someone who is older in the Lord to meet weekly with you for a month.
3. Look around for someone who is younger in the Lord that you can spend time with encouraging and challenging.

End Notes

- 1 John MacArthur, Grace to You Newsletter, Oct. 15, 2004.
- 2 Gene Getz, Leaders on Leadership (Gospel Light/Regal Books 1997) p. 92
- 3 Jerry Bridges, Transforming Grace (NavPress, 1991) p. 170.
- 4 John Piper, God's Passion for His Glory, p. 41.
- 5 Paul David Tripp, Age of Opportunity (P&R Publishing, 1997) p. 189
- 6 David L. McKenna, How to Read a Christian Book, 2001, p. 46
- 7 Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline (HarperCollins Publishers Inc. 1978) p.111
- 8 John Piper, Desiring God, 1996, p. 138
- 9 Joni Eareckson Tada, Is God Really in Control (Joni and Friends, 1987) p. 9
- 10 Lawrence Richards, Youth Ministry (Zondervan Publishing House, 1972) p. 221
- 11 Charles Swindoll, Improving Your Serve (Word Books, 1981) p.211
- 12 Curtis C. Thomas, Practical Wisdom for Pastors (Crossway Books, 2001) p. 173