

Leadership

Economics by example

The way that leadership is exercised and the example that leaders give are significant for the communities they are part of. Leaders do set the pattern about what is important. The Bible has a lot to say about leadership qualities, including how leaders reflect economic values. Only a few people are in prominent leadership positions, but a great many more people exercise a degree of leadership in their work, church, other organisations, or in their family. In the wider context every Christian person can exercise the leadership of a life that exemplifies Gospel values.



Pray for clarity to see whatever God wants to reveal to you during this study



Think of a leader who impresses you the most. This may be a leader you have known personally, or a current world figure or historical leader. For the purposes of this exercise please choose an example other than Jesus.
Share that with the group, explaining what impresses you the most about that leader.

A King for Israel

Initially Israel did not have a king, but the people wanted to have a king and the Lord granted their request, but warned them of the potential consequences.

What do the following passages reveal about the risks that can come with positions of leadership?

Deuteronomy 17: 14 – 20	1 Samuel 8: 4 – 22
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What examples can you give of this sort of elitism among leaders?

What examples can you give of leaders who have resisted that tendency to elitism?



Solomon – a King with a Difference

1 Kings 3: 5 – 15 Solomon's request.

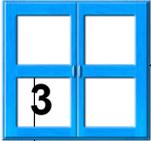
What was significant about Solomon's priorities when he became king?

1 Kings 5: 1 – 12 Solomon's dealings with Hiram, King of Tyre.

What are the attributes and results of Solomon's leadership that are apparent in this account of his dealings with Hiram?

Psalm 72 A prayer of Solomon.

List the qualities and results of leadership aspired to in this psalm.



Jesus' Teaching on Leadership

Luke 22: 24 – 27 Service

How do these words of Jesus challenge leaders today?

How can Christians in leadership positions in the secular world live out Jesus' principle of servant leadership?

How much should positions of leadership be rewarded by economic benefit or privilege, and how much should they be sacrificial service?

Mark 12: 38 – 40 re Teachers of the Law

Also consider Luke 11: 37 – 54

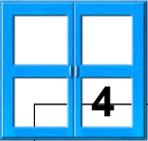
What challenges do the verses in these two passages pose for the church and for church leaders?

There are examples in churches, both overseas and in NZ, of low income church members being exhorted to tithe, while church leaders are given extravagant gifts or live a luxurious lifestyle.

How does that sit with Jesus' teaching?

Historically in the Anglican Church it's bishops were treated like nobility and its clergy like gentry. The church was closely identified with the ruling class and owned large tracts of land. The Anglican Church continues a tradition of its leaders using honorific titles and wearing distinctive apparel. The Anglican Church is also often perceived as being wealthy, and does hold significant assets in trusts.

What are the merits and difficulties associated with these aspects of our church past and present?



Jesus' Example

Luke 2: 7 Born in a stable

What does Jesus' coming as a human baby, born in a stable, teach us?

Philippians 2: 1 – 11 Jesus' attitude

What do verses 6 – 8 reveal about Jesus?

What are the values encouraged in verses 3 & 4?

If these values were widely applied, what difference would that make to the economic patterns and aspirations of our society and of individuals?

What would the resulting society look like?

What can be done to encourage these ideals?



What has this study revealed about the nature of God?



What new thought or understanding has come to you during this study?



What issues, questions or practical implications for your local church, your church denomination, or the wider Christian church, are raised by this study?



(This section may be used for personal reflection alone or may be shared within the group)

Think about how you exercise leadership and your own example.

In what ways do your commitments, priorities and aspirations reflect the norm around you?

In what ways do your commitments, priorities and aspirations challenge the norm with Gospel values?



Spend some time as a group praying over what you have discussed, asking God to bring into focus how you may respond to his Word in an ongoing way.



More Bible passages and discussion questions for further study:

John 19: 15 “We have no king but Caesar”

What makes this such a telling comment for the religious leaders to make?

What examples in history are there of the church placing human leadership and human economic principles or aspirations over God’s leadership and principles?

In what ways is the church now at risk of doing that?



Notes on some of the passages referred to in this study:

Deuteronomy 17: 14 – 20 When the people of Israel fled from Egypt and travelled towards the Promised Land they were led by Moses, whom God had appointed. Joshua succeeded Moses as the appointed leader after Moses' death. Once in the land of Israel there developed a system of Judges providing leadership to the people (refer Deut. 16: 18 – 20), but no monarchy. This passage shows that there was an inevitability about Israel eventually choosing to have a king, but reveals the risk that a monarchy could move away from regarding the Lord as the real ruler over Israel.

1 Samuel 8: 4 – 22 Samuel was the last of the great judges of Israel. He stood aside from leadership when Saul was anointed king. Samuel remained a prophet with great influence among the people.

1 Kings 3: 5 – 15 As in many cases in Scripture, it was in a dream that Solomon received a message from God. Solomon's response shows true humility as a leader. Solomon is renowned for his wisdom; a wisdom which was God's special gift to him.

1 Kings 5: 1 – 12 The Kingdom of Tyre was on the coast of the Mediterranean. Tyre developed as a successful trading, commercial centre and accumulated much wealth as a result. At the time of David and Solomon there was a peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship between Tyre and Israel.

Psalms 72 We know that Solomon's father David wrote many of the Psalms; but this psalm is attributed to Solomon. Some, however, regard it as a psalm of David that expresses his blessing on Solomon; there are also some who interpret this as a psalm about Solomon rather than by him. This psalm comes at the end of the second section (or Book) of Psalms. This psalm expresses a request to God to equip the King for just and righteous rule. The psalm contains high ideals for a leader.

Luke 22: 24 – 27 The context for these words of Jesus is the Last Supper and are expressed immediately after Jesus had used the bread and the wine to speak of his sacrifice. It is helpful to see Jesus' challenge to the norms of self-serving leadership against this backdrop of his own selfless giving of himself. We can also look at the account of the Last Supper in John 13: 1 – 17 where we find the added symbolism of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples.

Mark 12: 38 – 40 Jesus is revealed in the Gospels as being particularly direct and severe in his judgment of those who held positions of spiritual leadership but who used those positions for their own ends. He challenged the tendency to pride, aloofness and self-advancement that he saw in many of the spiritual leaders.

Luke 11: 37 – 54 This is another passage in which Jesus speaks against self-serving leaders. Jesus exposes and challenges an approach to leadership that observes a form of religiosity but does not have God's heart of love for people.

Philippians 2: 1 – 11 This passage may well have been an early Christian hymn. It is a simple yet profound description of the incarnation of Jesus. When we reflect on this passage we not only have a window into understanding the character and purpose of Jesus but are also inspired to consider the way that he models what Christian character and Christian leadership may be, as we are called to be Christ-like.

John 19: 15 This verse comes at the time of Jesus' trial before Pilate. This statement by the Jewish religious leaders suggests a subservience to the ruling Roman culture and abandonment of God as their true king.