**GOD’S EXPECTATIONS OF LEADERS**

I must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4; NKJV)

Jesus Christ’s single-minded, unerring purpose in the world was to do the works of Him who sent Him. Even though it meant He would lay down His life for the sins of the world, Jesus focused all His energies on doing God’s will.

Kingdom leaders join the Lord in His work as they guide the church in carrying out the Great Commission. To accomplish this task, leaders must carry out four basic, essential functions: leading, administering, ministering, and communicating. Jesus’ example and the directions that Paul gave the early churches embody these four functions (or duties) of kingdom leaders. Therefore, kingdom leaders must develop, improve, and strengthen their abilities in each of these areas.

Let us look closely at each of these basic functions.

**Leading**

Leading the church to carry out the Great Commission is the principal function and responsibility of kingdom leaders. Jesus Christ is the consummate kingdom leader. He guides the church by the Holy Spirit and through His called leaders to carry out its work in the world. Paul declared, “For as many as are led by the Sprit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

Throughout Jesus’ earthly ministry, He led His disciples in their work. He sent them to preach and to heal. He directed them to feed the people who gathered to hear Him preach and teach. He commissioned them to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

The kingdom leader learns from Jesus Christ that a leader . . .

* establishes the vision
* selects the leaders
* trains the leaders
* maintains a focus on the vision
* sets a personal example
* watches over Christ’s followers.

Leading (overseeing) is a basic kingdom leadership function. Paul pointed out this responsibility when he wrote, “If a man desires the position of a bishop [overseer], he desires a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1).

Jesus Christ is called an overseer. Peter wrote, “but now [you] have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25). Christ watches over His church and its work. He sees its imperfections. He knows its failures and successes. He nourishes and strengthens it for carrying out its mission.

Like Christ, a kingdom leader is an overseer. He sees the direction God is leading the church and shares what he sees with the people. He observes and guides the church’s growth. He watches for spiritual problems, attacks from the devil, and comprise within the church.

The Old Testament often refers to prophets as watchmen (Isa. 52:8; 56:9-12; Jer. 6:17), a concept similar to the New Testament idea of an overseer. The watchman’s task was to listen, watch, and warn the people. The Lord commissioned Ezekiel to “hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me” (Ezek. 3:17). Like watchmen, kingdom leaders hear from God and warn the people.

The kingdom leader watches over the spiritual condition of the church and the progress the church is making in carrying out the Great Commission. Paul reminded the elders from Ephesus to “take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has mad you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchase with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

The kingdom leader is accountable to Jesus Christ for overseeing the church. The Book of Hebrews encourages believers to remember that their leaders “watch out for your souls, as those who must give account” (Heb 13:17).

Church members must find in their leaders a lifestyle worthy of being emulated. Jesus called on people to follow His example (Matt. 4:19). Paul urged Christians to imitate his lifestyle (1 Cor. 11:1). All kingdom leaders must be able to encourage the churches they lead to duplicate their walk with God. Paul told Timothy to “be an example to the believers in the word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

Leading includes vision, oversight, and personal example. Every kingdom leader must strive to excel in this function of leadership.

**Administering**

Jesus Christ, the Ruler of the kingdom of God and the church, the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev. 19:16), was a master administrator. He understood His disciples’ character and personality. He chose and called them. He knew that, but His grace, they would accomplish the work He gave them to do. Jesus assigned these disciples their mission tasks and followed up on their assignments when they returned.

Administering is a basic kingdom leadership function. The biblical term *elder* describes the kingdom the kingdom leader’s administrative work.

During the New Testament era, synagogues had rulers called *elders*. Generally, these were older, distinguished men who were appointed to lead the people.

The New Testament calls pastors *elders*. The term *elder* does not describe a separate category of church leaders. It describes a function of the kingdom leader.

The elder directs the work of the church. Paul told Titus to “appoint elders in every city” (Titus 1:5). The apostle described elders as overseers (Acts 20:28). To “oversee” is to direct, guide, or manage the church. The pastor-leader is to manage, delegate, and prioritize the church’s work.

Kingdom leaders administer the work of the church and equip the saints for ministry. Equipping the church requires management and delegation. These roles are part of the leader’s administrative function.

The kingdom leader discovers needs and matches the church’s resources to the needs. They administer these resources according to priorities adopted by the congregation. This enables the church to carry out the Great Commission effectively.

**Ministering**

Jesus Christ modeled the importance of the kingdom leadership function of ministry. He said that “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28).

Jesus began His Galilean ministry by declaring that God had sent Him “to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18).

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus is the ideal model of leadership ministry. Peter referred to Him as “the Chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4). Paul called church leaders *pastors* (Eph. 4:11), a word that means “shepherd.” This word is used often in the New Testament to describe the work of the local church leader.

The shepherd analogy is an excellent illustration of ministry. Shepherds feed, lead, protect, and watch over the sheep. As the shepherd of the church, the pastor must feed, lead, protect, and watch over the congregation.

**Communicating**

Jesus Christ is the perfect model of a kingdom communicator. The Gospels declare that “Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14) and “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues” (Matt. 423).

Jesus was a preacher and teacher. His ministry was centered around effectively communicating God’s message.

Preaching is a basic part of the kingdom leader’s role as a communicator. He is the *kerux*, the herald of God’s message. He is responsible for proclaiming the Word. Paul said to Timothy, “Preach the word!” (2 Tim. 4:2). Kingdom leaders must work throughout their ministry to improve this gift.

Teaching is a basic role in the kingdom leader’s function as a communicator. Kingdom leaders must be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). They must teach the Scriptures with authority. Paul said, “These things command and teach” (1 Tim. 4:11).

Kingdom leaders are to mentor future leaders. Paul reminded Timothy that “the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Just as Jesus mentored His disciples, mature kingdom leaders have the responsibility of mentoring future kingdom leaders.

Kingdom leaders are responsible for other types of communication within the church. Paul told Timothy, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Kingdom leaders are responsible for reproving, both privately and publicly, individual believers who need correction. Paul instructed Timothy to “in humility [correct] those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him t do his will” (2 Tim. 2:25-26). Leaders also are responsible for using the Scripture to correct the church if and when it moves into error.

The kingdom leader is a preacher and teacher. He must communicate the Word of God to the church. He must encourage, reprove, and correct. Often this is not easy. Nevertheless, communication is a biblical function entrusted to kingdom leaders.

**Definition of a Kingdom Leader**

Jesus Christ is the model all kingdom leaders must emulate. He exemplified the truth that calling, character, and competencies are foundational to effective leadership. He functioned as leader, administrator, minister, and communicator of the Word of God.

In light of Jesus’ teachings and example, . . .

a kingdom leader can be defined as a person called by God to follow Christ in a life of discipleship, utilizing the leadership gifts given by the Holy Spirit to lead the church in carrying out the Great Commission for the purpose of expanding the kingdom of God.

**A Kingdom Leadership Principle**

* Kingdom leadership grows out of God’s call.
* Kingdom leadership is shaped by character.
* Kingdom leadership is accomplished by God-given competencies.
* Kingdom leadership guides the church to achieve the Great Commission.
* Kingdom leadership focuses on the expansion of God’s kingdom.
* The four functions of kingdom leaders are:

Leading

Administering

Ministering

Communicating

**Kingdom Leadership Evaluation**

* Identify God’s call in your life.
* How is God working to develop your character?
* What competencies has God given you to equip you for leadership?
* Which functions identified in this article need improvement in your ministry?
* Which leadership functions identified in this article are strengths in your ministry?

**Bibliography**

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