

# What is a Spiritual Leader?

## Discipleship, Submission to Spiritual Leadership, Imitating Jesus

Southern CT Introduction to Spiritual Leadership Conference | February 1-2, 2019

- “I define spiritual leadership as knowing where God wants people to be and taking the initiative to use God’s methods to get them there in reliance on God’s power. The answer to where God wants people to be is in a spiritual condition and in a lifestyle that display his glory and honor his name” (John Piper).
- Spiritual leadership is not born nor inherited; it is disciplined (i.e., this is the NT way).
- Developing a church’s spiritual leadership is *both* complex—meaning, it involves many counter-cultural habit forming disciplines that go against the idolatries of society and against our own idolatrous hearts—and it is simple—meaning, spiritual leadership is worked out through discipleship, which involves submitting to spiritual authority in order to learn how to imitate Jesus.
- A spiritual leader is to set an example of Bible study and prayer, thus an intentional path for regular Bible reading and study is needed and a regular prayer life should be developed, *even* before being an appointed, approved, or recognized church leader.
- “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:15-16).

### 1. The goal of spiritual leadership is to help individuals in a church to know God and to glorify him in all that they do.

#### *Westminster Shorter Catechism (#1)*

**Q:** What is the chief end of human kind?

**A:** Humankind’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

- **1 Corinthians 10:31:** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God
- **Romans 11:36:** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.
- **Psalms 73:24-26:** You guide me with your counsel / and afterward you will receive me to glory / Whom have I in heaven but you? / And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you / My flesh and my heart may fail / but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
- **John 17:22, 24:** The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one . . . Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

### 2. Spiritual leadership, as an element of discipleship, assumes we are to submit to spiritual authority *prior to and after* we are in places of church leadership

- **Matthew 28:18-20:** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
- **Matthew 10:24:** “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.”
- **Hebrews 13:17:** Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- **Philippians 3:17:** Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us
- **1 Peter 5:1-7:** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup>shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup>not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup>And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. <sup>5</sup>Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” <sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.
- **1 Timothy 4:12:** Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
- **2 Timothy 2:1-7:** You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup>and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. <sup>3</sup>Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. <sup>5</sup>An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup>It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. <sup>7</sup>Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.
- **Titus 2:3-5:** Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.
- **1 Corinthians 4:14-17:** I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. <sup>15</sup>For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>16</sup>I urge you, then, be imitators of me. <sup>17</sup>That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.
- **1 Corinthians 11:1:** Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.
  - ↳ Get involved with the community life of your church (most activities are led by recognized church leadership).
  - ↳ Get involved with a smaller community group within your church (these are locally led by established church leaders/elders).
  - ↳ Learn to be involved with the overall mission of your church; show support as a servant to established leaders of your church.
  - ↳ Show up (which is an important element of leadership): this is how you practice spiritual leadership responsibility before your as a leader.
  - ↳ Learn not to be asked, take initiative to help, to support, to take part, and even to lead when and where allowable and proper.
  - ↳ Show your willingness to submit to the spiritual leadership of your church (i.e., your pastor, your elders/the session, to established leaders of the church).
  - ↳ Although this should happen the other way around (that is, a spiritual leader seeking you out), seek out a spiritual mentor to be accountable to, to learn from, to be disciple.

### 3. Spiritual Leadership, as an element of discipleship, assumes that we are learning to imitate Jesus.

- **Matthew 20:26-28:** It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,<sup>27</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be your slave,<sup>28</sup> even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (cf. Mark 10:35-45; Luke 22:24-27).
- **John 13:34:** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.
- **Philippians 2:3-8:** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.
- **1 Peter 2:21:** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.
  - ↳ When asked don't be quick to turn down, but thoughtfully consider a discipleship relationship with a spiritual leader when asked or encouraged.
  - ↳ Put yourself, intentionally, in a discipleship relationship with a spiritual leader.
  - ↳ Learn how to serve in the community life of your church.
  - ↳ Ask for support and help to respond to suffering, pain, and trauma in a Christ-like, wise, hopeful manner.
  - ↳ Learn to be humble in your interaction and relationships with family, friends, and neighbors; those inside and as well outside of the church
  - ↳ Learn to love the other, welcoming to the stranger in the midst of your church, taking the initiative to show mercy to outsiders, and to serve, support, and help and serve others in your church fellowship. Be mindful of the least among you.

### 4. Develop a Prayer-Life as an element of developing toward spiritual leadership

- **Luke 18:1-10:** Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!’ “And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”
- **Some other verses on Prayer:** Matthew 6:7-13; Romans 8:26; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; 1 John 5:14-15
- **Some simple basic principles for developing a regular prayer-life:**
  - ↳ Commit to some regular time of prayer (10, 15, 30 mins); you don't even have to be good at it
  - ↳ Keep is simple; simply pray (talk to God)
  - ↳ Develop a prayer list: at first keep it short (family, close friends, church family) and commit to regularly praying through it
  - ↳ But, learn to be as consistent as you can
  - ↳ Slowly commit to more time, increasing that daily time
  - ↳ Learn to pray for your church, the requests people have, your neighbors, etc.
  - ↳ Take advantage of intentional and scheduled prayer times of your church
  - ↳ Find a prayer partner (preferably your discipler, i.e., a spiritual leader)

## 5. Develop a Love for Reading and Studying the Bible

- **John 10:4, 27:** When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
- **Joshua 1:8:** “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”
- **2 Timothy 2:15:** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17:** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
- **Some other verses on Bible Reading & Study:** Nehemiah 8:8; Psalm 119:9-11, 105; Matthew 4:4; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 1:1–3.
  - ↳ Set intentional time aside to read your Bible everyday
  - ↳ Learn to just read your Bible
  - ↳ Discover some method of reading through your Bible each year
  - ↳ Take advantage of your church’s times of Bible Study
  - ↳ Take advantage of deeper training in scripture and theology

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### *Total Christ Mark of the Church # 5: United in Community (relevant to spiritual leadership outlined above)*

We want to emphasize a local-oriented ministry where community really matters. This community formation occurs where Christ our King is fleshed out through life on life “one anothering” and holistic empowerment under the shepherding care of Christ’s under-shepherds and servant leaders. (Jn 13:34, Gal. 6:2, 1 Peter 5:1-5)! What to look for:

- A communal, rather than individual, approach to everything – such as to change the way we think about our possessions, time, decisions, ethics – everything in relation to one-anothering!
- A community that shares its burdens with one another.
- A communal consciousness that feels the relation of the part to the whole, both in flourishing as each member flourishes and in suffering as one member suffers.
- Intentional shepherding and life on life (vs. just curriculum on life) discipleship.