

10 CHARACTERISTICS OF A GODLY LEADER

Bible Study Lesson

Learning Goals: By the end of this session, each learner should be able to:

Know — Understand the guidelines God gives to leaders.

Feel — Feel inspired to learn to lead in a godly way.

Do — Name one area that you have been given leadership and one way you could follow God's way better.

Some of us are "**natural leaders**" and some are "**natural followers** or **subordinates.**" However, all of us have been given leadership in some area. Parents have the God-given responsibility to lead their children. Even if you are not an owner or manager at work, you might have some people or tasks that you are assigned to take the lead. Most of us change roles depending on the situation. When you talk to your boss, you are in the role of subordinate. When you talk with your team or unit, you are in the leader. Regardless, we all have worked with leaders.

Solomon was the King of Israel. Proverbs is his book of "**leadership wisdom.**" In Proverbs, he is teaching young, potential religious and political leaders the wisdom that God gave him as king.

An up-and-coming young man asked an experienced executive,

"What is the secret of your success?"

"Two words, young man — Good Decisions."

"But, Sir how do I learn to make good choices?"

"Two words, young man — Bad Decisions."

Through studying Proverbs, we can learn how to make good decisions in leadership.

Bible Input and Life Application

Read **Proverbs 25:1-5.**

The word "**king**" is used **5** times in chapter **25** and over **30** times in the entire book of Proverbs. In Proverbs, Solomon acknowledges the following:

— God is greater than the king.

— God knows the wisdom of the universe and all wisdom is found in Him.

— God reveals His wisdom to the kings who search for it.

- The king is subordinate to God.
- The king's role is to fear God — that is, discern His wisdom and rely on His power
- The king's role is tied to God's sovereignty, and his ability to make godly, wise decisions.

None of us are kings and most of us have never lived in a monarchy. However, we do experience being a leader — or working with a leader — almost on a daily basis.

The principles in Proverbs regarding leaders applies to many areas of our life — home, church, government and work. The attitudes and wisdom that made a good King in **1000 B.C.**, also make a good 21st century leader. Let's look at kings, leaders, and rulers first and then make the connection to the times when we are leaders.

When we are the leader, too often we concentrate on our rights, our power, and who is on our side. It is natural to assume that God is on our side. But what side is God really on?

The Bible teaches us to focus on:

- Responsibility not rights
- Service not power
- Obedience not taking sides

There are many examples in the Bible, but the classic one is told in Joshua.

Read **Joshua 5:13-15**. The point is: God doesn't come to take sides, He comes to take charge. He wants to take charge in every area of our lives:

- At home
- At work
- In politics
- In the church

Let's let Solomon's teaching motivate us to grow and improve as a leader.

10 CHARACTERISTICS OF A GODLY LEADER

1. WISDOM

Proverbs 8:15 — “By me (wisdom) kings reign and rulers make laws that are just.” **Proverbs 20:8** — “When a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes.” All leaders must have God's wisdom. Jesus himself was filled with God's wisdom and grace (**Luke 2:40**). Wisdom is different than mere knowledge. The wise leader can see farther than others. His

spiritual discernment is what sets him apart as God's leader. The church today is in dire need of wise leaders.

2. INTEGRITY

Proverbs 16:12 — “Kings detest wrongdoing, for a throne is established through righteousness.”

Proverbs 29:4 — “By justice a king gives a country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down.” Personal integrity is demonstrated by who we are and what we do when no one is looking.

In recent years, the Enron Corporate scandal left millions of American feeling very disturbed. But there is one person within that infamous scandal that represents honesty and courage.

Christian Radio Host **Chuck Colson** tells the true story of former **Enron Vice President Sherron Watkins**. Colson said, “While the whole Enron collapse seems to tarnish the reputation of nearly all of Enron's senior management, there is one notable exception. Her name is **Sherron Watkins**.”

When Watkins, an Enron Vice President, learned about the questionable accounting practices and the lies that followed, she was initially afraid to confront senior management.

But after talking with a Friend, her Mother, her Pastor and the People in her Bible Study Group, she drafted a six-page memo to Enron CEO Kenneth Lay.

In it she expressed her concern that the company “will implode in a wave of accounting scandals.” She went further calling Enron a “crooked company” with profits that were “nothing but an elaborate hoax.”

Watkins was expected to be fired and was surprised when she wasn't. But finally, Colson added, here's her real Christian witness: “Watkins not only had the courage to risk her job, she, unlike other Enron executives refused to use her insider knowledge for personal gain. Despite seeing the company falling apart, Watkins never sold her stock.”

Choosing between your relationship with Jesus and your 401(k) is a matter of integrity! Seriously ask yourself, “What would you have done if you were in her shoes?”

3. LOVE

Proverbs 20:28 — “Love and faithfulness keep a king safe; through love his throne is made secure.” How we love is more important than what we know or achieve. The Pharisees in Jesus' day were religious but unloving. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

4. SEEKS GOOD ADVISERS

Proverbs 11:14 — “For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure.”

Proverbs 25:4,5 — “Remove the dross from silver and out comes material for the silversmith; remove the wicked from the king's presence, and his throne will be established through

righteousness." Every effective leader needs advice and seeks advice. The ability to listen to the advice of others is the mark of a great leader.

In **1990**, **General Norman Schwarzkopf** was **Commander in Chief of U.S. Forces in Operation Desert Shield**, undertaken to prevent Iraq from moving against **Saudi Arabia**. During the days of the war, he assembled **765,000** troops from twenty-eight countries, hundreds of ships and thousands of planes and tanks.

General Schwarzkopf called **General Colin Powell**, then **Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**, every evening on the telephone to discuss the events of the day. One day a news reporter asked, "Why?" Schwartzkoff answered, "**He was the only person in the world who knew what I was trying to do. He listened to my ideas, helped me form strategies and exposed my errors in judgment daily.**" Every great leader needs a trusted adviser like that.

5. SELF-CONTROL

Proverbs 28:15 — "**Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked man ruling over helpless people.**" The leader who cannot control himself will not be able to command the respect of those he leads.

6. AWARENESS OF HIS INFLUENCE

Proverbs 29:2 — "**When the righteous thrive, people rejoice; when the wicked rule, people groan.**" In almost every era, no country has been able to rise above its leaders. For better or worse, people become like those they follow.

7. COMPASSION

Proverbs 29:14 — "**If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure.**" Jesus is the ultimate model of taking time for the poor, the outcasts, and children. He was naturally drawn to the weak who needed an advocate. That is why James teaches us that pure religion is to look after orphans and widows in their distress.

Mary Clarke grew up in **Beverly Hills** during **World War II**. She was a teenage beauty, loved Hollywood and liked dancing with young soldiers. Mary dreamed of being rich, married and raising a family with seven children. It all came true, but twenty-five years later her marriage ended in a painful divorce. With her marriage was over and her children grown, she began her second life by helping the less fortunate.

In **1977**, convinced she had found God's true purpose for her life, **Mary Clarke** became **Sister Antonia** and made La Mesa Prison, near Tijuana, Mexico, her permanent home. Since **1977**, Sister Antonia has lived by choice in a ten-foot concrete cell at La Mesa. With no hot water and surrounded by murderers, thieves and drug lords, she attends to their needs around the clock. She raises bail money, finds antibiotics, distributes eyeglasses and false teeth, counsels the suicidal and washes bodies for burial. "**I live on the premises,**" she explains, "**in case someone is stabbed in the middle of the night.**"

La Mesa was built for **600** but holds **2,500** prisoners. Once during a raging prison riot, Sister Antonia, a **52** woman wearing a nun's habit, calmly strolled into the battle, ignoring the bullets and flying bottles and ordered everyone to stop. Amazingly, they did. A former inmate said, **"No one else in the world could have done that. She has changed thousands of people's lives."**

"Love," says Sister Antonia is what she offers everyone. **"I'm hard on crime, but not the criminal."** Sister Antonia truly understands the power of compassion.

8. NO NEED FOR PUBLIC APPROVAL

Proverbs 29:25 — **"Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe."** The greatest freedom is having nothing to prove and no one to impress. Good leaders are more concerned about pleasing God than their popularity with others. The desire for honor among men makes trusting God almost impossible. The leader who has his eyes on receiving the praise of men is not focused on obeying and pleasing God.

9. MODERATION

Proverbs 31:4-5 — **"It is not for kings to drink wine; not for rulers to crave beer; lest they drink and forget what the law decrees and deprive all the oppressed of their rights."** I've seen leaders who were such heavy drinkers that eventually, due to their lack of self-control, they lost their positions.

10. SUBMISSION TO GOD

Proverbs 21:1 — **"A king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a water course wherever he pleases."** **Hebrews 10:5** — **"When Christ entered the world he said, Here I am O Lord, I have come to do your will."** This is the most important characteristic of a good leader. When a man or woman is submissive to God and His Holy Spirit, God will direct the person into the ways he can glorify Him the best.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1.** Look at the 10 characteristics of a good leader. How do these qualities apply to being a good boss, owner, leader or manager at work or home?
- 2.** Which of these are present in the leaders at your workplace and what difference does it make?
- 3.** In what leadership positions has God placed you?
- 4.** Which of these characteristics of a good leader do you find most inspiring and challenging for you?

SOURCE — Paul Schlieker