

Take Me To Your Leader

READING

Exodus 3
Acts 9
1 Samuel 16
1 Timothy 3
Titus 1
Matthew 25:14-30
John 14
Romans 13

Pretty much every leader in the Bible was chosen by God. Not elected by the people.

When you think of leaders in the Bible who do you think of?
What was it about them that made them leaders?
How did they get to be leaders? Did someone appointed them?
What are the qualifications for leaders? Says who?
How about you... can you be a leader?
Can I?

When I think of Biblical leaders I usually think of people like Moses, David, Petros, Paulus... But they are more the super-leaders of the Bible. A bit out of my league. Maybe even out of yours. There's not much point for most of us asking how we can become a Moses, or a Paulus.
But there might be some useful principles there for us to learn from, and to be guided by.

Pretty much every leader in the Bible was chosen by God.
Not elected by the people. (Even in the cases where they were the popular choice).
Almost always they didn't fit what the people being led thought it took to be a leader.
Moses was a stuttering loser who used to be someone, but who was a nobody shepherd.
David was a small teenage boy. Petros was just a simple fisherman. Paulus was a murderous persecutor of Christians, one of the church's greatest enemies.

So basically if everyone votes on who the perfect leader is... it's probably not them.
Weird huh.

So what does God look for in a leader?

There are some obvious and fairly well known passages.
1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 for example give us a checklist of qualifications.
Above reproach
The husband of one woman
With faithful submissive children, (grown children)
Not accused of being wasteful or subordinate
Not easily angered, or contentious, or a brawler
Not drinking too much
Not greedy
Hospitable
Sensible, righteous, self controlled
A good teacher who is able to expose false teachers

So how did you score?

The problem with this kind of list is the same as the problem with "The Law", or the Ten Commandments.

We tend to interpret them in a way that makes us "in" and the people that we don't like "out".

The purpose of the Law was to show that everyone was out. That God's standards are so high they are unattainable for all of us. To show that we need a saviour.

The purpose of these lists is to show that God's standards for leaders is very high. These kind of restrictions aren't put on "ordinary" Christians. Just on leaders.

But we need to be careful not to use them to judge others.

"Husband of one woman" doesn't necessarily mean they never divorced, or their first wife never passed away. It means what it says. They do not have two wives. I guess it also means they are not single.

Having obedient, submissive children. Means their children need to be grown up.

Otherwise they haven't had the opportunity to be tested yet. (Although for some people it becomes obvious that they fail this test very early on).

Not drinking too much does not mean they don't drink at all. It means they don't get drunk.

A good teacher must know what they're talking about, (by definition), and must be able to argue against people who don't.

Here's something to consider... If this is a literal, black and white, in vs out list... Yeshua wouldn't qualify. He had no children. He isn't married, (although he is engaged). Neither would Paulus. He was also not married, and also childless.

But he wrote the lists, and it was him who sent Timothy and Titus to appoint leaders. So clearly he never intended this list to be a literal list of qualifications which disqualified him.

They're like the pirate's code. They're more like guidelines really 😊.

These lists are saying that teachers need to have excellent character, to have a demonstrated history of leading their own families well, to have good reputations in the community, and to be outstanding and confident teachers.

There are a few less obvious passages about leadership, which kind of say the same things. Remember the parable of the talents? At the end Yeshua said, "Well done good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things. I will install you over many things." They had shown that they could be trusted with material things. So God entrusted them with people.

So if someone wants to lead a church... what evidence is there that they have already been a good leader in smaller things? Like their family, or with a small group?

David was a shepherd. A good one. God entrusted him with his people.

Moses appeared to be the perfect leader. A prince of Egypt. Very educated. But useless to God. Until he went off into the wilderness to be a shepherd for 40 years. Then he was ready to be a leader for God.

The good leaders of the Bible were also humble, servant hearted people who had huge trust in God. They knew that God was the real leader and that they were just servants of the people. Not achieving greatness but merely doing their duty.

Yeshua said this too when James and John wanted to be elevated to sit next to him in his kingdom. "Whoever wants to be the leader among you will become servant of all."

Leadership is also part of God's plan for mankind. We need leaders. It's part of how we're designed.

Early on, the global church had apostles, and local churches had elders.

Ephesians 5 says that the father is the head of the family, in the same way as Yeshua is the head of the church. It's a sacrificial position of responsibility.

If you want to be a leader make sure your motivation is right. For some people, wanting to be leaders is based on the false teaching that leaders are more important. They're not.

They are the servants. They are at the bottom of the pile, not the top. Any leader who thinks they are more important than the people they lead is worldly and of no value in the kingdom of God.

God described Eve as Adam's Helper. The common idea that "being the helper means you're less important" fits how the world views things. But it doesn't fit God's view. John 14 describes the Holy Spirit as our helper. Does that make us more important than him?

Hardly.

So then.

Leaders need to have the right character. They need to have the right attitude. And they need to be willing to sacrifice themselves for God's people.

But perhaps the most important aspect of leadership is that we don't choose them, God does.

Romans 13 tells us that even our worldly leaders are all appointed by God. We think we vote for them. The Chinese think their leaders choose themselves. But Romans teaches us differently. God chooses leaders. Always.

Our role is to recognise those leaders when God chooses them. The Israelites recognised that God had chosen David over Saul. The early church recognised that God had chosen Paulus, even though he had been their enemy. The Jews recognised that God had sent Moses to deliver them. Paulus recognised the potential in Timothy and Titus, and in turn they were sent by Paulus to recognise who God was appointing to be elders in the new churches of Asia Minor.

So.

Who is leading you? Have you recognised who they are?

Are you aware who appointed them? And who you are criticising when you criticise them?

Do you think you should be a leader?

Do you meet the guidelines?

Have you proven your ability?

Can you teach?

Are you willing to sacrifice yourself?