

## Traits of Godly Leaders

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## Traits of Godly Leaders: Faith (Abraham)

While Abraham is known for many things, his faith is probably at the top of the list. Let's study some of the events of his life which demonstrate his faith and leadership.

1. Moving from place to place From the time Abraham obeyed God by leaving his family and exploring the land God would give his descendants, he dwelt in tents (Gen. 12:1, 4; 13:17; Heb. 11:9). Most of his decisions to move were made by faith, otherwise he would have returned to his original home (Heb. 11:15). His decision to separate from Lot could have been a disaster in many ways (Gen. 13:8). Every move, involving his family, servants, money, and livestock, required a leader with faith (among other traits).

Question or comment:

2. Read Genesis 18:19

- What would Abraham's faith cause him to do?
  
- Find an event in Abraham's life where his children or household learned to keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice?
  
- How did this occasion make Abraham a better leader?

Question or comment:

3. Not a flawless leader Two times, Abraham put Sarah in danger by not revealing that she was his wife (Gen. 10:13-15; 20:1-2). Abraham heeded Sarah's plan to have a child by Hagar (Gen. 16:1-2). At times, his faith and leadership failed, but God did not forsake Abraham. God gave him opportunities to return to the faith, and associated works, by which he was called *the friend of God* (Js. 2:23).

Question or comment:

Application and discussion Faith, like Abraham's, is needed in churches today. For example, elders are overseeing people, money, and the possessions purchased with that money (a meetingplace, books or other things that aid the church's work, selecting evangelists to aid). These decisions can be as complex as some of the decisions Abraham faced. Without faith, decisions will be made with knowledge lacking love or zeal lacking knowledge. Faith produces a zeal that is according to the knowledge gained by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:1-3, 17).

1. Why is the knowledge and zeal produced by faith necessary in the following decisions pastors regularly make?

- Who will, or will not, be teachers in a church's classes or assembly.
  
- What should be known of people desiring to work with that church.
  
- The proper response to requests for financial help.

2. From the traits of bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Ti. 1:6-9), which traits does faith most help produce?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Compassion (Joseph)

The life and faith of Joseph are worthy of an in-depth, ongoing study though we now have time for only one lesson. The Lord made him a successful leader, and compassion was one of the ways God raised him up to lead.

### 1. Joseph rarely received compassion

*His youth* We do not know from whom Joseph learned and observed compassion in his youth, but we do know of his father's favoritism and his brothers' bitterness, jealousy, and cruelty (Gen. 37:3, 4, 20, 23-24, 28). He likely even saw the spirit of competition that existed between the wives of his father (Gen. 30:1-22). Surely selflessness, compassion, and mercy existed in this home, but evidence of it is hard to find, except in Joseph.

*His slavery* There is no reason to think Joseph saw compassion from his Midianite or Egyptian masters (Gen. 37:36; 39:1). When he was given favor by his masters, it was because they recognized what Joseph could do for them (Gen. 39:2-6, 21-23; 41:37-41). The lone exception may have been in Potiphar's reaction to his wife's accusation against Joseph. Potiphar may have put Joseph among the king's prisoners to spare his life. I assume that most trusted slaves accused of attempting to rape their master's wife would be quickly executed. Whether Potiphar viewed Joseph as a valuable tool worth preserving or had compassion on him is impossible to know.

Question or comment:

### 2. Joseph showed compassion before he was set over Egypt

*to fellow prisoners* Read Genesis 40:5-8, and describe Joseph's compassion, while he was an overseer of his fellow-prisoners (39:22).

*by faithfully using the gifts of interpretation God gave him* (Gen. 40:8; 41:16) As far as we know, Joseph had no guarantee that interpreting the dreams of the butler, baker, or Pharaoh would benefit him.

Question or comment:

### 3. Joseph showed compassion when he was set over Egypt

*seeking no revenge* (Gen. 41:41) Once over "all the land of Egypt," what stopped Joseph from remembering the wounds given to him by Potiphar's wife or others?

*meeting the needs of all nations* (Gen. 41:57) Obviously this was also financially beneficial for Egypt, and thus for Joseph, but his life shows his interests went further than that.

*his dealings with the Egyptians* (Gen. 47:13-24) Joseph's dealings here, and especially his statement in verse 24, is either well-worded "politicking" or genuine concern for the people he is responsible for---which fits his character?

*his dealings with his family* (Gen. 42-47:1-12; 50:15-21) Compassion does not mean tossing wisdom aside, trusting everyone. Joseph was wise in dealing with his brothers as he tested their integrity, and once he believed he could trust them, his compassion was unrestrained.

Question or comment:

(continued on back)

Application and Discussion The compassion of a leader is inherent in the “shepherd/pastor” language the New Testament uses of those qualified men who serve by overseeing the church (Luke 15:4-7; John 10:1-16). Like Joseph, he cultivates a spirit of compassion before his leadership begins, and it aids him in that work. Also akin to Joseph’s work, elders in every church oversee all kinds of people, including their own family, and must maintain compassion whether or not it is shown to them.

1. Read the following verses and comment on the role compassion plays in a bishop’s work.

- Hebrews 13:17

- 1 Tim. 5:9-16

2. Name another area of work, wherein the elders need compassion.

3. From the traits of bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Ti. 1:6-9), which traits does compassion most help produce?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Meekness (Moses)

*Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.* (Num. 12:3, NKJV).  
What a statement for God to make! What an essential trait for leaders.

1. Moses grew in humility At the burning bush, Moses was not being humble when he dodged the directions God was giving him (Ex. 4:1, 10, 13). When Pharaoh and Israel rejected his original appeals to them, Moses' humility was still a work-in-progress (Ex. 5:22). But, with each plague and sign, Moses must have been increasingly humbled to see the might of God delivered through his rod. By the time of Numbers 12, Moses is more than 80 years old—having lived and learned enough to acquire humility from the Lord.

Question or comment:

2. Overcoming failures Surely Moses looked back at his hesitancy at the burning bush with regret. At times, we see Moses' strong temper used both for righteousness and sometimes leading to sin (Ex. 2:11-12; 32:19; Ps. 106:32-33). He did not dwell on these to the degree that he could not continue to lead. His humility caused him to accept responsibility and to return to his God-given duties, instead of drowning in guilt and regret.

Question or comment:

3. Overcoming the failures of others Moses spent his life convincing, rebuking, and exhorting others within the law of his day. Surely the accusations made by Miriam, Aaron, Korah, and others grieved him (Num. 12:1-2; 16:1-3). As they stood at Canaan's doorstep, the faithlessness of Israel meant that he spent the final forty years of his life in the wilderness, instead of the earthly promised land. Would it be possible for Moses to decide that their sins exceeded his own and to lose all desire to continue leading them? Without humbly accepting the work God gave him to do, few things could keep a man devoted to the Israelites, as he was.

Question or comment:

4. Accepting a great responsibility Moses accepted this duty with reluctance initially, but each day, he had to renew his commitment to God and His people. He refused to quit, though understandably a few times he appealed to God to release him from this work. Moses knew the promises God made to Abraham (remember, Moses wrote the historical record called "Genesis"), the testimony of Joseph's bones (Gen. 50:25; Ex. 13:19), the expectations of the people he led, and that without faith he could not receive the reward (Heb. 11:26). Without humbling himself in the sight of the Lord, Moses could not have been lifted up to lead as he did.

Question or comment:

Application and Discussion I have heard elders try to express the weight of the duty to watch for souls. Only jobs like being a husband, parent, or teacher are similar, in that they awaken the leaders to the fact that their work, for better or worse, will influence the eternity of those whom they lead.

1. As Moses must have grown in humility by the events of life, what general events in life commonly produce growth in humility?

2. How may the work of an elder be affected by others' failures, and how does humility affect his response?

3. Can a man be humble and desire the work of an overseer, without desiring preeminence and praise? Explain.

4. From the traits of bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Ti. 1:6-9), which traits does meekness most help produce?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Wisdom to Delegate (Jethro)

The conciseness of Scripture testifies to the wisdom of God in revealing the history of the world and His plan for our salvation. One consequence of this brevity is that we often want to know more about the lives of the people we read. One such person is Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. What does he teach us of leadership?

1. His leadership as a father Ex. 2:16 Jethro had seven daughters who tended his flock. Families work best when parents do not do all the work but delegate duties to the children according to their talents and abilities (a critical factor being lost in the specialization of work in our society). This process develops the abilities of parents to perceive obvious and subtle differences between their children and choose tasks that are both challenging and reasonable. In a home with at least seven children, Jethro knew the importance of dividing duties.

Question or comment:

2. His leadership as priest of Midian Ex. 18:1 We know less about Jethro as a priest, than we do as a father. We assume his duties were similar to other priests in Scripture and depending on the size of Midian, he would have been one part of a priesthood working together. The division of labor in this way would also teach Jethro that when every part does its share, the work is done most efficiently and effectively.

Question or comment:

3. His advice to Moses Ex. 18:13-27 Jethro, having a personal interest in the well-being of Moses, saw the exhausting load Moses carried as the only lawgiver and judge for all Israel. Could your hometown function well with one man serving as mayor and judge? Jethro advised Moses to find spiritually qualified men who could “bear the burden with you... if God so commands you” (notice Jethro recognized the need for God to authorize/approve of this change in Moses’ leadership).

Question or comment:

Application and Discussion In God’s plan, no elder will face what Moses did, before Jethro’s advice. Consistently in the New Testament, the leadership of a local church was composed of a plurality of qualified men. The practice of having one man to be the pastor of a church is the result of man’s tradition. In this work, *two are better than one* (Eccl. 4:9-12). Their work is enhanced by deacons. In Acts 6:1-7, whether or not the seven chosen men were identified at that time as “deacons” or “servants,” that was the nature of their work and it was necessary because the apostles could not handle all the work alone. Every church needs steady workers leading and assisting to the best of their ability, causing growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love (Eph. 4:16).

1. What dangers await the church and eldership when one elder, either out of diligence or pride, does the majority of the public and private work by himself (even if he reports back to the other elders)?
2. May elders over-delegate their duties? How much is too much?
3. Some brethren teach that a church may not have an evangelist regularly working among them, claiming that elders must be the main teachers. How does Scripture respond to this claim?
4. From the traits of bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Ti. 1:6-9), which traits show he has learned to delegate in wisdom?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Fear God, Not Man (Joshua and Caleb)

Caleb was 40 years old when sent as a spy, already a leader among his tribe (Josh. 14:7; Num. 13:1). Joshua had worked closely with Moses when he was chosen to spy out the land (Ex. 17:9; Num. 11:28; 13:8). Their work as spies revealed that they were *of a different spirit* than their brethren—they feared God, not man (Num. 14:24).

1. Willing to accept the work God chose men to go out as spies who were already leaders among the tribes (Num. 13:1). Somehow, these men had already shown a willingness to do more than “the bare minimum” required by God of them--can you imagine them saying “I’d rather not go.”? As they thought about spying out the new land, they understood the risks and the rewards, but by faith, a proper fear of God made Joshua and Caleb fearless. Judging by other periods of Israel’s history (including the response of Israel upon the return of the spies), not everyone in Israel would have been willing to accept the work of a spy, as were Joshua and Caleb.

Question or comment:

2. A good report despite what they saw Num. 13:27-30 Whatever expectations the spies had, they returned with an accurate idea of the land. The food supply was large and abundant, as was the number and strength of the enemies. All the spies saw giant walls and giant men yet Joshua and Caleb told the people to “go up at once and take possession” (v30). When they saw giant obstacles, Joshua and Caleb did not compare the obstacles to themselves and their own might but to God and His might, so they saw no reason to delay going in. They feared God, not man.

Question or comment:

3. A good report despite what others said Num. 13:31-33; 14:1-4, 9-10 What was the most difficult part of Joshua’s and Caleb’s work as spies? Was it crossing rivers, hiding from enemies, or carrying evidence of the land’s produce? No, it must have surprised Joshua and Caleb, that the hardest part of being a spy was being in the minority among the spies and the tribes. By fearing God and not man, they did not waver. This willingness is an essential trait of godly leaders.

Question or comment:

Application and Discussion I hope the applications of this lesson to our own lives and to leaders are obvious. Elders, evangelists, and teachers must be fearless. Based on Paul’s warning in Acts 20:29-31, an elder may find himself in the minority among other elders. An evangelist may find himself in the minority among other evangelists or those whom they are teaching (2 Tim. 4:2-5; 1 Jn. 4:1). Teachers may find that many hearers do not like the teaching of Christ when it impacts some treasured part of their life (Mt. 13:20-21). No generation will escape this challenge. In the early 1900s, the minority of saints refused to add mechanical instruments to singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. In the mid-1900s, another minority refused to add work to the church God did not include (church donations to colleges and orphan homes, church-sponsored recreation). In the late 1900s and into the present, Satan ensures controversies continue (who may marry-divorce-remarry, fellowship with false teachers, worldliness). On these occasions, fearlessness is not arrogance for this firmness is rooted in God’s might and wisdom, not man’s.

1. What did Jesus say about fear in Matthew 10:28?
2. What are proper and improper reasons for leaders to fear, when they are in the minority?
3. What must godly leaders do to help keep the saints they lead on the side of truth?
4. From the traits of bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Ti. 1:6-9), which traits will be necessary during controversy, when the fear of man makes some men weak?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Focused (Samuel)

After Hannah devoted Samuel to the Lord at the Temple, Samuel devoted himself to the Lord everywhere. This devotion contributed to his focus when leading as a prophet, judge, and Levite in Israel (1 Sam. 3:20; 7:15; 1 Chron. 6:33, 38).

1. *Speak Lord, for your servant hears* (1 Sam. 3:9-10) Though these were the words Eli recommended Samuel speak when the Lord spoke to Samuel on this night, it partly explains his focus as a leader. The work of a prophet, judge, and Levite required God to speak and man to hear as a servant. Samuel was always willing to hear first and then speak what was spoken, even when it grieved him or others (1 Sam. 3:18; 8:6, 10; 15:26, 35).

Question or comment:

2. Focused on God's agenda, not personal accomplishments or goals We have no evidence that Samuel ever was arrogant when God chose to speak to him instead of his mentor, Eli (1 Sam. 3:20). Neither was he offended when God chose Saul, and not him, to be king in Israel (1 Sam. 8).

Question or comment:

3. Focused until death Though the people said he was too old to judge, he persisted as a prophet for several more decades. Apparently, not everyone believed he was too old to be useful as David sought his help when fleeing from Saul, and he was leading the prophets decades after being rejected as judge (1 Sam. 10:19-20). Whatever limitations he did or did not have due to age, by faith Samuel willingly led however he was needed. At some point near the end of Saul's life, Samuel died (1 Sam. 25).

Question or comment:

Application and Discussion The word "elder," when describing a leader of one of the churches of Christ, emphasizes not only his age but also his associated experience and wisdom. Such factors give these men a unique perspective on life and matters of importance. By this time, they have learned the vanity of a life focused on earthly things apart from God (Eccl. 2). They have seen all sorts of "soil" and where the focus of each life leads (Matt. 13:1-23). Though still learning and growing in Christ, physical and spiritual maturity ought to produce ongoing focus. Men who lead as a result of setting their minds on things above will put personal accomplishments and goals far behind the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Thus, in God's plan, the Lord's people will have shepherds who are undistracted by the cares of this world, deceitfulness of riches, and pleasures of this life. Even if they need to be paid to have time to fulfill their duties, other work can be partly or even fully set aside, as the disciples left their net to focus on following Jesus (1 Tim. 5:17-18; Mt. 4:20).

1. How can parents train their children to have the kind of focus that is necessary for them to develop into future leaders among the church?

2. What things in our society present a challenge to the focus needed by leaders (and all Christians)?

3. Name some necessary parts of a bishop's life that cannot truly be called distractions, though they are not directly related to this work?

4. From the traits of bishops (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Ti. 1:6-9), which traits most require a focused life?



## Traits of Godly Leaders: Delight in Right (David)

Why do we enjoy the things we enjoy? Are we “just that way,” have others trained us to enjoy them, or have we decided to learn to enjoy them?

*The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD; and in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!* (Psa. 21:1). David delighted in God and the things of God. Why did these things satisfy him? What affect did they have upon his leadership?

1. More than money David had to give attention to finances in his work as king, but he did not judge success primarily by the economy. Knowing that money may bring a degree of joy, David often expressed his delight in God and His word as exceeding the joy of gold. His willingness to delight in God far more than riches, no doubt, is part of the reason why he was a man, and leader, after God’s own heart.

*The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver.* (Psalms 119:72)

*Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold!* (Psalms 119:127)

*More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold;* (Psalms 19:10)

- What are people willing to give up for gold/money?

- Contrast what we receive from delight in money and from delight in God’s law.

Question or comment:

2. More than knowledge of other legitimate things Most kings are aided by some knowledge of history, geography, law, combat, etc., if for no other reason than being able to seek wise counselors, in those areas. Knowing the law of the Lord actually provides a foundation for some knowledge in all of the above areas and beyond (Prov. 1:7). David gave the biggest boost to his kingship by “specializing” and delighting in the LORD.

*I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways.* (Psalms 119:15)

*I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.* (Psalms 119:99-100)

*The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.* (Psalms 119:130)

Question or comment:

3. More than the passing pleasure of sin Consider sins easily appealing to kings and David’s response to them.

Various sins against enemies

*I have done justice and righteousness; do not leave me to my oppressors.* (Ps. 119:121)

*Many are my persecutors and my enemies, yet I do not turn from Your testimonies.* (Ps. 119:157)

Ease of being non-judgmental

*I see the treacherous, and am disgusted, because they do not keep Your word.* (Ps. 119:158)

*Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law.* (Ps. 119:136)

Covetousness, in thought and action

*Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness.* (Ps. 119:36)

*Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way.* (Ps. 119:37)

Question or comment:

(continued on back)

Application and Discussion Seasoned Christians know the unparalleled delight of serving the Lord, and this delight will be obvious in their life and labor. Rejoicing in God's law is part of the reason for a man to desire the work of a bishop (1 Tim. 3:1). This work provides a unique opportunity to train others in the delight of walking in the law of God, even when their work is unpleasant. When these leaders rejoice in what is good, their work is most profitable and effective, increasing the reasons for delight in right (Prov. 17:22; Heb. 13:17).

1. What will a congregation see and hear from elders who delight *most* in what is right?
2. What are some unpleasant things that bishops must do?
3. How can an elder delight in God's law, when required to do "undelightful" things?
4. What are the consequences for a congregation when elders delight more in other things?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Wisdom (Solomon)

Possibly the wisest thing Solomon ever did was done before God miraculously filled him with wisdom. His request for "an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" shows that the fear of the Lord and the knowledge and wisdom this brings was already his (1 Kings 3:9; Prov. 1:7, 9:10). Though his life was not a shining example of godly leadership in spiritual things, through him God gave words that will make wise leaders.

1. **Wisdom from God's word** Though Solomon wrote of the value of what God revealed, Solomon's life often indicates that, in deed, he did not value all of God's word to the degree his father did (Prov. 2:4-6; Ps. 19:7-11). But few Scriptures summarize the value of God's word like the close of Ecclesiastes--. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all." (12:13 NKJV). When leaders view understanding and keeping the words God has spoken as a fundamental, vital purpose for our existence, wisdom will follow.

Question or comment:

2. **Wisdom from others** Solomon often wrote about the importance of accepting help from others, especially wise counselors (Prov. 15:5, 22; 18:1; 24:6; Eccl. 4:9-12). His son shows what happens when leaders do not have the wisdom to heed wise counsel, and instead, choose to accept the advice of lesser qualified people (2 Chron. 10:1-14). Leaders must learn from others, including the people they lead!

Question or comment:

3. **Wisdom from your own life** Solomon did not always act consistent with the knowledge and wisdom of God. Early in his reign, his sin of multiplying horses and wives undermined his leadership (1 Kg. 4:26-28; 11:1-2; Deut. 17:16; 7:3-4). Ecclesiastes 2 seems to be Solomon explaining what he learned from testing his heart with quickly-passing pleasures. Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:14 may also be the wisdom Solomon gained "the hard way."

Question or comment:

Application and Discussion Beginning with this lesson, we will use the "application and discussion" section to focus on leadership in the home, primarily involving the work of husbands and parents.

As a man says "I do," by personal experience he is typically unqualified to lead his wife, but he now begins on-the-job training. Likewise, first-time parents both quickly and gradually realize how, by their own knowledge and wisdom alone, they are unqualified for this task. These are among the most humbling tasks of life. Such experiences ought to motivate every husband and parent to dig into Scripture, searching for every command, statement, example, or inference God has placed in Scripture for their benefit. Proverbs is among the most obvious books. Genesis offers a variety of "do"s and "don't"s for parents. These seasons of life should bring a freshness to reading and discussing familiar Bible passages. Leaders of the home must be among the most diligent workers seeking God's approval by rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). On that foundation, they are ready to seek advice from wise counselors and wisdom from past experiences.

1. Though addressed to "my son," what does Proverbs 1:7-8 teach parents about leadership?
2. When wives and mothers have not grown up in a godly home, what things might be especially difficult about their work? What help does God offer them?
3. When husbands and fathers have not grown up in a godly home, what things might be especially difficult about their work? What help does God offer them?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Bold (Elijah)

Elijah may be the second-most respected prophet among the Jews, beside Moses. He visited Jesus, along with Moses, at the mount where Jesus was transfigured (Mt. 17:3). For this reason alone, he deserves our attention for his work as a leader. Among his traits, his boldness is outstanding.

1. Turning hearts to God In Luke 1:17, the work that John would do is compared to the work Elijah did “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.” Among his recorded deeds, Elijah announced a drought that lasted three years, rebuked Ahab, scolded Israel, challenged and humiliated false prophets, and was responsible for the death of one hundred of Ahaziah’s soldiers (1 Kg. 17:1; 18:18-21; 2 Kg. 1:9-12). What was his purpose in all these things? To turn hearts to God.

Question or comment:

2. Usually in the minority His faith, words, and deeds are even more impressive when we consider that he had few people standing with him. There is no mention of parents, siblings, a wife, or children from whom he could draw strength and encouragement. In fact, he seems to have personally known so few, faithful people that he had to be told that beside himself, seven thousand had not bowed to Baal (and even 7,000 was a small number).

Question or comment:

3. A man of prayer Choose one of the following prayers of Elijah and comment on how this prayer helps to explain his ongoing boldness despite the faithlessness of Israel—1 Kg. 17:1 (Js. 5:17), 21; 18:36-37, 42-45 (Js. 5:18); 19:4, 10, 14

Application and Discussion Elijah is not typically thought of as a parental role model but the principles of good leadership apply equally to all leaders. So how does Elijah’s boldness aid leaders of the home? The home is where God planned for hearts to first be turned to God, but that requires parents to face the typical adversity that raising children brings. That task is even more difficult when those parents live in a society who raises children in different ways, with different purposes, and with different expectations for their children. Godly parents will find very little help from the majority, requiring that they learn to pray with the boldness and confidence of Elijah, according to the Lord’s will (1 Jn. 3:22).

1. Just as many people viewed Elijah’s work as “negative,” for what reasons might godly parents be similarly viewed as they seek to turn their children’s hearts to the Lord?

2. When husbands or parents compromise their convictions so that those they lead do not feel “excluded and left out,” what harm is done?

3. Because of his work as a prophet, there were times where Elijah could pray about something, knowing that this would produce the outcome he requested. Since we are often uncertain of the outcome of circumstances when we pray, how is his example helpful?

4. What things do children need to hear us fervently praying for, or about?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Leading in Change (Josiah)

Josiah was a leader from his youth but was able to develop himself as a leader because he spent his life seeking God (2 Kg. 22; 2 Chron. 34). Due to being raised in an ungodly home, Josiah had to make many, essential, personal changes. Due to inheriting the leadership of a generally faithless nation, Josiah had to make many, essential, national changes. The willingness and ability to recognize the need for change is essential for leaders, as is the willingness and ability to lead during those changes. What does Josiah teach us?

1. Regular self-examination We have a unique biography of Josiah's spiritual development. 2 Chronicles 34:3-8 gives a chronology of his spiritual search and development, individually and as a king. His father, Amon, "did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done," so Josiah had to "unlearn" the wickedness he witnessed in his youth to turn his heart to God (2 Chon. 33:22). This honesty in examining and evaluating himself helped equip him to do the same in Judah, by which he sought to "undo" the wickedness of his family and return the hearts of his people to the Lord.

Question or comment:

2. Willing to listen Because he inherited the throne at age eight, Josiah must have had councilors and learned to value good advice. This prepared him for a key moment in his reign, when Hilkiah discovered the Book of the Law in the temple and read it, revealing Judah's current unfaithfulness (2 Kg. 22:8-13). Josiah's willingness to hear and admit that he had been wrong all his life, despite his ongoing sincerity in seeking the Lord, caused him to lead the people to repentance and the fruits of repentance (2 Kg. 23:1-3).

Question or comment:

3. Change as directed by Scripture Josiah did not advocate "change for the sake of change," thinking that Judah could be restored to God by meaningless changes ("Let's try something new for a change!"). He was not a young king simply trying to leave his mark on the nation by trying something that had never been done before, so he could be viewed as "an independent thinker" (he proved that by not following the sins of his family). Unnecessary changes are often empty, and do not help to change the heart. The changes Josiah brought in Judah were changes demanded by Scripture (2 Kg. 23:21-25).

Question or comment:

Application and Discussion Every society has its own "personality." We Americans typically pride ourselves in being independent and exalting freedom as an inherent right of all men (something God did not guarantee, though likely prefers). While many "traditional" cultures value maturity, wisdom, and time-tested practices, our society increasingly values youth, experimentation, and innovation. Both approaches have their benefits and drawbacks, when kept in balance, and leaders today must have this balance. By reason of use, their senses are trained to discern the difference between good/evil and helpful/unhelpful (Heb. 5:14). This presents challenges to husbands, parents, and other family leaders today. Fads, buzzwords, trends, hashtags, blogs, viral videos, and internet pictures and posts are ongoing sources of experimentation and change in the meaning of words, clothes, symbols, and signals. Family leaders must recognize which things: are always sinful or righteous, that could be innocent are abused to communicate unrighteousness, and are not sinful but are not helpful. Discerning when change may happen, must happen, or must not happen is the work of leaders.

1. What kind of changes did Korah advocate, in Numbers 13?
2. What kind of change did Jethro advocate in Ex. 18:13-27?
3. Describe why change did happen in Acts 16:3 but not in Galatians 2:3.
4. What types of changes and decisions do families face today?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Endurance (Prophets)

*My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience.* (James 5:10 NKJV). The work of the Old Testament prophets was much like the work of Moses—leading a hard-hearted people. Unlike Moses, most of them were killed for their faithfulness in leadership (Acts 7:52), yet God continued sending prophets who endured by faith in the strength of God, refusing to surrender.

1. Their work was a “marathon, not a sprint” Few prophets were given a one-time, temporary assignment. For most, it was a life-long duty. They prophesied during lengthy and brief reigns of righteous and wicked kings, enduring the uncertainty of the present and future. Occasionally, their work was rewarded with positive, visible fruit but more often they planted and watered for years, rarely seeing desirable results. Yet, they endured.

Question or comment:

2. They could not force or accelerate the changes they desired to see In the Old Testament citations in the introduction of this lesson, God told Isaiah and Ezekiel to go warn the people but that the people would not respond (Isa. 6:8-13; Ezek. 3:7-10; Jer. 2:17-19). *Think about that.* How diligent would you be if told to do a job that would fail when judged by visible results? No matter how many miracles, history lessons, and exhortations they delivered to the people, change typically came slowly, if it came at all. Rarely was the king of Israel or Judah fully on their side, which also slowed the visible effectiveness of their work. They may have grown frustrated by imagining the potential good of having, what they viewed as, the right man in the office of king. Though unable to bring change at all, or at the pace they desired, they endured.

Question or comment:

3. Their duty was to please God, not man They endured because God was not judging them on their “success rate.” They did not have a weekly, monthly, or annual “quota” to meet, like salesmen do. Paul acknowledged the same when he said “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. 1:17). They were successful in God’s eyes when they did what they were sent to do, regardless of the response they received. Like us, the prophets were no doubt pleased when they saw what was being accomplished, but in spiritual work, that will never sustain faith. Knowing that they pleased God allowed them to suffer and endure.

Question or comment:

Application and Discussion We don’t often compare parents to prophets, but parents also often become discouraged when they do not see “results” in their children. Or, sometimes one spouse is doing their best to serve the Lord and strengthen their marriage, but life is difficult because the other spouse lacks the same, or any, faith or diligence (1 Pet. 3:1-2). What each one would like to see is some immediate changes and results in their children or spouse, and without that, it is tempting to simply do what is easy, not what is right. So, you who lead a family, take the prophets as an example of patience (endurance). Examine your life—is God pleased? If not, God will help you make the necessary changes that might be hindering change in others. If God is pleased, then define your “results” by that, not by the results that are out of your control.

1. How is our society defining “success” in the area of raising children?
2. Choose any leader of the home (husband or parents) and find one or two verses that tell us how God defines “success” in that role.
3. What, or who, contributes to the endurance of husbands, parents, and other family leaders, beside those leaders getting the results they want?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Encouragement (Barnabas)

A few people in Scripture are given new names (Abram-Abraham, Sarai-Sarah, Jacob-Israel, Simon-Peter, Saul-Paul). Jesus was given the name “Barnabas” by the apostles, during a time in which many disciples were giving themselves and their possessions to their brethren (Acts 2:44, 46; 4:32). Barnabas’ leadership was primarily as a teacher and prophet, and that work must have been aided by his experience as an encourager (Acts 11:22; 13:1).

1. In deed, to the needy We first learn of Jesus, his new name, and encouragement in Acts 4:36. Paul expressed the reaction of saints whose needs are met by generous brethren in 2 Corinthians 9:12-14. All the saints in Jerusalem had made the same commitment to Christ, but it came at a greater, physical price for some. It can be discouraging to be in physical need because of your faith, but how encouraging to see others volunteer to lose what they have because of the same faith.

Question or comment:

2. In deed, to the weak In Acts 12:25, John Mark begins traveling with Barnabas and Saul but by Acts 13:13, he returned to Jerusalem. We don’t understand why until Acts 15:37, when Paul does not have enough confidence in John Mark to travel with him again. Barnabas insists on John Mark accompanying them, so Paul and Barnabas travel separately. What did Barnabas see in John Mark? Barnabas and Mark were cousins (Col. 4:10), but the work of the gospel was too serious for nepotism (giving favors to family). Barnabas must have seen some strength in John Mark and believed that with some training and encouragement, John Mark would not repeat past mistakes. This “second chance” benefitted Peter and Paul (1 Pet. 5:13; 2 Tim. 4:11). You and I benefit because this Mark is typically believed to have authored the second book of the New Testament. A little encouragement can go a long way!

Question or comment:

3. In word, to the lost and saved Acts shows us that Barnabas’ encouragement reached beyond Jerusalem and his family. The church in Jerusalem chooses Barnabas to work among the “great number” who “believed and turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21-22). We are not surprised that he arrives and “encouraged them all,” nor that as a result of his work among the lost “a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11:23-24).

Question or comment:

Application and Discussion The book of Ecclesiastes emphasizes that spending the gifts of God primarily upon ourselves is vain and unfulfilling (Eccl. 2; 5:13). Every home needs leaders who direct the family’s attention and action to encouraging those in physical need (especially brethren, Gal. 6:10), those spiritually struggling, the spiritually growing, and the lost. A home that includes encouragement as part of its “leisure activities” will reap riches untouched by thieves or economic tailspins (Mt. 6:19-21; Acts 20:35). If the example of Barnabas means anything, it is that lives which are filled with self-sacrifice and encouragement in spiritual things become increasingly useful tools in God’s hand. It is also worth noting that we are told nothing of Barnabas being married, making him a useful example for all who are unmarried.

1. What must I do in order to encourage someone? (I am not asking for “ways to encourage others” but “What is involved in the process of encouraging someone?”)

2. When the family’s leader regularly directs the family’s time to encouraging others outside of the family, what forms of encouragement is the family receiving?

3. In what ways is a husband and father who leads his family in encouraging others preparing himself to be a bishop?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Trustworthy (Wives and Mothers)

Just because women do not lead their husbands, does not mean they have no leadership abilities. When homes are ordered according to God's plan, the mother has more time with and influence over the children during an early, crucial phase of their lives, than the father does. What does this tell you about the leadership potential of women in God's eyes? Among the virtues of godly wives and mothers, needed by all leaders, is trustworthiness.

1. The woman of Proverbs 31 Her husband sits among the elders of the land, so he has lived long enough to know trustworthiness when he sees it, and she has earned this trust (v23, 11). She is deeply involved in the financial details of the home, overseeing the provisions for herself, her maidservants, and all her family (v13-15, 22-27). She aptly handles a dollar, an hour, adversity, and prosperity. She isn't perfect—she's trustworthy.

Question or comment:

2. The older and younger women of Titus 2:3-5 These women work together, showing themselves trustworthy by what they teach, learn, and practice. Older women who have gained knowledge and wisdom over time prove to be worthy of those gifts when they share them. Younger women who have accepted the duty of being wives and mothers prove to be worthy of those gifts when they learn and follow God's plan for each one. When generations combine their gifts (wisdom of age, energy of youth), they produce fruit some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty, proving themselves good stewards of the manifold grace of God (Mt. 13:23; 1 Pet. 4:10). In what other career field may they produce this kind of fruit?

Question or comment:

3. The older women of 1 Timothy 5:5, 9-10 Anyone who soberly reads this description, sees a woman who has been trustworthy in many things. As the wife of one husband who brought up children, lodged strangers, washed the saints' feet, and diligently followed every good work she was trustworthy in her family, with her possessions, among her brethren, and in her faith. Because of this, when she has no family to care for her, God trusts her enough to care for her with the church's funds. Not all widows receive this trust and must be cared for in other ways. We cannot imagine the gifts God would give if every civil and spiritual leader on earth had and passed on a legacy of trustworthiness like these worthy women.

Question or comment:

Application and Discussion The value of these women is "far above rubies" because when any leader pays attention to this example of trustworthiness, they better understand its value and results. When her godly children and their spouses see this trustworthiness they will imitate it in their home and even ask her for advice. When elders see this among the women of the church, they will find ways to make use of her life for the benefit of the church. Her faith will "transfer" to other roles and lives because it is the product of faith and the fruit of her faith will draw the attention of every spiritually-awake person around her. If such women are overlooked and forgotten because they are not among the most visible leaders, then we have not yet learned the lesson of how God has composed the body, which includes giving "greater honor to that part which lacks it" (1 Cor. 13:24). Her honor is not like that of an elder or husband but is not lesser, just different. Hers is the honor of a willing servant, which puts her among the greatest of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 20:25-28). This wins her no recognition or award among the wise, mighty, and noble of this world, for her reward is with her treasure above.

*(continued on back)*



1. What sins, plaguing families today, are primarily the result of violating basic trust?
  
2. What lessons do our young daughters learn about leadership from their godly mothers and grandmothers that are rarely available elsewhere in society today?
  
3. What lessons do our young sons learn about leadership from their godly mothers and grandmothers that are rarely available elsewhere in society today?
  
4. What lessons do husbands and fathers learn about leadership from godly wives, mothers, and grandmothers that are rarely available elsewhere in society today?

## Traits of Godly Leaders: Love (Jesus)

The King of kings and Lord of lords is the Leader of leaders. Jesus is the ultimate model for each leader of the church and home.

Love, when defined by the world, is a self-pleasing desire. This corrupts leadership abilities and traits. Love, when defined by God, is an others-pleasing desire that enhances leadership abilities and traits.

Open your Bible and learn how love defines the leadership of Jesus.

1. Jesus is Love 1 Jn. 4:8; Jn. 1:1 As God, Jesus is the ultimate authority on all things, including love, so Jesus belongs in any discussion of “love” (spouse, children, friend, enemy, neighbor, brethren, etc). When thinking of “love” in the context of leadership, Jesus again is the standard. He leads in love as a physician for the sick (Lk. 5:31-32), a shepherd of sheep (Jn. 10:13-14), the head of His body (Eph. 1:22-23), an overseer/bishop of souls (1 Pet. 2:25), the creator of His creation (Col. 1:16), husband of His bride (Eph. 5:23), and king of His kingdom (1 Tim. 6:15). To lead these people, He was willing to become a servant of man and the Son of God. Meditate on that to begin to understand “love,” and then you will begin to understand the purpose of leadership.

Question or comment:

2. Jesus leads sinners in love What does love in leadership look like when people reject the leader? Moses often provided a good example of this, while appointed over Israel. Jesus was mockingly called “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” in an attempt to portray Him as being guilty or approving of their sins (Lk. 7:34). In reality, Jesus showed that a true friend of sinners teaches them to leave their sins and do the will of the Father (Lk. 13:3; Mt. 7:21). Does love ever offend (Mt. 15:12-14; Jn. 6:61)? Does love lead someone to the conclusion that they are lost (Jn. 8:24)? Does love ever publicly identify the public guilt of others (Mt. 15:1-12)? Does love show the offended, lost, and guilty the way back to the Father (Jn. 14:6)? Yes, Jesus leads the lost in love.

Question or comment:

3. Jesus leads the Church in love As the head of His church, Jesus leads in love (Eph. 5:23, 25). He patiently aids us in weakness and temptation of any kind (Heb. 2:18; 4:14-15). He always offers forgiveness (1 Jn. 1:9). He gave gifts and grace to produce ongoing growth (Eph. 4:7, 11-12; 2 Pet. 3:18). He directs men to pure worship (Jn. 4:23). He rebukes, chastens, and knocks at the heart of blind and naked saints (Rev. 3:17, 19-21; 1 Cor. 5:4-5). When a church persists in lukewarmness or compromise, He will remove His approval (Rev. 3:16; 2:4-6). Is this your image of the loving leadership of Jesus?

Question or comment:

Application and Discussion Are you beginning to see the depth of His love? It goes far beyond “a smile and hug.” Every aspect of His leadership involves His love, and that love is needed from every leader in the home. Love is the factor by which husbands make decisions that involve self-sacrifice, not self-preference. Love is the basis of fathers’ and mothers’ decisions that, though disappointing to the children (and often, to the parents), trains them in the grace of God that denies ungodliness, lives righteously, and maintains zeal for only good works (Ti. 2:11-14). When my decisions are made on the basis of convenience, my preference, what my family always did, what the world urges, or such things, then I have missed the lessons of loving leadership Jesus Christ left for me to learn.

*(continued on back)*

1. How is the love and leadership of Jesus commonly misunderstood and misrepresented today?
  
2. Name some of the most difficult decisions Jesus made while on earth, then comment on the role of love in those decisions.
  
3. Name some of the most difficult decisions husbands must make today, then comment on the role of love in those decisions.
  
4. Name some of the most difficult decisions parents must make today, then comment on the role of love in those decisions.

*For your own, further study* Every trait in this series is seen in the life of Jesus. To learn more from His example of leadership, find some word or deed from His 3 ½ years on earth that fits each of the traits we have studied, and then examine yourself, to be sure you are following The Leader.

*(compassion, meek, delegate, fearless, devout, delight, wisdom, bold, change, endurance, encouragement, trustworthy)*