

A Leadership Example

Now the overseer is to be above reproach. (1 Timothy 3:2)

Scripture: 1 Timothy 3:1–7

Song “Yield Not to Temptation”

My friend’s son was attending school in another country where cheating was rampant and often overlooked. He was in a rough spot and had a difficult choice to make. Should he cheat to pass the class? Should he do his own work and bear the consequences? His classmates may have wondered why he would not take the easy way out, but perhaps some of them saw his example and felt led to examine their own behavior. Perhaps the Holy Spirit’s convicting power was at work in their hearts.

Today’s Scripture highlights several character traits that Christian leaders must possess. At first glance, it seems impossible to find all these wrapped up in one person. But Jesus Christ is that one, an example for Christian leaders everywhere. Scripture tells us Jesus was tempted in every way we are, and yet He didn’t sin.

I’ve proven repeatedly that I am not above reproach, as we all have. The key is to focus on Jesus and His character. Through His power, our lives can be forever changed.

Father, let Your character traits become mine so that others may see and seek their source. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

June 1–7. **Stephen Taylor** is a long-time Sunday school teacher who lives in El Dorado, Kansas.

A Leader Who Cares

At Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. (Acts 9:36)

Scripture: Acts 9:36–42

Song: “Make Me a Blessing”

Anyone married to a seamstress is familiar with the saying “She who dies with the most fabric wins.” During our recent move, I thought *I* would be the one dying after carrying box after box downstairs. My wife loves collecting discarded fabric, repurposing it into clothing for dolls, and sending the dolls overseas. Every piece of my wife’s doll clothing goes on its way with the understanding that the greater gift is Jesus.

You might wonder how dolls and their clothes could help spread the gospel. Some may have wondered how Tabitha’s generosity helped spread the gospel. But her gifts of clothing—and obviously of her time and friendship—made an impact on those around her. Because Tabitha cared (and because Peter did too) “many people believed in the Lord” (v. 42).

Tabitha’s story caused quite a stir in Joppa, resulting in many believers. I can imagine doll clothes causing quite a stir in Mexico, in Cambodia, or in Ukraine. The smallest gift, given in Jesus’ name, can become a miracle and help spread the gospel.

Father, please take any gift I give in Your name and use it to allow people to hear Your Word and respond to Your love. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

A Leader Who Teaches

When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him into their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. (Acts 18:26)

Scripture: Acts 18:24–28

Song: “Pentecostal Power”

I am rich in Bibles. I also have commentaries, concordances, and books on church teachings. However, many people in third-world countries have no access to even a page from a Bible. I know two people working in different areas of Africa training pastors and church planters. The work is hard. Terrible roads, dilapidated infrastructure, and opposition from non-Christians hamper the spread of the message. Scripture is scarce, and false teachers take advantage of the situation to deceive many. Sort of sounds like the challenges of the first-century church.

Apollos was “a learned man. . . . instructed in the way of the Lord” (vv. 24–25). He taught accurately about Jesus, but he was missing a key element. Priscilla and Aquila took time to invite Apollos into their home and fill in his “knowledge gap,” explaining in detail the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Rather than publicly correcting him and moving on, they took the time to teach. Apollos went on to become a great leader, one who could effectively explain the whole gospel and refute its opponents.

May we take the time not only to learn and grow for our own sake but for the sake of others, so that together we may grow in our walk with Christ.

Father, may I be “a great help” to others as they grow in their faith and as I also grow in mine. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

A Leader Who Listens

The king said to me, “What is it you want?” (Nehemiah 2:4)

Scripture: Nehemiah 2:1–8

Song: “I Must Tell Jesus”

I was a poor college student when my church called for us to pray and to give up food as part of a fast. When it was over, my friends ordered pizza. Rather than admit I was broke, I excused myself. The next morning, I overslept and missed breakfast. Then lunchtime passed at work. By midafternoon, hungry and irritated, I reminded God that I loved Him, that I loved pizza, and that I'd settle for anything I could get. As I yanked the mail out of my box, I found a coupon for free pizza. Obviously God heard my (somewhat frustrated) prayer.

It irritates me when people aren't listening. I feel slighted, and I'm sure Nehemiah felt the same. He was an expendable captive and the king's cupbearer. But the king noticed him and asked how he could help—and he listened to Nehemiah's request.

As Christ-followers, we can have an audience with the King at any time. Unfortunately, sometimes we don't pray because we're too busy or too tired. Sometimes we don't want to waste His time with trivial things. Sometimes we're irritated and grumble. Scripture, however, asserts that God listens to our prayers. We can come boldly before Him and find grace.

Father, forgive my excuses and mindless “duty prayers.” Remind me of the privilege to come before You. May I truly listen to the needs of others and help when I can. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

A Leader Who Intercedes

“Hear us, our God, for we are despised.” (Nehemiah 4:4)

Scripture: Nehemiah 4:1–6

Song: “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying”

Every Sunday the whiteboard in our small group is filled with prayer opportunities. Some are praises, some are requests. A volunteer leads us in praying for each one. Then, someone pulls out a cell phone, takes a picture, and emails it to the group as a reminder to continue praying.

In today’s passage, the returned exiles were trying to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall in the face of fierce opposition. In his prayer, Nehemiah used the words *us* and *we*, not *me* and *I*, to plead for God’s intervention.

Many times, I pray self-centered prayers. I need help remembering that I am a member of Christ’s body, so what affects one part affects all parts. Our Sunday morning ritual gives me a chance to rejoice with friends who have experienced God’s blessing and to pray for those who are experiencing trials. Most important, it reminds me that God really does work for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28) and that I am not the only one in this world who has problems.

Father, You tell me I am part of a kingdom of priests who intercede for others. Forgive me when I pray only for myself. Thank You that I can pray with and for others. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

A Leader Who Serves

“Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” (John 13:17)

Scripture: John 13:3–17

Song: “Where He Leads I’ll Follow”

My grandfather was the patriarch of my family. I remember him as a gently stern, no-nonsense Christian man of prayer who was very involved in our local church. But he was also a compassionate man, generous to a fault. I admired how he “walked the walk.” Despite that, to his sorrow, I left the church and Christ. However, the weight of my grandfather’s exemplary life continued to pull on me until I was reconciled to Christ (and to him) several years later.

Jesus culminated three years of teaching and service by washing the feet of His disciples. It must have impacted them, because the account appears in three of four Gospels. Even though His disciples would desert Him a few hours later, the weight of Jesus’ exemplary life pulled them back into a relationship with Him.

Jesus told His friends that they would be blessed by doing “these things.” He didn’t mean only washing each other’s feet. He was saying that their lives should make others hunger for a relationship with Him. I need to check myself frequently to see whether I am living the kind of life that mimics Christ’s example and reflects His love.

Father, help me lovingly serve others so that they will come to know You. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

A Leader Who Inspires

Barak said to her, “If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I won’t go.” (Judges 4:8)

Scripture: Judges 4:4–10, 14, 21–22

Song: “Trust and Obey”

When I was a young man, my uncle, a Kentucky Colonel, offered to teach me auctioneering. I was intrigued, but questions and self-doubts caused me to refuse. Now, my wife and I are “downsizing” after 30 years of living in a house with a lot of storage. I’m really wishing I had those connections and resources as we try to thin our collections to fit our new space.

Barak also missed a blessing because of fear and doubt. God offered him the chance to be a great leader in Israel, but he wanted a co-leader. God provided Deborah to spur Barak on to the task to which God had called him. Due to his lack of trust, Barak did not get full credit for a victory against King Jabin. Just as I sold some of my collected things at a deep discount, Barak had to settle for less than he might have had he not given into fear or doubt.

The Lord can use anyone to accomplish His purpose. When He gives me a task, I can feel privileged and humbled that He chose me. And when He gives someone else a task, I can come alongside them, encouraging and supporting them along the way.

Father, many times I have missed the blessing of seeing what You can do. Forgive my fearfulness and help me do better both in obeying You and inspiring others. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.