

Leadership

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[0 : 0 0] So we're going to look at this issue of leadership together. There's a list of spiritual gifts found in Romans chapter 12. I'm just going to read that. Where the Apostle Paul writes to the Roman Church and says, we've got different gifts according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesied then prophesied in accordance with your faith. If it's serving then serve. If it's teaching then teach. If it's to encourage then give encouragement. If it's giving then give generously. If it's to lead do it diligently. If it's to show mercy do it cheerfully. So leadership is an important part of the gifts that God has given to his church and to his people. So what does good leadership look like?

What does good Christian leadership look like? If you've been part of a church for any length of time then you probably know what bad Christian leadership looks like and the church is much to apologize for in many ways for how poorly it's exercised leadership in many people's lives. One of the favorite films I saw last year, I saw it several times because my son loved it so much, was *The Darkest Hour* and that's the film about Winston Churchill leading Britain through the D-Day crisis or not the D-Day crisis but the Dunkirk crisis. Gary Oldman fantastic incredible performance as Winston Churchill and some people ask what made Winston Churchill such a great wartime leader and the answer to give is that he really hated Hitler. Really hated Hitler. So is that what a good leader is?

Somebody who's full of hate? Probably not but it made him a good leader. So sometimes we look around for leadership models you know and we think you know we look at secular models Sir Alex Ferguson that great Scottish sporting legend is he a great role model or we might look at figures in the Bible and say well David you know King David is he a great leadership role model but I don't want to do any of that with you. I decided to come to John chapter 15 because I think here what's happening is it's the night before Jesus is crucified he's with his closest circle of friends the future leaders of the New Testament church and he's entrusting the leadership and the mission of the church into their hands.

So if we want to get insight into the kind of leadership that Jesus wants in the church then this is a really helpful place to start because there are really important leadership themes woven into the passage in John 15 that Derek read earlier. You might not think of yourself as a leader but actually we all teach we all pass on information we all set the tone the culture we all influence and share ideas we're all involved in making things happen in the home at work in the community here in church we're all involved in leading influencing directing the course of events we might lead small groups we might lead kids church we might lead music but we're all involved at different levels in different ways in leading and influencing others. I'm going to give you a simple definition of leadership to begin with and then I'm just going to sort of unpack that in different ways and this idea of leadership is not mine I read it in a book called *Gospel Centre Leadership* it's an excellent book by two guys called Steve Timmis and Tim Chester but really what the insight that the book has that I found most useful is this that a Christian leader is not teaching others to live under their authority or their leadership but actually Christian leadership is teaching others to live under the authority of Jesus Christ. Okay so my job is not to exercise power or authority over you as a Christian leader but it's to help you to live under Christ's kingship Christ leadership Christ authority and if you're a Christian this evening then that's that's true for all of us isn't it that what we want to do is to lead others towards Jesus and we want to lead others towards Jesus in a way that they find that he is a good king and that to live under his reign and his authority that's good you don't want to live under my authority or my reign I can tell you people I've tried it people didn't like it okay it's miserable but to live under Jesus authority in reign that is wonderful because he is a good perfect king so as

I speak about leadership that's the kind of leadership that I've got in mind leading others to live under the good reign of Jesus Christ all my points start with L and there's loads of them so hopefully I'll be quite brief but anyway we'll go and we'll see how we go but you know all with L so living lowly listening loving we're gonna go on like that okay so let's start with living leadership so just at the beginning of John chapter 15 Jesus says I am the true vine my father is the vine dresser there's an organic metaphor here every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it can be more bear more fruit and verse 4 abide in me I knew as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine neither can you unless you abide in me so that's a really clear simple sort of horticultural idea that as Christians our life is rooted in Jesus Christ all spiritual life flows to the believer from Jesus he is the vine where the branch is the only way we can have spiritual life spiritual vitality spiritual fruit is to live a life in union with Christ rooted in him in the previous chapter chapter 14 of John's gospel in the same kind of pre crucifixion teaching that Jesus gives he's spoken to the disciples about the gift of the Holy Spirit and he says the Holy Spirit is going to come and live in you so that you can continue to know my presence in your life when I'm no longer around physically I will dwell in you Jesus says by the Holy Spirit the Spirit of God brings spiritual life to the people of Jesus he is the vine spiritual life flows through him so first thing then to say to this is you cannot give spiritual leadership to other people unless Jesus Christ is living in you and you are living in him verse 4 we must abide in him we must dwell in him we must live in him we must remain in him and he must remain in us this is the idea that theologians call union with Christ that through faith we are united to Christ in his death and resurrection that all the life we have is bound up in Jesus Christ so I want to say to you you may want to be an influencer of others you may want to do good in this world and to start that process as a Christian then you have to live in relationship with Jesus Christ and you have to focus first on your relationship with Jesus Christ only through him can you do anything that's really good okay I think that's a great insight isn't it in verse verse 4 you can't bear fruit by yourself unless you abide in the vine okay so unless you abide in Jesus but if we do abide in Jesus in verse 8 he tells us we will bear much fruit so some of you know about Tim Keller who is a well-recognized pastor he's now retired from Manhattan in New York and he's got a book so there's gonna be a church planting references woven through this he's got a manual called the church planter training manual that I use a lot and in it he

[9 : 24] makes a distinction between what he calls gift operation and spirit operation and he's trying to draw attention to the fact that we can do many things in a kind of church setting or a home setting or a life setting we can do lots of things out of the strength of our own gifts and sometimes it can look as if we're doing a great job but he's saying if you want what you're doing to bear lasting spiritual fruit you can't do it in the strength of your own gifts you need to do it in the power in the ministry of the Holy Spirit unless God is in it unless the spirit is in it it won't bear eternal fruit the good fruit of the gospel that God is looking for there's somebody that I use as an example of this now who's very dated but a man called Ted Haggard now Ted Haggard was a minister of Colorado Springs probably about 20 years ago and he led a huge church 14,000 people in his church and he was also a head of the evangelical alliance of America which had 42 million members so he was on obviously an incredibly gifted person at a gifting level huge impact but at the same time he was smoking crack with male prostitutes so you had somebody very gifted but whose personal life was really corrupt and who personally was far away from God so you can operate and look as if you've got a successful church or a successful ministry or a successful life because humanly speaking that's the way it looks but without the power of the Holy Spirit it's not going to bear fruit for eternity so you need to live in Jesus and Jesus must be living in you second thing I want to say is lowly good leadership gospel leadership is lowly what's the context it's the night before the crucifixion to give insight to how Jesus views leadership and how he's going to offer himself a sacrifice to rescue his people the night that Jesus is speaking here in chapter 13 he's got down and washed the feet of his disciples a really menial tasks usually taken on by the the most menial low-state as household servant

Jesus is saying the Lord is the servant Jesus is saying to lead is to serve to be the leader is to be the one who is willing to take the lowest and the humblest position to be a real leader Jesus says spiritually is to know that we are nothing and that Jesus is everything that it's not about us and it's not about us having power and it's not about us having influence on a authority over others I've met people who said I love to be a leader in the church because then I could make sure that things

happen the right way and the church would be a lot better if I was in charge and that's what some people think of as leadership isn't it it's a power over others I was reading an essay in the New York Times a few years ago about American politics and before the last presidential America election in America and they're talking about politicians and why politicians seek office you know I mean who would want to be a politician really and they drew this distinction you know that some politicians seek office because they want power over others but then you get a different group of politicians who seek office because they want power to help others power to serve others power to make a difference in the lives of others and so in the church leadership is not about power over but power to power to serve power to love power to help so lowly leadership we take the lowest position the biblical idea of servant leadership has caught on in lots of corporate cultures also listening leadership okay good leaders listen who do we listen to well as Christians we want to listen to God so in verse 7 he says if you abide in me and my word abides in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you so here Jesus is saying that we need to hear his word later on he will say we need to hear his commandments so we need to be listening listening for the voice of God listening for the word of God to lead we need to hear what God is saying to us that means we need to be in the Bible and we need the Bible to be in us it means we need to be listening to God and prayer there's quite a lot of prayer here in this passage to ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you as we live a life rooted in the word of God hearing the word of God hearing the voice of God speak through scripture his spirit leads us to Christ sent our prayer ask what you will and it will be done for you so that listening well to who God is and what he's saying is really important but listening to others so Jesus isn't speaking to one person on this occasion in John 15 he's speaking to a group he's speaking to a community of people a group of friends so we never lead on our own we lead together with others we lead as part of a community that God has called on mission so you not only need to be listening to God but you need to be listening to others to hear their heart to hear their concerns to hear their needs so that you can love and serve them well to listen well requires humility where does humility come from in the Christian life well of course humility comes to the gospel because what the gospel teaches us is this that we're not chosen for leadership or we're not chosen for the Christian life because we're great people or we're good people we're chosen to live for Christ serve Christ and because he's merciful and gracious because he takes broken people and redeems and restores them and puts them to new and better purposes so our leadership begins out of our own brokenness our own sense of sinfulness our own conviction about our utter inadequacy and knowledge of our own heart that we are the worst kind of sinner and that it's a miracle that God loves us and is willing to work in us and through us and so we listen we listen to God we listen to others we listen to the gospel and that means learning I think it's really important that you see yourself as a learner learning is one of the most boring words in the world isn't it you're gonna have to learn something you know so just sounds like hard work learning things doesn't it but learning is really really important part of our existence growing in knowledge and understanding and I want to say to you really try and grow in your knowledge and understanding of God and grow and understand in your knowledge of theology now you might think theology is nothing to do with your life but you know in the day-to-day but theology makes a big difference in so many parts of life because it helps us to understand who God is what his purposes are for this world who we are what's wrong in the world around us and then how to think through the problems that we face theology gives us wisdom for life about 12 years ago I was part of a small group of people who were looking at the free church of Scotland as a denomination try to work out why is our denomination shrinking and why is it so rubbish at everything that was basically the question we were asking ourselves and you might think we're still rubbish at everything so there you go we didn't solve anything but one of you know we so we look to organizational issues and financial issues and vision and all kinds of structural issues but as we've peeled away all the problems you know what we found out that really at root we had a theological problem and the theological problem was that we'd forgotten what the church was for we'd forgotten that the church was for mission for sharing the good news of Jesus and so theology helped us to understand what was wrong and what needed to be done so we need to learn learn from our failings as well so listen and learn love leadership needs love so verses 9 and 10 of John 15 as the Father has loved me so have I loved you abide in my love if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love just as I have kept my father commandments and abide in his love so you need to love God don't you you need to love God the leader loves God and because they love God they live in obedience to God in his word and God leads us through his word by his spirit so we need to have a passion a love for

the God who has rescued us by his grace but we also need to love people so verse 12 this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you greater love has known than this that he's laid down his life for his friends so as well as loving God you need to love the people around you this is often where we fall down in the

Christian life and in Christian leadership what does it really look like to love other people well well that means taking time doesn't it and most leaders don't think they've got much time they've got so much to do leaders are self-important I'm so busy I'm under so much pressure I've got all this stuff to do wow look at me and so they stop listening and looking and learning from others and so loving people means taking time for them getting to know them being their help or being their friend great ideas of friendship in this passage so many of us in leadership we get stuck on tasks I need to do this I need to do that I've got a task list and goals and all those kind of things but God calls us not to love the task but to love the people if we focus on people the tasks will get done one of the great temptations of leadership is to use people to use people as a means to getting what you want done done and so we need to learn not to use people but to serve people to love them well sometimes you know the leader thinks this is my vision so I could say you know if I was a minister of St. Columbus I would say I've got a vision for St.

Columbus and your job as the people of St. Columbus is to help fulfill that vision and then I think I used to think of church leadership in that way and then one day I was reading a book by Dietrich Bonhoeffer called Life Together and he said God hates the visionary dreamer well it was a bit crushed because I thought I was a visionary dreamer I was very proud of my visionary dreams God hates the visionary dreamer what does that mean well he meant this that we have a vision of what the church should be and we try and force everybody into that grid and that's not what leadership is about when you look at Christian leadership actually God says you all have your different vocations your different gifts your different callings you have a workplace you have a family you have a community God has given you a mission and a ministry and the job of the leader is to equip you to live that out well and whatever sphere of life you're in so loving people means not lining them up to do what you want but it means serving them well so that they can do what God wants and the calling that God has put on their life

[22 : 45] I would also say as we talk about love you know you need to love God you need to love others I think also you know you need to have passions in life you know so find one thing that you really love to do or be in life you know some of us have a passion for music some of us have a passion for working with young people or kids some of you have a passion for mercy ministry some of you have got a passion for the creative art some of you've got a passion for hospitality and so I say find that thing you love doing and God can really use that in a way to be a blessing to others and build his church and people who are good at influencing others usually are people who are passionate about something and who really care about something well so Derek and I care about church planting you know we're very simple people we have one thing that we talk about a lot of the time and it's starting new churches so find your thing that you love being and doing and pursue that so leadership needs love I'm going to go back over all these else just to keep you in the loop living leadership lowly leadership listening leadership listening includes learning loving leadership loving God loving others loving one thing with a great passion leadership means loss one of the most memorable paintings of the previous century is called the scream by

Edward Munch and it's a very famous painting of a face wide open and terror the screen and it's sort of speaks of despair doesn't it and hopelessness and fear and anxiety it's always our 20th century existentialist and it's the way these and fingers that Christianity chose as its symbol fear the symbol of fear the cross the cross was an instrument of fear and terror there was a rebellion about 71 BC by the slaves led by Spartacus and it was caused by a Roman general called Crassus and once he defeated the slave rebels Crassus crucified six thousand of them along the Apian way you couldn't walk more than 120 feet before you came to the next crucified person why did Crassus do that he wanted to make sure no slave ever rebelled against Rome again the cross was an instrument of terror and fear and that's what God chose to symbolize

Christianity why because the way of the cross is the way of Jesus we're not called to great things we're first of all called to suffer take up your cross Jesus said and follow me if you're going to follow Jesus if you're going to be a leader for Jesus if you're going to lead others towards Jesus let me tell you this you are going to lose a lot a lot in verse 13 Jesus says this love will ask that you lay down your life for your friends you've got to be ready to sacrifice and to sacrifice in costly ways verse 18

Jesus said this the world will hate you it's the way of loss we will be hated but in the Christian life the way down is the way up isn't it the Christian story is this story not only of death and of resurrection but it's also the story of resurrection and so at the heart of what it means to follow Jesus is dying to self but rising to new life in Jesus Christ and that's an ongoing process in the life of the

Christian day by day we crucify the old nature we die to the old wavelength but we rise to a new way of living in Jesus Christ and you know what that means it means this that loss and gain coexist in us at the same time we lose but we win at the same moment it means that suffering and joy coexist in the Christian at the same moment because we are dying yet living because we are in union and communion with the dying yet living Jesus and his life in us shapes us so that we can lay our lives down and live for something greater so there is loss there is loss and then slightly counterintuitively there is laughter okay so I think a lot of leadership in all kinds of different communities but especially in the church is a harsh crushing negative depressing controlling and mean so whatever sphere of influence you have in your home in your workplace in the church in the community please be a leader who brings laughter and joy so one of the reasons I like working with Derek is very simple he makes me laugh okay we laugh a lot and it just makes life a lot easier when you get to laugh lots one of the key things about leadership is culture creation okay when you're a leader you create a culture in your organization your church your home your family an atmosphere an ethos and lots of churches create very depressing negative cultures but Jesus said I came so that my joy will be in you and that your joy will be full there should be laughter there should be joy there should be celebration there should be thanksgiving so wherever you get to influence the culture to shape the ethos in the home or the family please bring some laughter and joy and celebration celebration of all that is good and blessed that's how we can have joy and sorrow together isn't it because no matter how hard life is or difficult he's always there he's in us living in us in the power of the Holy Spirit and he is our joy so leadership is all about him isn't it that's the biggest lesson of all for leadership that it's all about Jesus if he is our joy if he is our treasure if he is our prize if he is our love if he is our goal then that shapes everything else in a really great way so for those of you who aren't Christians I just want to say to you that you know I don't want you to do what I tell you I don't want you necessarily to come to my church all I want you to do is to find out that

Jesus is good good in a way that you've never experienced good before life with Jesus is good and that's what we're all invited to