

## 8 Accountability

### Aim

This workshop should help us to see that leadership is one aspect of the serving ministry of Christ, to understand that it operates in relation to other important roles and that as with all other ministries we are accountable for it.

**Introduction** There are three sections; - Biblical material, activity and questions.

Decide beforehand which options you will use this week, or if you can break up the group into smaller units, inviting each one to a different cluster. Also you might wish to invite a guest along to speak briefly about his/her experience of appraisal. (Option 2)

### Pause for Thought and Prayer

Think of the leaders in your life: at church, at work, at home, in your community. Thank God for them and during the discussion of today's study consider their roles from a Biblical perspective.

*Lord, for the leaders in our lives who care about us, who want to help us to develop and who work hard on our behalf, we thank you. Give them wisdom, energy, ideas, courage and commitment. Help us to support them and to follow them for the good of our families, community and your kingdom.*

### OPTION 1.

**Talents are given by God, for the good of the church. No one gets all the gifts and we need to use them interdependently. There is no status attached to gifts – they are all for service – including leadership, which is one gift among, at least seven**

READ: when my *stomach* is hungry, my *nose* sniffs out the food, my *eyes* search for the food stall, my *legs* race over to the stall, my *hands* part with the money that my *brain* helped to earn, *hands* pour the ketchup and carry the food to my *mouth*. What would happen if one part of this co-operation failed? What co-operation!

All parts of the body are absolutely necessary. We have to co-operate and it is not always so easy and well tuned as it seems! What happens when one part of this co-operation fails?

**Activity** Try ranking the following leadership skills in order of importance:

(If everyone rates these 1 – 15 in order, then average out the results on the F/C. The lowest score becomes the most important in the eyes of the group and so on. There is no right answer!)

Encouraging others Prophecy (telling what God is doing at this time) Organising others towards a goal Wisdom Willing to be helped	Serving others Being kind  Good self-expression  Able to explain things Able to get your own way, nicely	Giving financially Physical stature  Good listener  Decisiveness Trained in business skills
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**Reading;** Romans 12; 3-8 (then answer the questions in groups: afterwards take time to write them on a flipchart)

Who gets gifts and talents from God?

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What is God’s reason for giving these different abilities?

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Which of the gifts that God gives surprises you most? Why?

.....

How would you define leadership ability?

.....

**Finally**

Take a few moments to think honestly about your own gift(s) and talents. What do you think God has given you?

How, in the next week, could you use your talent for others in Church or community?

Do you – honestly – believe you are a leader? (Romans 12;3 “be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you”).

**OPTION 2**

**God holds us responsible for how we use the talents he has given. We report to God and to each other on their use.**

**Reading:** Matthew 25; 14-30

**Group Activity:**

What do you think about the fairness of the distribution of the talents?

.....

Was the one talent man right to play it safe? Would you have called him “wicked” as his boss did?

.....

Apart from the servants themselves, who gained and who lost out by their various actions?

.....

What judgement would you have made if these three men had been leaders in your Church?

.....

Would you have challenged the “play it safe” servant, or let him be?

.....

**INTERVIEW**

If there is someone in the group – or whom someone knows – who has experience of work appraisals, it could be of enormous benefit to ask them to come to tell what happens. If there is someone who has done it, and one who has had it done, that would be ideal. The issue here is about accountability where people are paid for a job, using the resources of their employers and must give account. Is God’s work less serious? Ask them for information on setting targets and measuring performance. Maybe you could really go to town and set this up as a drama!

**CONSIDER:** Look at Romans 14;12 as well as returning to Romans 12;3.

Would you rather do someone else’s appraisal than have your own done?

How do you feel about your own performance appraisal with God?

Is it possible to hold up a mirror to ourselves and be honest?

Are the comments made about people/leaders/ministers, in your Church an honest way of appraisal?

**OPTION 3**

**As leaders we are accountable to one another under God for our decisions and actions**

We think of Peter as one who gave a lead in the early Church, especially up to and after Pentecost. It could be argued that he made a mistake with his first major decision – the replacement of Judas with another apostle to make up the number with “what’s his name”! Later Peter reluctantly preached to the gentile Cornelius when God led him to do so. He then had to explain his actions to the Church leaders in Jerusalem. The Church then decided whether he was right and how they should proceed to widen the gospel to others. This discussion was developed later in Acts 15 when Paul and Barnabas were called to account.

**Reading;** Acts 11; 1-4, 18, 22-25. (Ideally the whole passage should be read)

**DISCUSSION**

What emotions do you think you would feel if you were Peter, having to explain yourself?

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What yardstick did the Church in Jerusalem use to judge the validity of what was happening in Antioch?

.....

**Now read** Acts 15; 7-31

What was the measure used to assess the situation in Antioch?

.....

What do you think were the opinions and feelings in Jerusalem with this outcome?

.....

What conflicts might we expect when we seek to be answerable to God and answerable to God’s people (the Church)?

.....

**CONSIDER**

Who is in charge in your local Church?

Is there any system of showing how we value - youth leaders, Sunday School teachers, ministers, stewards? How can the Church help them and us to evaluate their ministry and be ever more effective?

What steps can be taken to bring people closer to the head of the Body?  
What measure will you use to determine whether your church leaders are doing a good job?  
Where will you find guidance with which to do this?

Ideas might be: clear job descriptions: forward job plans (objectives); skills required; qualifications (eg for Child Protection safety, youth leadership); attitudes/style; standards of performance; outcomes; spiritual gifts; godly living (how determine?); fruit of the spirit

### **Concluding thoughts**

Leadership is about attitude, not status; about calling before function, about serving not bossing!. The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Those without a desire for status or power are to be leaders!

God knows our attitude and our motivation. Most people also see our attitudes and can guess our motivation. God looks at the inside. We need that focus and awareness. (For additional reading read about how and why God told Samuel to anoint David as king in 1 Sam 16: 6-7)

God holds leaders especially accountable – see Micah 3:1-11. They report directly to him and they also need to be willing to report to the people they are serving.

Weak leadership has consequences – not just for the leaders but for all of the people - Numbers 13,14:1-25. Both the leaders and the people suffer the consequences. ([See Appendix for more](#))

### **Further reading:**

Finding your place in the Body of Christ – Hughes  
What you do best in the Body of Christ - Bugbee

### **Some examples from secular literature**

In order to provide some contrasts from secular leaders it would be possible to read a short section on Machievelli 'The Prince' , extract 'On Things for Which Men and Especially Princes are Praised or Blamed' and also William Manchester's 'The Last Lion' a short section on Winston Churchill. The former illustrates the desire to retain power at any price and therefore leading by expediency. The latter illustrates leadership by principle. Machievelli felt he was only accountable to himself to maintain power. Churchill to the people and perhaps to his God.

For a better understanding of the spiritual foundations for good character it might be good to read PT Forsyth's 'God the Holy One' where he emphasises that an understanding of the holiness of God is essential for good character in leaders. Also Augustine's Confessions where the lesson of moral accountability is outlined.

### **APPENDIX**

Decisions leaders take have consequences for themselves and the people they lead.

#### **Read as much as you have time for: Numbers 13-14:1-11**

Twelve scouts are sent to do a job for Moses and for the people. They report back v25. Some got it right, some got it wrong. Caleb and Joshua saw milk and honey and grapes and giants. They also knew they had a big God and could trust him if they were obedient. The other 10 saw giants and forgot God. Trouble is the people had a choice and decided to go for the little God version! Decisions of leadership have consequences.

What were the consequences of weak leadership for the people of Israel?

Consider the consequences of weak leadership in the church?

What is the responsibility of the people who are being led in a church?

How will we discern who is leading us the way God wants and with courage and faith?