

## BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

**Rev. Christian Maduabuchi Umeanwe PhD**

Department of Religion and Human Relations,  
NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.  
drchrismadu777@gmail.com; [cm.umeanwe@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:cm.umeanwe@unizik.edu.ng)  
08032943999

### **Abstract**

Effective Christian leadership is crucial for the growth, development, and success of churches, organizations, and communities. This study explores the biblical principles and strategies of Christian leadership, examining the qualities, characteristics, and practices of effective leaders in the Bible. The study delves into key biblical principles such as servant leadership, humility, integrity, and accountability. It also examines the importance of spiritual leadership, vision, communication, and teamwork in achieving God's purposes. Furthermore, the study analyzes the leadership strategies employed by biblical leaders such as Moses, David, Nehemiah, and Paul, highlighting their successes and failures. The findings of this study provide valuable insights and practical applications for Christian leaders, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of biblical leadership principles and strategies. By embracing these principles and strategies, Christian leaders can become more effective in their roles, leading their followers to achieve God's purposes and fulfill their destinies.

**Keywords:** Biblical, Principles, Strategies, Christian, Leadership

### **Introduction**

This paper shall be discussing as well as investigating the general meaning of leadership, concepts of secular and Christian leadership, principles and strategies of Christian leadership. Leadership is important because it influences the destiny of people. Leadership also determines, to a large extent, what a group of people will be able to achieve. Leadership moves people towards common goals, principles and values. Good leadership enables people to work together well, and realize their potential. Poor leadership frustrates both people and projects. Poor leadership results in people being hurt. Good leadership results in strong people and excellent results. Anthony (2019) has some great insight and knowledge about church growth in the following words;

Peter's walk toward Jesus on a stormy sea forecast the dilemma of Christians in future centuries. Stormy change often leaves believers seasick as the gospel shrugs off the shackles of one historical period after another on its journey to the outer limits of recorded time and beyond. (p.1).

Today's Christian leaders face upheaval as time roars into the 21st century. They must walk with Him and obey Him on a raging sea of social, economical, moral, cultural, and technological change unprecedented in human history. Like Peter, they must decide which is stronger, their faith in God or their fear of the future. Simon Peter climbed out of the boat believing he could follow Jesus' command to walk on the water. However, anchored by his limited view of the possible, his faith failed and he sank. Church leaders on mission today must also step out in faith from their anchored past to answer Jesus' command to communicate His unchanging message in a mighty roaring sea of change.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

It is important to make some clarifications of the key words as contained in the research topic. This will guide the readers to grasp the clear-cut understanding of the context in which they are used in the research work. The key words include; Principles, Strategies Christian and Leadership.

13. **Biblical:** According to Merriam-Webster (2020), the term "biblical" refers to something related to or based on the Bible, the sacred scripture of Christianity. Kostenberger *et al.*, (2009) said, the Bible is considered the inspired word of God, containing accounts of creation, history, poetry, prophecy, and teachings of Jesus Christ and the early Christian church. Biblical principles and teachings guide Christian living, providing moral and ethical frameworks for decision-making and behavior (Wright, 2013). Soulen & Woodbridge (2016) further said, in academic and theological contexts, "biblical" is used to describe studies, interpretations, and applications of the Bible. Vanhoozer

(2002) added that, Biblical scholarship encompasses various disciplines, including exegesis, hermeneutics, and biblical theology.

14. **Principles:** According to Kotter (2001), principles are fundamental truths or propositions that serve as the foundation for a system of belief, behavior, or decision-making. Covey (2004) said, they guide thought and action, providing a moral and ethical framework for individuals and organizations. Senge (2006) added that, principles are universal, timeless, and unchanging, distinguishing right from wrong and good from bad.
15. **Strategies:** According to Porter (1980), strategies are comprehensive plans of action designed to achieve specific goals or objectives, encompassing multiple elements such as mission, vision, environmental analysis, goal-setting, resource allocation, and implementation. Bryson 2018) added that, effective strategies integrate these components to optimize resource utilization, adapt to changing environments, and maintain competitive advantage.
16. **Christian:** According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2020), A Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ and the teachings of Christianity, a monotheistic religion based on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Kostenberger *et al.*, (2009) added that, Christians believe in the Bible as the inspired word of God, guiding their faith and practices. The term "Christian" has multiple other meanings, encompassing:
  - a. **Adjective:** Merriam-Webster (2020) said Christian means, describing something related to or based on Christianity, such as Christian values or Christian music.
  - b. **Noun:** Encyclopedia Britannica (2020) opined that, a person who believes in and follows the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible.
  - c. **Identity:** in the words of Yancey (2010) the term Christian means, a self-definition or label adopted by individuals to express their religious affiliation and commitment.

## Who is a Christian? The Biblical Definition

Since the Bible is the authority for the Christian faith; let's see what it says about the word "Christian." The word is only used three times in the New Testament and each instance is referring to the first Christians of the early church.

- i. "...So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" (Acts 11:26).
- ii. Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?'" (Acts 26:28).
- iii. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name" (1 Peter 4:16).

They were called "Christians" because their behavior, activity, and speech were like Christ Jesus. The word Christian means, "Follower of Christ" or "belonging to the party of Christ." So, what made them part of this group called "Christians." The word Christian was given to the early followers of Jesus, and the name has 'stuck' to this day. A Christian is someone who looks to Jesus Christ for salvation and eternal life, someone who acknowledges his need for a Savior and who tries to emulate Christ in his daily life. Green leaf (1977) said, A Christian is a person who is trusting Jesus Christ for their eternal salvation, and is seeking to follow Him in their daily life. To put it another way, a Christian is committed to Jesus as both their Savior and their Lord (or master). Let me explain what this means. It means first of all that Jesus Christ was more than an extraordinary man; He was the unique Son of God fully God and fully man. As Jesus Himself said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). It means also that Jesus Christ was sent into the world for a purpose and that purpose was to save us from our sins. Sin separates us from God; it also makes us subject to God's judgment. But God loves us, and on the cross all our sins were placed on Christ, and He took upon Himself the judgment and Hell we deserve. When we commit

our lives to Christ, God forgives us — and now our desire is to live for Him instead of ourselves.

17. **Leadership:** According to Northouse (2019), Leadership is the process of influencing, motivating, and guiding individuals or groups towards achieving shared goals and objectives. Effective leaders possess vision, integrity, and the ability to inspire and empower others.

### **Further Definitions of Leadership.**

Let's see how some of the most respected thinkers of our time from religion to business define leadership, and let's consider what's wrong with their definitions.

- **Peter Drucker** defined a leader as someone who has followers.

A high military officer has followers who are compulsorily following him. By default his troops have to “follow” orders. Is the Captain really a leader? Commander yes, leader no.

- Drucker is of course a brilliant thinker of modern ideology, but his definition of leadership is too simple and has not fully reflected definition of true meaning of leadership.
- Warren Bennis defines leadership as the capacity to translate vision into reality. I agree with Bennis that leadership is ability to translate vision, but not every person that translates vision is a leader. Bennis' definition seems to have forgotten important aspects and meaning of true leadership.
- Bill Gates said as we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others. This definition includes “others” and empowerment is a good thing. But to what end is this empowerment? We have seen many leaders empowering “others” in our country especially our political leaders, empowering our youths from rioting hooligans to political thugs. Gates' definition of leadership is not definite of the type of empowerment, but still I

agree with him that leadership has its part of assignment as empowering others.

- John Maxwell said that leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less.

Minimalism is good, but this reduction is too concise and almost robbed the true definition of leadership. A robber with a gun has “influence” over his victim. A native doctor through his diabolical power can influence others. A manager has the power to fire team members which provides a lot of influence. But does this influence make an armed robber, native doctor or a manager a leader? The answer is no. Maxwell’s definition omits the source of influence.

### **11. What then is Leadership?**

Every prophet prophesy’s in part, this implies that no single definition by any thinker or author can give comprehensive definition, but when definitions are blended then there can be full meaning of widely acceptable definition of leadership. Kotter (2001) said, Leadership is the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to influence, empower and guide followers or other members of an organization. It is a process of social influence which works to increase the efforts of others in pursuit of a common goal. Leadership involves making sound, and sometimes difficult decisions, creating and articulating a clear vision, establishing achievable goals and providing followers with the knowledge and tools necessary to achieve those goals. Leaders are found and required in most aspects of society, from business to politics, from politics to religion, and from religion to community based organizations. Barna (2011) said, leadership is a process of motivating, mobilizing, resourcing and directing people to passionately and strategically pursue a vision from God that a group jointly embraces. Nwokoye (2012) said, *“The concept of governance means the process of decision making and process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)”* (p.274). Northouse (2004) defined leadership as “a process consisting of transactions between the leader and the followers: a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p.8).

Some others have identified four dimensions of leadership from the many perspectives of leadership offered such as;

- i. Leadership is a process
- ii. Leadership involves influence
- iii. Leadership occurs in groups, and
- iv. Leadership involves common goals.

On the basis of these four dimensions, Northouse (2004) furthered to state that, “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.” (p. 17).

This definition has important implications for understanding the role of leadership in our society, particularly based on the four dimensions identified. If we see leadership as a process, that would imply that leadership is not a trait or characteristic that inheres in the leader, but rather, a transaction between the leader and the followers, which produces mutual effects on the two ends; that is, with effects on the leader as much as on the followers.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The researcher adopted the Servant Leadership as the theory for the theoretical framework of this research work. While servant leadership is a timeless concept, the phrase “servant leadership” was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in *The Servant as Leader*, an essay that he first published in 1977. In that essay, Greenleaf said:

The servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions...The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. The difference manifests itself in the care



taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?" (p.1).

A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the "top of the pyramid," servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible. This theoretical study integrates Servant Leadership propounded by Greenleaf (1977) with biblical principles and strategies for effective Christian leadership. The study examines the alignment of Servant Leadership with Jesus' teachings and biblical leadership models. Servant Leadership, introduced by Greenleaf (1977), emphasizes leaders prioritizing followers' needs. This study explores the theoretical foundations of Servant Leadership in biblical principles.

### **Biblical Foundations:**

1. Jesus' example (Matthew 20:26-28, John 13:1-17)
2. Servant heart (Mark 9:35, Philippians 2:3-5)
3. Humility (Matthew 18:4, 1 Peter 5:5-6)
4. Empathy and compassion (Matthew 9:36, Colossians 3:12)
5. Stewardship (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Titus 1:7)

### **Different Names Leaders are Called**

The English language has several synonyms for the word "leader" depending on the body the leader is appointed or elected; this is according to the words of Mills (2012) as below;



These different names review the different kind of leaders that exist in world. These are leaders in every sphere of activity and each sphere of activity gives a different name to its leader. Leaders in ships are called captains; leaders in planes are called pilots whilst leaders of soldiers are called generals. In the political world, leaders of nations are called presidents or prime ministers, whilst leaders of universities are called chancellors. In the religious circle leaders of churches are called pastors, bishops, etc, whilst leaders of mosques are called imams. In the Arab villages their leaders are called sheiks and in Ghana, their village leaders are called chiefs. (pp. 3-4).

The Holy Bible buttresses Mills (2012) view on different names by which leaders are called. They are reviewed as follow; *“He will destroy all the nation’s leaders-the heroes, soldiers, judges, prophets, diviners, elders, army officers, honorable citizens, advisers, skilled magicians, and expert enchanters.”* Isaiah 3:2-3.

From the scripture the preceded scriptural quotation, one will notice the different kinds of leaders that were present in the city of Jerusalem. The following are more catalogs of names leaders are called in some different spheres of life.

- 32. Leaders are called captains
- 33. Leader are called chiefs
- 34. Leaders are called commanders
- 35. Leaders are called presidents
- 36. Leaders are called prime ministers
- 37. Leaders are called shepherds
- 38. Leaders are called generals
- 39. Leaders are called governors
- 40. Leaders are called guides
- 41. Leaders are called pastors
- 42. Leaders are called bosses
- 43. Leaders are called the heads

44. Leaders are called the managers
45. Leaders are called the principals
46. Leaders are called the rulers
47. Leaders are called minister
48. Leaders are called senators
49. Leaders are called counselors
50. Leaders are called superintendents
51. Leaders are called fathers
52. Leaders are called supervisors
53. Leaders are called pilots
54. Leaders are called chairmen
55. Leaders are called directors
56. Leaders are called masters
57. Leaders are called lords
58. Leaders are called dictators
59. Leaders are called kings
60. Leaders are called seniors
61. Leaders are called prefects
62. Leaders are called monitors
63. Leaders are called chancellors
64. Leaders are called bishops
65. Leaders are called sheiks
66. Leaders are called judges
67. Leaders are called nobles
68. Leaders are called specialists
69. Leaders are called consultants
70. Leaders are called deans
71. Leaders are called pacesetters

Each of the names as mentioned above by which leaders are called in different works of life has its characters or traits which may be peculiar to others. The dealings of a judge, army general, chancellors, dictators, pilots, sheiks, will obviously be different from that of a bishop, medical specialists and consultants in other works of life. Still, regardless of the differences in their system or pattern of administration, there can still be a means of leading. Fackerell (2018) has extensively informed some vital qualities of leadership as follow;

### **Qualities of a Christian Leader?**

6. A good leader leads by example. The greatest authority in leadership is reserved for those who have done themselves the things they seek to motivate others to do.
7. A positive attitude is very important. Leadership is not possible without advocating something. Criticism of others behind their backs is not leadership. A leader must show a better way, mostly by example.
8. People want to be part of a winning team. A good leader must be positive even in the face of setbacks, so that people will not be discouraged and give up. This requires the quality of steadfastness and endurance.
9. A good leader is self-disciplined. A good leader can sacrifice his or her present comfort for future benefits, and in this way inspires others to do the same. A good leader manages his or her time well.
10. A good leader knows and studies people. A good leader is a good listener, and also observes the body language and non-verbal communication of others. A good leader waits before speaking, and does not promise quickly.
11. A good leader is in touch with the needs, hopes, aspirations and desires of others. A good leader considers others, and seeks to do things that benefit everyone involved.
12. A good leader is prepared to change and skilled in preparing others to embrace change.

13. A good leader encourages dissatisfied people in the organization to work together to find a solution.
14. A good leader is willing to learn from others. A good leader also invests considerable time in self-education – by reading books, listening to tapes or attending seminars.
15. A good leader has personal integrity and works hard to develop this quality. Integrity means keeping one's word, and dealing truly with others. People do not like being let down by the broken promises of those in authority over them. A good leader will avoid resorting to tactics of manipulation.
16. A good leader is highly motivated to achieve results, and therefore diligent.
17. A good leader nevertheless is patient and slow to anger.
18. A good leader is faithful to others and inspires loyalty and team spirit in his or her followers.
19. A good leader enjoys other people and doesn't overly dwell on their weaknesses.
20. A good leader invests in others and empowers others to achieve and to become leaders themselves, without being threatened.
21. A good leader seeks models the attitude and practice of service towards others.

### **Biblical Examples of Christian Leadership**

Jesus Christ modeled all of the above characteristics. In seeking to lead people to God the Father, Jesus himself demonstrated the power of a relationship with God through prayer. He modeled faith for his disciples to observe, showing to them and later declaring to them the power of faith (see Mark 11:22-24). Jesus modeled love, self-discipline, integrity and righteousness. Not even his enemies could convict him of sin. They could only point out where he violated their own traditions and interpretations, such as his healing of people on the Sabbath. Jesus ultimately gave His life for his followers. The great miracle was that He got back to life through his resurrection from the dead. Jesus was positive and cheerful. He

said to his disciples, "that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete". Even though he had many things to correct, he did so in a wise way. Jesus believed that his work would be accomplished, and entrusted part of it to his disciples, whom he trained. Later he left his disciples the task of reaching the world. Jesus was self-disciplined. He often prayed through the night. Once He fasted forty days. All these things were preparation for His ministry.

Jesus could perceive the inner thoughts of others, even his enemies. He knew things about his disciples, even beyond what a man could know through the power of observation alone. Jesus did not waste His words. Jesus gave himself to serve the needs of the people by healing their sick, feeding them when they were hungry, giving them a true hope concerning the kingdom of God, and setting them free from evil, sin and demons by the power of His Word and the Holy Spirit. Jesus made disciples and developed others who could continue His ministry after He left the earth. Jesus demonstrated both nobility and compassion in his dealings with people. Multitudes followed him, yet he invested in relatively few so that the quality of his mission could continue for longer. Jesus demonstrated a humility and servant attitude that is unparalleled, considering his divine origin. Many other things could be pointed out from the life of Jesus that illustrate leadership. It is true that Jesus' style of leadership was and is very different to some style of the leadership of today, especially in the church. Yet His life has produced enduring moral results which have lifted so many to a better life and some to life eternal.

### **What is Christian Leadership?**

What is Christian leadership? What should a Christian leader be like? There is no finer example for Christian leadership than our Lord Jesus Christ. He declared, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" ([John 10:11](#)). It is within this verse that we see the perfect description of a Christian leader. He is one who acts as a shepherd to those "sheep" in his care. *Christian leadership is a dynamic relational process in which people, under the*

*influence of the Holy Spirit, partner to achieve a common goal - it is serving others by leading and leading others by serving.*

Christian Leadership is the act of influencing/serving others out of Christ's interests in their lives so they accomplish God's purposes for and through them," according to Bill Lawrence, president of Leader Formation International, at Bible.org. Christian leadership is not rooted in worldly notions of success, such as the love of money or power. Jesus Himself spoke against this when expressing the importance of serving others.

*But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:25-28.*

Leaders are not to oppress and overpower others with their authority, like the Gentiles practiced. Instead, leaders serve others, which Jesus demonstrated when He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7-8).

Christian leadership is a vital aspect of the Church, and its effectiveness depends on adherence to biblical principles. According to the Bible, leaders are called to serve and shepherd God's people (John 10:11, Matthew 20:26-28). Key Characteristics of Christian Leaders:

### **Biblical Leadership Models:**

1. Jesus' leadership (Matthew 20:26-28, John 13:1-17)
2. Paul's leadership (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 2 Timothy 2:2)
3. Peter's leadership (1 Peter 5:1-4, Acts 2:42-47)

## **Eight Christian Leadership Principles**

I heard a well-known pastor describe the church as the most leadership-intensive organization in the world, Stephen Grunlan, senior pastor at Grace Fellowship in Overland Park, Kansas, wrote in *Ministry Magazine*. “Church leaders do not have the authority of military leaders or the financial incentives of the corporate world; they only have leadership skills on which to rely. Those leadership skills will define whether church leaders or all Christian leaders, because they have the same values and focus are successful. “Where do they find the leadership principles needed to lead?” Grunlan asked. “While excellent books, seminars and classes on leadership are available, church leaders, first of all, need to look in God’s Word.”

**i Love (John 13:34-35, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3):** Yukl (2010) said, demonstrating genuine care and concern for others is essential by Christian leaders. While Northouse (2019) said, prioritizing relationships and people over tasks should be paramount in Christian leadership. God is love (1 John 4:8) and “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5). Expressing the power and influence of the love of God is difficult to overemphasize. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul famously wrote about the transformational nature of love and how it is greater than spiritual gifts like faith and hope. Jesus told His disciples that other people will know them by their love (John 13:35). Love is central to Christianity and every Christian. Any Christian leader should be driven in his or her life by the love of God in anything that he or she does. In this light, may other people recognize the heart and motives of that leader.

**ii. Modesty (Matthew 18:4, 1 Peter 5:5-6):** Collins (2001) opined the necessity of embracing humility and lowliness in Christian leadership. Whereas, Kostenberger & Quarles (2009) Recognizing one's limitations and dependence on God as inevitable in Christian Leadership. We have all encountered the know-it-all leader, the ‘submit-or-else’ type of leader. Proverbs 16:5 says the proud of



heart are “an abomination” to God. Being arrogant does not help model or demonstrate Christ’s interests. Rather, it is in direct conflict with Christian leadership.

*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.  
Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil  
with the proud. Proverbs 16:18-19.*

**iii. Self-Development (2 Timothy 2:15, Psalm 119:130):** Barna (2011) suggested pursuing spiritual growth and maturity in Christian leadership as sine qua non. Whereas, Drucker (1999) suggested continuously learning and improving skills as what to be esteem high in Christian leadership. Jesus modeled self-development. Jesus often “constantly slipped away to spend time with God.” One of the most striking examples of this is when Jesus prayed in the garden at Gethsemane just before His arrest. Jesus knew “all things that would come upon Him” (John 18:4), including the painful flogging and crucifixion. This caused intense anguish and sorrow, which is evident from Luke’s account. Luke, who was a physician, was the only writer in the gospels to describe Jesus’ sweat as blood — referring to a rare condition called hematidrosis.

*And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”  
Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.  
And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Luke 22:41-44*

Christian leaders can follow Jesus’ example of seeking God for insight into His will and for strength. Becoming more righteous is a lifelong process for all Christians, and leaders need to make time to grow spiritually.

**iv. Motivation (Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Corinthians 9:22-23):** Hersey & Blanchard (1988) opined that, Inspiring and motivating others to achieve a

shared vision. In the same vein, Kouzes & Posner (2017) maintained that, leading by example and demonstrating passion should not be trivialized in Christian leadership. Instead of misleading or exploiting people, good leaders motivate others, Grunlan said. In Nehemiah 2:17, “Nehemiah fearlessly motivated the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem,” Grunlan wrote. “He laid out a vision, he shared a plan and he reassured God’s people that God was with them. When we are moving people for our benefit, we manipulate and exploit them. But when we call people to a higher purpose, we motivate them.”

**v. Correction (Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1-2):** According to Gilliland & Dunn (2003) Addressing conflicts and errors in a constructive manner should be prioritized in Christian leadership. While, Wright (2013) asserted that, restoring relationships and promoting unity is crucial in Christian leadership. Correcting others in the right way is important for all Christians. Many passages in Scripture speak to this principle, as the following examples illustrate:

*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24-25).*

*And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. Be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all” (1 Thessalonians 5:13-14).*

*But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and*

*escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:23-26).*

How can Christian leaders approach correcting others in the right way? Lawrence offers the following tips:

- i. By understanding their temperaments
- ii. By respecting their concerns
- iii. By believing in their gifts
- iv. By supporting their dreams
- v. By challenging their flaws
- vi. Integrity (Proverbs 10:9, 1 Timothy 3:2-3):** in the words of Ciulla (2003), demonstrating honesty, transparency, and moral integrity is a way of gaining the followership of the led in Christian leadership. Still according to Kostenberger & Quarles, (2009) opined that, upholding biblical values and principles should be the watchword of Christian leaders. Good Christian leaders practice and value integrity.

*Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and they love him who speaks what is right.— Proverbs 16:13*

People don't follow leaders who lack integrity. Integrity involves actions as well as words. Integrity involves practicing what we preach, being consistent and dependable, doing what we say we will do and living in such a way that others will trust us.

- vii. Following of God's Will (John 5:30, Psalm 143:8-10)** According to Blackaby & Blackaby (2001), seeking God's guidance and direction is very important to any leader in Christian leadership. While, Wright (2013) advocates submitting to God's sovereignty and authority as what is highly demanded in any Christian leadership as leaders are mere human beings who cannot do anything on their own, but should depend on God's daily supply of His grace. Is there anything more important in a leader than he or she seeking God's direction? A

good leader seeks the Lord, commits his way to the Lord and the Lord establishes the next steps.

*The preparations of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. ...Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established. ...A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps. Proverbs 16:1, 3, 9*

**viii. Servant Leadership (Mark 9:35, Philippians 2:3-5):** According to Greenleaf (1977), prioritizing others' needs over personal interests is Christlike leadership. Still in the same vein, Northouse (2019) encouraged serving with humility and compassion as what is worthy of emulation in the leadership styles of Jesus Christ. There are two components of servant-leadership. The first is that of being a servant. The second is being a leader. 'Servant' defines the timeless, changeless style and attitude that must be present in our lives. 'Leadership' defines the responsibility. As believers we are all called to be servants. When we assume the responsibility of motivating people to bring about purposeful change we must do so as servant-leaders. Servant-leaders who serve but do not lead may be wonderful servants but they are not servant-leaders. Leadership by example is a call to lead with diligence.

Is it possible to be a leader and a servant at the same time? For most people, it would seem that these two words, servant and leader, are in opposition to one another. The servant leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead in order to secure opportunity to serve. Servant leadership is a kind of leadership that emanates from intense desire to serve. This style of leadership takes the view that leaders are there to enable others, to encourage a team to create something that no individual could. According to Bernes (1962):

Servant leadership is the manifest design of humility of Jesus Christ; to teach disciples by his example that they ought to condescend to the most humble offices for the benefit of others. They ought not to

be proud, and vain, but to regard themselves as the servants of each other in every way. And especially as they were to be founders of the church, and to be greatly honored, he took this occasion of warning them against the dangers of ambitions, and of teaching them, by an example that they could not forget, the duty of humility. (p.2935).

Servant leadership does at least two things. First it accomplishes worthwhile goals. Secondly, servant leadership develops and transforms those who are being lead. People are really better people and better off because they have served with that leader. They are more competent, confident and equipped. Leadership is needed to transform vision into reality. Following Jesus' example of leadership in the church, leaders must serve the church obediently, humbly and lovingly.

Servant leadership is servant-hood in leading people. It implies call and readiness to serve the people and to serve God above all else. It is expected of servants to be found faithful, contented and with high ethical principles. Servant leaders are not involved with riotous living and do not act rashly. They are self-controlled and disciplined in their lives and in the discharge of the responsibilities of public office. Eric Swanson said that leadership has to do with purpose and direction. Everything that leaders who practice servant leadership do must be laden with purpose from the beginning to the end of their leadership. Every servant-leader encourages his potential followers to follow in his steps. Every servant-leader understands each follower's giftedness, and will assign work to them in line with their giftedness; he will hold them accountable and help them with their weaknesses. Every servant-leader takes time to explain to the followers every philosophy of his ministry.

### **Strategic Approaches of Christian Leadership**

Christian leadership is a sacred calling that requires adherence to biblical principles and strategic approaches. By embracing these principles and models, leaders can build a strong foundation for ministry, foster healthy communities,

and advance the Kingdom of God. Leaders must prioritize their relationship with God. Leaders must foster a sense of community and belonging. Leaders must prioritize integrity and humility. Leaders must practice spiritual disciplines. Leaders must empower others (Ephesians 4:11-12, Matthew 28:18-20). Leaders must build community (Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 10:24-25). Leaders must practice spiritual disciplines (1 Thessalonians 5:17, Acts 6:4). There is an experience that takes place in the book of Ezra, in chapters 9 and 10, that provides a great source of learning for us on this topic. Ezra had already successfully led a group of leaders back to Jerusalem from their place of captivity. The physical temple had already been reconstructed, and now Ezra had returned to facilitate the restoration of the spiritual temple – the hearts of the people. After he arrived in Jerusalem, he took the time to assess the situation and determined the issues (in this circumstance, they were the issues of unfaithfulness and ungodliness), and prepared a strategic plan to address the issues and restore the people and the nation before God. According to Bryson (2018), the process we see when we focus in on Ezra 10:6-17, others include; Servant Leadership as a biblical mandate (Matthew 20:26-28). Empowering others through servant leadership (Ephesians 4:11-12). Building community through servant leadership (Acts 2:42-47). Practicing humility and empathy in leadership (1 Peter 5:5-6, Colossians 3:12). Stewarding resources and talents through servant leadership (1 Corinthians 4:1-2, Matthew 25:14-30).

The integration of Servant Leadership with biblical principles forms a comprehensive framework for Christian leadership. When we analyze the description of this event in these verses, breaking it down into its sequential steps, what we see illustrated is an eight-step process of strategic planning. We find a description of the process, from inception to implementation, of a specific and measurable plan to address the issue that they faced. In this process, Ezra led the way by his example and his intentional methods, showing us how we too can undertake the task of strategic planning for our ministries and organizations and

finally carry out effective Christian leadership. The following are the strategies of Christian leadership;

**i. Preparation**

Strategy one in the process is preparation. A leader, needs to enter the process ready, and with the right attitude, taking ownership. Spend some time in reflection and analysis, resolving himself for the task ahead and building his own enthusiasm and commitment. Preparation is inevitable towards achieving a goal. When leaders fail to plan they had carefully, but unconsciously planned to fail. When leaders take time to prepare or plan properly that will; (i.) prevent them from poor performance and (ii.) will save much time and energy during implementation process.

**ii. Training People:**

Strategy two is to gather and train the right people together. Training the church to do the work of the ministry is the leader's strategy. If a leader has the wisdom to invest in *potential* people, rather than *problem* people, he will discover he is training those who can minister to the problem people. *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. 2Timothy 2:2.* The main thing a Christian leader should produce is other *leaders*. That is how Paul's friend Timothy ended up in the ministry. Some pastors seem reluctant to prepare other men in their congregation for leadership. Having known many pastors, I suspect some fear others may rise to take their place and they would be out of a job. Rather than take the risk, they prefer the congregation as a whole remain mediocre. The main product of Christian leadership is other leaders. The call to leadership comes from God by grace. No one ever deserves it. The leader is first committed to people rather than a program. His strategy is to prepare others to do the ministry including training others to lead.



**iii. Need:**

Strategy three is to identify the issues or need that must be addressed. It is the leaders duty to provide a succinct and understandable statement of the issue, problem, or need that must be addressed, attacked, or resolved. Before a leader can prepare a plan, he must be able to articulate what it is that needs to happen, or where it is that he needs to go, based on where you currently are and what you are currently doing. Identify the issue and state it clearly, and don't make it complicated.

**iv. Goal:**

Strategy four is to identify the goal or goals that are to be achieved. This implies identifying the means and steps of correcting or resolving the need that has been identified. More specifically, it means determining what will need to be accomplished that, when done, will fulfill the plan. Leaders are to identify for the people the goals or steps that would need to be accomplished in order to meet the need, and these goals, which must necessary for the restoration of the existing reality of the people, must be specific and achievable. In the same way, Christian leaders need to follow their identification of the need with the establishment and communication of how that need must be met. When the leaders have given the vision and direction; they ought to give the steps it will take to get there.

**v. Listen:**

Strategy five is to listen, giving people a voice in the process. People need to be given the opportunity to respond to the information that they are hearing. The key is that leaders ought to let the people speak, and listened to what they will say. Christian leaders, likewise, we need to let people have a voice, especially those people who may be impacted or affected and those people who have "ground-floor knowledge." Then, listen to what they say, and let them know that they have been heard.

**vi. Process:**

Strategy six is to establish a process for implementing the plan, and there are four pieces to the process that we can infer. In this establishment of the process we can choose to implement, we can draw out these implications as follows: (a) it is important to determine the steps in the process, from start to finish; (b) it is necessary to select leaders to oversee the process of carrying out the plan, and this also helps to provide accountability; (c) a calendar, schedule, or timeline needs to be created; and (d) when all is said and done, it needs to be more than just talk, and so the process has to be initiated.

**vii. Obstacles:**

Strategy seven is to identify and prepare for obstacles and opposition. The first is the importance of seeing the obstacles early that will hinder the plan, and the second is to show that we can expect both opposition and support, while neither one needs to be the primary factor for determining direction. There will be obstacles, there will be opposition, there will be support, and leaders need to develop the ability to “foresee,” learning to identify where these might or will come from so that they can be addressed or responded to.

**viii. Implement:**

Strategy eight is the final step, the one of implementation. It is the action of implementing the plan and the process. The lesson for us is a reminder that words and ideas have little value if they are never put into action. Once we have the plan prepared and communicated, put it into action, keeping the end in focus, and identifying when the goals have been reached. I am sure that there are other tools, strategies, and principles for strategic planning that can help Christian leaders to be effective as leaders. Along the way, one of the tasks of a leader is to periodically assess what is happening, in order to confirm that the process is working (so that adjustments can be made, if needed) and to ensure that the goals are being reached. And then, when you arrive at the end, take time to celebrate!

## **Conclusion**

Christian leadership in the first decade of the 21st Century Church seems an impossible task. Nigeria Church leaders have replaced leadership with lordship. Theology has become subjective and man centered instead of being grounded in the reality and objective truth claims found in the Bible. As a result the Church has lost its prophetic voice and ability to change lives, shape the culture for the cause of Christ, and expand the Kingdom of God. Since no one can exercise spiritual leadership based on objective truth and an absolute standard everyone is free to decide for himself. The end result is that too many choices become no choice at all. Contemporary Church leadership skills have suffered from two extremes; borrowing too much from the secular culture which leads to spiritual compromise and little or no power to affect eternal change in people's lives. Fortunately there is a solution for pastors and other Christian leaders. Spiritual leadership is grounded in the person of Christ. Cultures will change, governments will come and go, and great men will let us down but not Jesus Christ. A Leadership training model patterned after the principles He created to train the twelve Apostles still works today. His model is built on four principles taught in sequence as follow;

- i. The calling of the spiritual leader,
- ii. The character of a spiritual leader,
- iii. The competence of a spiritual leader,
- iv. And the commission of a spiritual leader.

When pastors and other Christian leaders follow Jesus' pattern for training spiritual leaders, they and those they teach will become the man or woman God intended them to become. Leaders are in a unique position to help their followers to develop their own leadership skills and to reach their full potential. They can then become all that God created them to be. Only Jesus can effectively and eternally train, test, and reward leaders. Using his model will guarantee that the Church will transform cultures, society and people while preparing the next

generation of leaders to continue the work of advancing the Kingdom of God. In John 13:15 Jesus said, “*For I have given you an example, you should do just as I have done for you.*”

## **References**

- Anthony, E. (2019, January 10). What Are the Top 10 Christian Leadership Skills? Like a Team. (link unavailable)
- Barna, G. (2011). The power of vision. Regal.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). Leadership and performance beyond expectations. Free Press.
- Bernes, A. (1962). Barnes' notes on the New Testament. Kregel.
- Blackaby, H., & Blackaby, R. (2001). Experiencing God. Lifeway.
- Bryson, J. M. (2018). Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement. John Wiley & Sons.
- Ciulla, J. B. (2003). The ethics of leadership. Praeger.
- Collins, J. (2001). Good to great. HarperCollins.
- Covey, S. R. (2004). The 7 habits of highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal change. Simon & Schuster.
- Drucker, P. F. (1999). Management challenges for the 21st century. HarperCollins.
- Fackerell, M. (2018, March 12). Principles of Leadership. Campbellsville University. (link unavailable)
- Fiedler, F. E. (1967). A theory of leadership effectiveness. McGraw-Hill.
- Gilliland, S. E., & Dunn, J. (2003). Social influence and social change in the context of organizational leadership. Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, 10(2), 1-13.
- Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness. Paulist Press.

- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. (1988). *Management of organizational behavior*. Prentice Hall.
- Kotter, J. P. (2001). What leaders really do. *Harvard Business Review*, 79(11), 85-96.
- Kostenberger, A. J., & Quarles, C. L. (2009). *The cradle, the cross, and the crown: An introduction to the New Testament*. B&H Academic.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The leadership challenge*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Maxwell, J. C. (2005). *Developing the leaders around you*. Thomas Nelson.
- Maxwell, J. C. (2007). *21 irrefutable laws of leadership*. Thomas Nelson.
- McKnight, J. (1995). *The careless society: Community and its counterfeits*. Basic Books.
- Merriam-Webster. (2020). Biblical. In *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. (link unavailable)
- Mills, D. H. (2012). *The art of leadership*. Hosanna.
- Mulder, P. (2018, October 10). *Lead by Example*. ToolsHero. (link unavailable)
- Northouse, P. G. (2004). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Northouse, P. G. (2019). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (8th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Porter, M. E. (1980). *Competitive strategy: Techniques for analyzing industries and competitors*. Free Press.
- Senge, P. M. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization*. Doubleday.
- Soulen, R. N., & Woodbridge, J. D. (2016). Theology, biblical. In J. D. Barry & L. Wentz (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (p. 746). Lexham Press.
- Vanhoozer, K. J. (2002). *The drama of doctrine: A canonical-linguistic approach to Christian theology*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- Wright, N. T. (2013). *The case for the Psalms: Why they are essential for Christian worship*. HarperOne.
- Yukl, G. (2010). *Leadership in organizations*. Pearson.