

Biblical
SLAVE
Leadership

**A Stewardship from Above
to Lead from Below**

DANIEL L. ANDERSON
FOREWORD BY CHARLES C. RYRIE



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Biblical Slave Leadership: A Stewardship from Above to Lead from Below

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Foreword

by Charles C. Ryrie

The title of this book may startle you. (And perhaps it should!) Typically we might have expected the word *servant* to be used, but not *slave*. Therefore it is essential to have the first word in the title and to know whether or not it is Biblical to use the word *slave* instead of the customary and less startling word *servant*.

The author's handling of the Biblical material certainly justifies his title.

But this is not only a Biblical study of slaves and slavery in relation to leadership. Many down-to-earth situations and guidelines on how to be a slave leader in today's culture are included. Helpful charts illustrate these very practical applications and ramifications of slave leadership.

In their purpose statements, so many organizations state that they are preparing servant leaders. But they do not tell you how they propose to do it or what the product will be and act like. Not so in this book. Too, one of the most significant sections shows how to prepare one's successors to be slave leaders.

The author has practiced what he preaches in his own slave leadership as president of Appalachian Bible College for thirty years. This in itself makes this book an important resource for those who serve in any position of leadership in our Lord's work.

Preface

Solomon stated that “of the making of books there is no end” (Eccles. 12:12). Why then would I entertain the task of adding another book to the scores of books already written on the subject of leadership?

My impetus to write has been the result of various factors. For several years those closest to me, such as family and friends, have encouraged this venture. The board of directors of Appalachian Bible College annually interact with my goals for the year as I exercise my accountability to them. Each of their reviews has increasingly urged me to write. Some of my closest ministry colleagues have also suggested the same.

While these voices of encouragement have been both flattering and convicting, I regularly excused the assignment to write for three primary reasons: (1) I didn’t believe I had the time to effectively do it; (2) I wasn’t certain that another book on leadership was needed; and (3) I didn’t want to add to the collection of shallow “how to” volumes.

But with the sense of God’s direction and enabling, the time has come. Regularly, throughout these months of writing, I have truly sensed “the good hand of my God upon me” (Neh. 2:8). Time will ultimately tell whether my original excuses have been negated.

I do believe that in the collection of recent literature on leadership there is a significant void in the foundational area of the topic. Most of the books represent a particular voice of leadership testimony whose impact has arrested the interest of leaders and potential leaders wanting to learn how the noted voice leads. Such an interest is not without its own potential merit. However, the subjectivity of this approach usually lacks the objective help so essential for leading.

This observation led to my desire to address the foundational and formational issue of a Biblical philosophy of leadership. What does the Bible demand

of leaders? Even more specifically, what does Jesus teach about leadership? With that primary burden, I have sought to develop a Biblical philosophy of leadership especially focused on the teaching of Jesus.

A venture of this sort is the product of many circumstances and individuals. My interest in leadership is traceable to three significant persons. The first leadership model would be the late Dr. Lester Pipkin. As my predecessor at Appalachian Bible College, he impacted me in ways known only to God. Second, I will always be indebted to the late Dr. Stephen Slocum for permitting me to serve as his administrative intern during my years in seminary at Dallas. As the executive vice president, Dr. Slocum introduced me to an administrative curriculum that does not show in my education degrees but has kindly been evident in my years of being a leader. My dear friend Dr. Charles Ryrie has sharpened my thinking in so many ways that I am remiss to adequately acknowledge his contribution to my life as a leader. Thank you, my friend, for “coming out of restricted retirement” to honor this work with your introductory words. I am humbled by your kindness.

The initial invitation for this work was extended by John Greening and Kevin Mungons. Thank you for your wonderful assistance and for piloting my path into uncharted waters. The added help of Michael Nolan in facilitating the efforts in marketing and distribution discussions has also been appreciated.

A project of this nature could not be accomplished without the support of my wonderful fellow-servants at Appalachian Bible College. In addition to an amazing board of directors, I am blessed to serve with the finest of colleagues. Special thanks to the fellow-administrators on our Administrative Committee—Ken, Dave, Jonathan, Dave, Dan, and Michael—for covering times when writing took priority. As well, my administrative assistant, Lisa, mastered the ability to explain with grace my times of absence. A word of appreciation is in order for the entire ABC community for allowing me the opportunity to learn and lead. I could not have asked for a more amenable “laboratory” for gaining leadership experience and insights over these past decades. I am privileged to serve with precious servants.

Two individuals deserve a special note of accolade. Sarah Rinker provided the finest of editorial assistance. I loved your dedication to excellence; you came rightly by this trait from your mother! Your determination to likewise ensure that the revisions and additions still accurately “sounded like me” will always remind me that you truly were serving others, not yourself. I am blessed to call you my daughter. And then I must thank my executive assistant, Michael Rowe, for his skill as a research/design editor. You make me look better than I am! Your

dedication to use your skills for the Lord when I know you could enjoy grander opportunities of recognition and resources affirms that you truly are a servant. I am grateful for your help and for your care both personally and professionally. Sarah and Michael, both of you “owned the book” as you shared the spiritual burden to produce a work that would be used of God to advance the cause of Christ and His Church.

Two dear personal friends merit a heartfelt word of thanks. Ralph and Marjorie have been special friends for most of my years of serving as president at Appalachian. Your love for the Lord and your commitment to honor the Lord with your resources have regularly been used to encourage my wife and me. Your partnership with this project has been God’s provision to more effectively accomplish my passion to share my burden for Biblically based leadership. You are genuine examples of Biblical slave leaders. Likewise, I want to express my thanks to Jeff and Trish, two very special friends to Rosalie and me, who have regularly modeled Biblical Slave Leadership. We are blessed and honored because of you.

A task like writing is impossible without the support and encouragement of my family. Frequent words of inquiry about “the book,” usually accompanied with assurance of prayers, were faithfully shared by all of my children. I am a blessed man!

The greatest of all earthly blessings is my privilege to be married to Rosalie. My ultimate thanks goes to you, my soul mate and dearest earthly companion. From our days as students together at Appalachian when you urged me to face the principle of Luke 12:48, through our years of education and ministry growing together, to the willingness to share so effectively the stewardship assignment from God to be Biblical slave leaders, you have been the “First Lady” of my life! You are a wonderful Biblical slave leader. God was so kind to give you to me.

Throughout these months of writing, I have sensed an intensification of my passion to develop successors in my life to serve as Biblical slave leaders. This assignment from God has truly impacted my own life with a deepened conviction about a Biblical philosophy of leadership. Until I embarked upon the writing of this book, I characteristically practiced closing all of my correspondence with the words, *His Servant*. It was my desire to intentionally express my surrender to the Lord as I wrote thousands of letters over these past decades as president.

However, this process of deliberately reflecting and more extensively researching the whole topic of Biblical leadership has changed me. My heart’s

desire has intensified to a greater degree as I have come to understand more fully the “stewardship from above to lead from below.”

With humbled heart, I pray that this book will be used of God to develop Biblical slave leaders. With deep gratitude to the Lord, I introduce a new expression of “closing” as I surrender my life anew to my Master-Owner . . .

His Slave,
Daniel L. Anderson, ThD
Psalm 84:11, 12

Introduction

My journey on the path of leadership officially began March 26, 1982, as I opened a letter that arrived that day. The letter began with these exciting yet sobering words:

Dr. Lester Pipkin, cofounder and President of Appalachian Bible College, is retiring as President in June, 1983. Under the auspices of the Board of Directors, a Presidential Search Committee is currently seeking candidates for the position. Your name has been suggested as one who may be qualified to serve in this role. As such, the committee has authorized me to contact you to learn of your potential interest. This letter may be totally unexpected and the matter may have never crossed your mind before, but would you be willing to give prayerful consideration to the matter?

As my dear wife and I attempted to wrap our thoughts and reactions around this unexpected opportunity, I quickly realized what my first response must be: to face this invitation appropriately, I must understand God's view of leadership.

With a sense of curiosity and eagerness, I started my search for what God expects of leaders. Quite frankly, I needed to know what the Bible says about leadership. As I began my quest in Genesis and continued throughout the pages of the Scriptures, I paused to visit with such leaders as the patriarchal leader Abraham, the tribal-domestic leader Jacob, the political leader Joseph, the military leaders Moses and Joshua, the spiritual leaders called the prophets, the church leader Peter, and most notably the missionary leader Paul. The illustrations went on and on.

It did not take me long to identify the singular description given most frequently to leaders throughout the Bible. God's accolade for leaders is *servant*. "My servant Moses" (Num. 12:7, 8), "Your servant David" (1 Kings 8:25, 26),

“My servants the prophets” (Zech. 1:6), leading me right to the pinnacle of all leaders—Jesus Christ Himself, Who took the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7). That perfect model of leadership is followed by such familiar examples as Peter and Paul.

Leaders are servants!

Throughout the years since that initial search, my journey has taken me time and time again to those first leadership insights. In fact, my understanding of Biblical leadership has crescendoed to the level that I now believe there is really only one way to properly lead. That way is *Biblical Slave Leadership*.

The elements of the phrase “Biblical Slave Leadership” provide distinct and required components. This is not the same as “servant leadership.” It is not even adequately captured by the phrase “Biblical servant leadership.” True Biblical leadership as described by Jesus encompasses the very features readily recognized in the first-century culture by the term *slave*. There is no glamour or glossing over the intended identity which conveyed the principle that Biblical leadership is a slave task.

This description is most powerfully expressed in the words of Jesus as He explicitly compared and contrasted the leadership perception of His day: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them” (Matt. 20:25). These words easily express the elements so frequently associated with leadership: position—“rulers,” power—“lord,” prestige—“great,” and privilege—“exercise authority.”

Jesus quickly and clearly countered such thinking with an unbelievably contrasting concept for leadership: “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 [a leader] among you, let him be your slave” (Matt. 20:26, 27).

Jesus categorically and unilaterally described His model for leadership: it’s a slave task. Biblical leadership is practiced only in one form—Biblical Slave Leadership!

It is my prayer that the deliberation upon and development of this understanding of God’s design for leadership will dynamically impact the exercise of leading the Body of Christ, the Church. At a time when our world desperately needs effective leaders, the Church has the opportunity to display Biblical leadership. From the individual leadership of one’s personal life, to the domestic leadership of family life, to the public leadership of ministry settings—at all levels and in all arenas—Christian leaders must be Biblical slave leaders.

The ultimate destiny for all Church-age believers is described as “ruling and reigning with Christ” (Rev. 20:4, 6; 22:3–5). Since the believer’s future involves

leading, it is imperative that leaders exercise the principles of Biblical leadership now. While Christians' glorified bodies will undoubtedly be perfectly enabled to lead Biblically, it is God's design for believers to begin right now practicing Biblical leadership as defined and directed in His Word. God gives believers a variety of tasks and levels of responsibility according to each one's abilities (Matt. 25:15), but all leadership functions are to match the one and only model for leadership which Jesus initiated—Biblical Slave Leadership.

I invite you to join this journey and explore with me the only leadership model and style ordained by Jesus. Welcome to the high and holy task of Biblical Slave Leadership.

Part 1: What Is Leadership?

The topic of leadership has been discussed and published by various sources. In fact, opinions concerning the definition and description of leadership vary greatly. Many if not most of these opinions reflect a combination of thoughts taken from such realms as business, education, or administration. Some have couched these worldly leadership philosophies in Biblical terms to give the impression that they are Biblically based.

I would like to entertain a somewhat radical and extremely limited understanding of leadership. Beginning with a review of the more popular perceptions about leadership, I then present what I believe is the only Biblical model of leadership—the model Jesus presented to His disciples when He was confronted with the subject of leadership. From His teaching and direct instruction, true leadership can be defined.

I invite you to get on board as we start down this exclusive path called *Biblical Slave Leadership*.



1

Popular Perceptions of Leadership

I was born and reared in a modest pastor's home in the state of Iowa. The atmospheres of my home and church impacted my perceptions about ministry. In addition to my own parents' dedication to the Lord, I was indelibly affected by a collection of dear saints, such as my junior class Sunday School teacher, Geneva; my junior high youth leader, Bob; and my senior high youth leader, Vernon. One precious saint's testimony I cannot overlook was that of a great prayer warrior named Charlie. I will never forget his conversations with God in our preservice prayer meetings. I even discovered one Sunday morning as I peeked during his prayer that Charlie actually prayed with his eyes open—imagine that—as he looked heavenward. He spoke with such intimacy to God that I peeked because I thought I would actually see God during his prayer!

Each of these individuals and circumstances shaped my idea of a leader. I confess that the testimony of humility and the emphasis upon being careful not to promote oneself caused me to see leadership as a thing to avoid, because it seemed to indicate either pride or selfishness. Desiring to be the leader was, in my mind, the same as wanting to be “the boss,” and to want to be the boss was an evidence of pride and selfishness. Thus my early perceptions of leadership led me to see it as bad or, at the very least, something to be avoided.

These misconceptions are in no way a reflection on the dear saints I have referenced; nonetheless, I do believe my simplistic and erroneous understanding of leadership illustrates how leadership can easily be misunderstood.

What are some popular perceptions—or should I say misperceptions—about leadership?

Mistaken Perceptions Identified by Jesus

In Matthew 20:25, Jesus identified perceptions about leadership as He responded to the disciples' ambition for recognition or status. His answer to the disciples describes at least four popular perceptions about leaders in that day which continue to be popular perceptions today. The verse states, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them." Note the four misperceptions Jesus referenced in this verse.

Mistake: Position Is Leadership

First, there is the perception that leadership is all about a *position*. To have the title *ruler* is to be empowered to be a leader, that is, ruler equals leader. The thought is not much different from believing that the quality of leadership is automatically assured with an official title such as *president* or *director* or *boss*. This is not to deny that a person having such a title might truly be a leader. However, the title does not make one a leader. Who has not experienced the dilemma of observing, or even serving with, persons who consider themselves leaders because they have the position but are not really practicing true leadership. *Position does not make one a leader.*

Mistake: Power Is Leadership

Second, Jesus identified the misperception that leadership is all about *power*. That perception is seen in the phrase "lord it over them." Somehow, exercising control implies that the one having such power of permission or direction is a leader. Again, those who truly are leaders will give directives; they are empowered to give orders. However, just because one gives an order to another does not guarantee that he is a leader. "Lording it over" another can simply mean that the "leader" is obeyed for some other reason: he might be bigger; he might be older; he might have some advantage, such as a weapon. There are any number of reasons someone might be able to lord it over another yet not be a true leader. *Power does not make one a leader.*

Mistake: Prestige Is Leadership

Third is the erroneous perception that *prestige* equals leadership. This idea is seen in Jesus' words "those who are great." Often people are inclined to see a particular individual as a leader simply because he is famous. His fame might even give him the opportunity to assert some influence over a decision or an activity, such as raising funds for a specific cause. Status can be seen as power, and, as

previously mentioned, power is often perceived as leadership. True leaders will likely enjoy a measure of prestige; however, *prestige does not make one a leader.*

Mistake: Privilege Is Leadership

Fourth in the faulty Gentile model of leadership is the perception of *privilege*. Jesus described this final category as those who considered themselves leaders because they “exercise authority over” others. Undoubtedly this characteristic of faulty leadership thinking is one of the most common, as reflected in the saying, “Rank has its privileges.” A person might be identified as a leader because he has a particular uniform or a set of keys to access an area limited to individuals with special status. Those who have such privilege might even be inclined to flaunt their authority. The very expression “over them” describes a sense of superiority. How easy it is to assign a person with these privileges the status of being a leader just because he exercises control that may not be available to another. As with each of the preceding misperceptions about true leadership, a genuine leader certainly may exercise privilege. He may have the keys or the uniform. But ultimately, a true leader is not determined by special privilege. *Privilege does not make one a leader.*

The Gentile Model for Leadership	
Rulers	= Position
lord it over	= Power
those who are great	= Prestige
exercise authority over them	= Privilege

“It’s all about me and my status.”

Jesus declared that these perceptions about leadership are totally contrary to the model for true leadership. With a dogmatism that parallels the familiar “God forbid” of the apostle Paul, Jesus decisively negated this Gentile model of leadership: “Yet it shall not be so among you” (Matt. 20:26).

Mistaken Perceptions Currently Promoted

In addition to the erroneous perceptions for leadership described by Jesus, three popular perceptions currently being promoted also do not adequately align with the Biblical model of leadership. While variations of these examples

could be enumerated, I will address them in a general way to both simplify them and succinctly note their inadequacy when they are compared to the leadership model mandated by Jesus.

Mistake: Leadership Is Determined by a Particular Personality Type

That a particular personality type determines leadership has been popularized by those who studied patterns of human behavior and then packaged them into classifications, such as melancholic and choleric, which they saw as predictable and somewhat characteristic of certain types of occupations or functions. These various classifications led to the assumption that leaders are dominantly found within the choleric group. Another designation, Type A personality, is also used to catalog persons perceived as leaders. In other words, choleric or Type A people are natural leaders by their very personality. Other personality classifications were seen to have varying but lesser propensity to be leaders. A variety of tests and analysis tools are used to assess which of these personality types a person might be, thus supposedly identifying who is a leader.

On a personal note, if I had taken one of those tests in high school or college, I would have been one of the last people designated “leader material.” At that stage in my life, I was quiet, self-conscious, and shy—far from choleric or Type A. I often say to developing leaders, “If you had told me in college that I would someday be president of a Bible college, I would have said, ‘Shoot me now! It will be less painful!’”

Without carelessly dismissing the validity of various testing and screening instruments that may be helpful in the study of human behavior, I do believe there is an exaggerated confidence in the mechanisms of testing that does not correctly take into account the Biblical model for leadership. *Biblical leadership is not determined by a simple personality type.*

The perception that personality classification determines leadership brings to bear a frequent discussion or debate regarding whether leaders are born or made. Are leaders only those born with such an inclination? Or can a person aspire to leadership and truly become a leader, that is, be *made* a leader? Can a person go to school and take leadership or management courses and thus be trained to become a leader? I’d like to examine some Scriptural passages that I believe are pertinent to this debate.

Suffice it to say at the outset that God has ordained the function of leadership. From the time of Creation onward, God’s practice and plan for the exercise of leadership can be traced in the family, in the establishment of government, in the design of His plan for His chosen people Israel, in the

instruction for the work of the Church, and ultimately even in the description of eternity future, when believers are “ruling and reigning” with Christ. Leadership is indeed ordained by God, both in the sinless world of original creation and in the sinless realm of eternity future. Leadership is not an alteration imposed by sinful man, nor is it the result of the fall of man.

The gift of leadership from God is described in 1 Corinthians 12:28–31 and in Ephesians 4:11–16, which identify a variety of functions representing leadership roles. One particular function Paul mentioned is that of “administrations.” He further exhorted his readers to carefully follow certain guidelines as they entertained the prospect of being a leader. Romans 12:3–8 states:

For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

This extended passage delineates reminders related to the provision and appropriation of the gift of leadership. To “think soberly,” as commanded by Paul, is to have an accurate self-appraisal. A leader is not qualified due to personality alone, but is, rather, one who objectively and accurately assesses his capacity for leadership to determine if he truly has the qualities required of a Biblical leader. This self-appraisal also gives opportunity to identify and address deficiencies so as to become eligible for leadership. Simply stated—learn to be a leader as described by the Scriptures.

The desire for leadership can be seen as part of God’s provision, noted in Scripture passages that emphasize this element, such as 1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1; 1 Timothy 3:1. Peter exhorted elders to take to heart the responsibility of shepherding the flock: “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly” (1 Pet. 5:2). This strongly implies the role of both desire and initiative in the task of leading.

These and other passages lead to the conclusion that Biblical leadership is the blend of Spirit-led saints with the gifting of God and confirmation of the church. God's work of calling and men's desire to lead are jointly exercised. Are leaders born or made? The only accurate answer to the question is *yes*. Both elements are equally defensible in determining what makes a leader.

Mistake: Leadership Is Determined by a Particular Style of Performance

The popular perception that performance style determines leadership suggests that various styles of leadership are legitimately practiced and equally acceptable. This concept is somewhat connected to the view of leadership being determined by personality types but goes even further into the idea of analyzing a leader's behavior and then categorizing it according to a particular grid of leadership styles.

One such example may be seen in the book *Modern Approaches to Understanding and Managing Organizations* by Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal. In this study, Bolman and Deal establish four styles of leadership, or "leadership frames," and then analyze each style as it relates to nine leadership functions, from planning to decision-making to goal-setting. Bolman and Deal conclude that leaders usually possess one or two dominant frames of leadership style, with the remaining two frames being apparent only occasionally in that leader. They conclude that multiple leadership styles can be effectively seen, but they do not suggest that any single leadership model is the ideal or accurate one. They exemplify the popular perception that there are multiple acceptable leadership models.

While it is true that various situations require a range of actions and responses from a leader, this range is not simply a matter of variation in leadership styles. Jesus provided only one Biblical style of leadership, Biblical Slave Leadership. Any variation of that model is only a partial implementation of the sole model; it is not an acceptable alternative style of leadership. *Biblical leadership is not just one style to choose out of a variety of leadership styles.*

Mistake: Leadership Is Determined to Be Influence

Probably the most popular but wrong perception of leadership today is to equate leadership with influence. In fact, some of the most noted writers on the subject use this description for leadership. While these respected voices develop extensive discussions on leadership beyond the single word *influence*, nonetheless, they very clearly state that "leadership is influence." I respectfully take exception to that statement. Leaders will influence, but influencing others

does not automatically qualify one as a leader. The next chapter notes that the leadership lesson of Jesus outlines a far greater and more encompassing role for leaders than mere influence. Again I state that a leader will influence, but mere influence does not fulfill the requirements for leadership that Jesus demanded. To honor a person of influence with the description *leader* does not ensure that he is exercising the essential ingredients of divine stewardship from and to God through his absolute surrender of himself to God for the purpose of developing others in the will of God. *Biblical leadership is not defined as influence.*

In summary, most of these popular perceptions about leadership have elements of truth, but each one has glaring deficiencies when it is compared to the Biblical teaching of Jesus. It is true that when leaders exercise the exclusive Biblical model of leadership, varying capacities are displayed. Likewise, circumstances will often provide a variety of ways to execute leadership, thus giving a perception of different types of leaders.

The key deficiency in all of these popular but inadequate perceptions is the absence of a genuine realization that leadership is a stewardship from and to God. This aspect will be more fully developed in chapter 2.

Summary

This chapter has addressed popular perceptions about leadership that are actually misperceptions about leadership. According to the instruction of Jesus in Matthew 20:25–28, there is really only one accurate model of leadership (cf. Mark 10:42–45). Jesus identified four inaccurate concepts about leadership: *position*—“ruler,” *power*—“lord it over them,” *prestige*—“those who are great,” and *privilege*—“exercise authority over them.” None of these is an accurate description of a Biblical leader. In fact, Jesus declared that His followers should totally avoid such leadership perceptions: “It shall not be so among you” (Matt. 20:26).

Along with these erroneous leadership perceptions delineated by Jesus, three additional wrong perceptions of leadership are currently popular: (1) leadership is defined by a particular personality type, most usually the Type A or the choleric personality; (2) leadership legitimately reflects differing styles, as illustrated by the “leadership frames” of Bolman and Deal; and (3) influence is leadership.

Each of these inadequate perceptions defining leadership may provide a measure of similarity to the one and only true model of leadership. But none of these should be accepted as a sufficient description for the leadership model that Jesus demanded—*Biblical Slave Leadership*.