

PREFACE

“Patterns of the Flock” is part of the following series:

1) **The Believer’s Paradox**

Recognizing the struggle within us to love, follow, and serve Christ.

2) **The Five Enemies**

Identifying the major opposition to loving, following, and serving Christ.

- **The Self life: The Hindrance to the Spiritual Life (A Murray)**

“Am I a carnal Christian?” and “Is it possible to live as God intends us to?”

3) **Putting On & Putting Off**

Living out the process of transformation.

- **Ground Zero (TA Sparks)**

The beginning point of our salvation.

- **Carnal Versus Spiritual: Denying the Self (A Murray; ctr)**

Four marks of the carnal life & four steps to victory.

- **Failure Versus Victory (TA Sparks)**

Excerpts from the “Victorious Life”

- **The Principal of the First (1 Corinthians 15:45; Hebrews 10:25)**

Practical application. The context of Not forsaking the assembling together.

4) **God’s Economy - Relationships in the Household**

Practically learning how to put on the virtues of Christ.

- **Things Which Cannot Be Shaken (TA Sparks)**

The Nature of the Church.

- **The Education of Children (Menno Simons, 1557 A.D.)**

The chief and principal care of the saints.

5) **Today, If You Hear My Voice**

Believers are called to a life of obedience to Christ.

6) **Patterns to the Flock**

Qualifications of Leadership.

None of the specific articles are meant to cover all aspects of our life in Christ, but each has a particular focus.

To the elders among you, ... be patterns to the flock.” **(1 Peter 5:3)**

What does it mean to be a “pattern to the flock?” It is not a question of whether we are a pattern to others, but what kind of pattern we are to others. Those who desire to take the lead in the church are usually sons, fathers, husbands, coworkers, brothers, etc. In each realm we become a pattern of how we live to those whom God has placed us with. This study will delve into the kind of pattern the Lord Jesus desires for those He chooses to lead His church.

Leadership is the ability to inspire or influence others towards a particular goal. The best leaders are those who personify the goal as compared to those who preach the goal, but do not live it. This article will explore leadership as observed and defined in the Bible. The intended audience includes brothers who have been led by the Holy Spirit to lead, and those already in a leadership role in the church.

1. What is leadership?

a. Service

Matthew 20:23-26 lays out God’s view of a true leader: “**²³Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup [talking about James and John Zebedee’s mother asking for her sons to sit on each side of the Father in the heavens], but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”**

²⁴When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants

to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The first and most important aspect of leadership is service, even to the point of being a slave. The world’s view is quite different. In the world men fight and kill to become the so-called leader who displays his power, his fame, his skills, his, his, his ... it’s all about him (or her). A slave has no identity other than that of his master. In order for us to be qualified to lead God’s people in any aspect, we must be His slave, identified with Him alone. We die to self, we die to selfish ambition and vainglory, all for the sake of following our Master.

On the contrary, it is easy for fallen men to exercise authority over others. Even as children, we learned how to manipulate others to gain “the upper hand.” Men spontaneously push their own agenda, seek and promote their own platform, and usurp other people in the process. We expect others to serve us and to relinquish their will to us. Yet, the Lord Jesus said that He did not come to be served, but to serve. His service was a continual putting aside of His own soul life in order to ransom men (1 Timothy 2:6), to redeem men, and to save men to the uttermost (Hebrews 9:12; 7:25).

b. Role Model

1 Peter 2:21-23, “²¹**To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model, that you should follow in his steps.** ²²“**He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.**” ²³**When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.”**

Because we were born of the flesh with a fallen nature, none of us knows how to follow God ourselves, not to mention, our inability to lead others in Christ (Romans 3:10-18). So, we are blind to God’s ways and our hearts are hardened to know His voice (Hebrews 3:7). So, God in Christ set the example, the model, for us to follow. Then, He tells us to follow in His steps by the grace He imparts within us. He showed us the FRUIT of His life and living so we can recognize and acknowledge when we experience it.

Jesus Christ is our role model, which is another way of saying He is our Leader, and this model includes a life of profound suffering. To lead God’s people requires the utmost sacrifice and suffering, so the Lord paved the way for us. Acts 5:31, “³¹**God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince (Leader) and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.**” Only Christ is qualified to lead God’s people and we, His disciples, must learn to follow His steps by being one with Him.

c. A Life of Suffering

“To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: ² Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God

wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being patterns to the flock. ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.” (1 Peter 5:1-4)

Peter specifically addressed those who are leaders and told them that they would suffer as they walk in Christ’s steps (1 Peter 2:18-21). Peter watched the Lord Jesus suffer physically, emotionally, and spiritually while on earth. He saw how the Lord watched over His people out of love, not compulsion. He observed the Lord’s generosity and compassion despite living in poverty Himself; and He did it eagerly with zeal. The Lord Jesus was God, the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Judge of all mankind, yet He did not lord over people. He actually placed Himself “under them” by being a servant (Philippians 2:5-9). This is hard to fathom. The Lord protected His own people with His own life and would not allow any to perish, not even one. Peter recalled as the Lord shared the parable of the shepherd that left the ninety-nine sheep to go after the one lost sheep (Luke 15). True leaders are ever watchful on behalf of others. They willingly give up their own ability to prosper, and rather eagerly serve the Lord by taking the lead to be an example for the saints. Leadership is to go first to show the others the way, not pushing everyone from the rear while barking out orders. Leaders “take the lead” to go first, to act first, to live out whatever they ask of those who follow.

d. Obedience

The most profound example or model of leadership is recorded in Philippians 2:5-8, “**⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!**”

How could God, the all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present supreme being, become a man enslaved to His own creation? Again, we cannot understand this in our natural minds or fallen being. But to me, what is even more impressive is how the Lord Jesus demonstrated His leadership to us: He became obedient. Leadership begins with obedience. Obedience assumes submission to a higher authority. The Lord Jesus obeyed God the Father even to death. We also, then, must obey God the Father in Christ in order to lead.

e. Following the Master’s Lead

John 13 shows our precious Lord Jesus serving once again. “**Jesus knew that the hour had come for Him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. ²The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was**

returning to God; ⁴so He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him."

If you were eating your last meal with your closest companions, would you (1) wash their dirty feet or (2) give a message on the most important things to remember? Jesus, the ultimate Leader, washed dirty feet! What can any of us say to such a display of love and leadership? Jesus stripped Himself of all He was (God, Creator, Perfector, Leader, Father, Counselor, Lord, King, etc.) and washed His disciples' feet. This act issued out of a Person and a manner of living, so it was not just some activity to perform. Unfortunately, many so called leaders think that if they do some outward deed this would follow the Lord's example. There are leaders who literally wash each other's feet. While this in itself is not sinful and may possibly be of the Lord, the reality is seen in their daily lives. The Lord wants us to humble ourselves daily before those we serve. The Lord always wants us in a position of obedience to Himself in our leadership, meaning that we are following the Master's lead as we lead. We are willing to be stripped down and to strip ourselves down in order to obey the Lord's leading in our lives on behalf of others. Obedience is unto death, meaning that there is no self-interest or personal glory gained in leadership.

The apostle Paul made this practical when he wrote his second epistle to the Corinthians as he was surrounded by opposition, persecution, and much reviling. **"¹⁰ We always bear about in the body the putting to death of Jesus that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So, then death operates in us, but life in you."** (2 Corinthians 4:10-12) Paul followed the Lord's example of entrusting himself to Him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23). We may have the thought that Paul would strongly rebuke the opposers who slandered him, but on the contrary, Paul chose the "putting to death of Jesus". He did not retaliate or complain about the false accusations, nor did he defend his own character. He defended the faith by living Jesus Christ in resurrection. This means that he took the cross rather than react in his flesh or self-life.

f. We Know a Tree by its Fruit

The Lord proclaimed that we can know whether we are obedient to Him or whether we are truly serving Him (*both aspects are requirements of leadership*) ... by our fruit. Matthew 7:18-20, **"¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."** Too many so-called leaders "lord" over the saints; too many lead by their natural ability; too many lead without obeying the Father. How do we know? Look at their fruit. Does their life display the life that the Lord exhibited while He lived on earth?

2. Fruit Based on the Household

Paul laid out qualifications for leadership in a way that represents fruit of following Christ. In other words, if a believer displays the virtues or “qualifications” of Christ, he is leader material in God’s kingdom, and his life in Christ will display such fruit as he leads. Consider the context which Paul used to unveil the fruit of leadership. The context of Paul’s writing is the family, the household; in particular, the realm of marriage and child rearing. There are two parallel passages in the New Testament written by Paul that unveil the healthy, “good” fruit, of a godly leader’s life which should be apparent before he is appointed a leader and apparent while he is leading. We will consider each aspect individually.

Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, able to teach, not an excessive drinker, not a striker but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) ... if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:2-5, 15)

An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by healthy teaching and refute (convict) those who oppose it. (Titus 1:6-9)

a. Above Reproach (Without Reproach)

The first qualification listed for leadership is a person above reproach or without reproach. This is an overlying principle which incorporates all the other aspects forthcoming. A person without reproach gives no ground for anyone to lay a moral charge against him. His transformed character is of truth, honesty, purity, and uprightness. His renewed disposition is admirable not only in its constitution, but because it represents a role model to others. This brother can be followed by anyone from infant to elderly. But even more impressive is the inability for anyone to “land of punch.” Politicians make it a practice to dig up any “dirt” possible regarding their opponents. When one is above reproach, there is nothing for anyone to ‘dig up.’ The only action the opposition can take is fabrication.

b. Husband of One Wife

Although marriage is not a mandatory requirement of leadership, it is noteworthy that Paul includes it as the first major description of being without reproach. Paul understood God's economy to be fully wrapped up in an intimate, affectionate, and open relationship between God and man. Marriage is the most highly lauded relationship in the human realm because of its potential for intimacy, openness, and oneness. Paul implies the deepest relationship a man can experience as compared to a legal matter of just having a ring on our finger. On the contrary, he is advocating and stressing the most intimate, harmonious relationship a man can know besides Christ Himself. A godly marriage lays the proper foundation for intimate, harmonious fellowship in the church among believers.

1. Harmony

Marriage must be pure, holy, monogamous, and harmonious. In Paul's day divorce and polygamy were common practices. Divorce has again become a common practice. There is only one Biblical ground for divorce (fornication on the spouse's part – Matthew 5:32), and even that does not imply that we must divorce. Paul's inclusion of "the husband of one wife" goes much deeper than not getting a divorce. So, it is a clear, pure testimony, when a man devotes himself wholeheartedly to one woman; the one whom God arranged for him to marry. God's greatest desire for all His children is that we would love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength (Mark 12:29-31). How can we learn such a love? We learn this kind of deep and wholehearted love in marriage. This is why marriage is the one relationship that God uses as a foundation and picture of "**Christ and the church**" (see Ephesians 5:22-33).

2. Dealing with Divorce

Until recently, evangelical churches eliminated any brother from leadership who divorced on any ground other than fornication. Few questioned that divorce disqualifies a man from taking the lead in the church. Presently, however, the mainstream church has altered its strict view and opened the door for allowing divorced brothers to take the lead even when fornication is not present. The matter of divorce is extremely serious and should be met with the greatest sobriety and willingness to come under the light of the Lord. We are all sinners saved by grace and therefore, we all make damaging mistakes. We must become as David, who committed murder and adultery together, but once exposed he placed himself under the deep dealing of the Lord. Psalms 51 depicts his repentance, his accountability, and the depth of God's dealing towards him ... even to the point of being broken and contrite in spirit. Yet, in today's age, brothers have taken the world's permission to remarry as a "freedom" which may violate the Lord's word (Matthew 5:32) and preempt any deep enlightenment and discipline by the Lord.

There may be a loophole allowing divorce on grounds other than adultery. "**Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.**" (Mark 6:11-12) If a

man or woman divorces IN ORDER TO remarry, this is adultery. However, what if the unbelieving spouse leaves of their own accord as in 1 Corinthians 7?

If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. (1 Corinthians 7:12-15)

Combining Mark 10 with 1 Corinthians may give allowance to divorce because the believer did not initiate the divorce and therefore, Paul wrote that they are not bound or enslaved any longer. This may imply that the believer is free to remarry since the unbeliever left of their own volition, in essence, annulling the marriage because of being unequally yoked ... an unbeliever with a believer.

I hope you see that this is a delicate issue and is a matter of the heart, meaning that God must be the judge to whom we are to give account. If God truly brought about the separation, we are free to follow and serve Him as He leads. But we should never forget that it was God who commanded from the beginning, that what God has put together, no one should separate (related to marriage). He desires that we stay in the vocation, status, calling in which we were called until He decides to change that (1 Corinthians 7:17-20). With this in view, we must never act rashly, emotionally, or by consensus of opinion (what others say), but on the contrary we must ask the Lord, seek his will, and knock until He answers (Matthew 7:7-8). This requires time and dealing before the Lord.

A divorced man who remarries apart from the two possible exceptions is no longer above reproach for four reasons:

- 1) God only permitted divorce if the spouse was fornicating with another person;
- 2) To divorce for the purpose of remarrying another is adultery in God's eyes;
- 3) God also emphasizes the restriction we need to embrace so as not to become a stumbling block to other believers who may be emboldened to repeat what we do (1 Corinthians 8);
- 4) To remarry without setting aside time, energy, and contemplation to allow the Lord to deal with our heart and lead us shows that we did not deny our self, take up our cross, and follow Him. There is no broken and contrite spirit before the Lord based on the Lord's discipline. Any saint who has experienced divorce for any reason, must await the Lord's light, the Lord's discipline, and the Lord's leading before he presumes (takes upon himself) a leadership role in the church.

Divorce rarely, if ever, happens “overnight.” Usually, it is a long process of ignorance or negligence towards matters that should have been dealt with years prior. Too many brothers admit that their marriage was “on the rocks” or experiencing signs of great struggle years before the divorce occurred. It is highly possible that the brother did not live in the light of the Lord nor obey His leading to cherish and nourish his wife by the washing of the water in the word (Ephesians 5:26-29) throughout their marriage. The type, figure, or picture of Christ’s words are so important, “**Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.**” Do we give ourselves up for our wives so that they will love the Lord with all their heart? When our marriage is healthy before the Lord and especially when we are struggling, we must give up ourselves to allow the Lord’s work in our marriage. When we experience difficulties in our marriage, we must stop our activity, even our so-called serving of the Lord, and fall on our faces before the Lord in prayer, seeking His will, His discipline, His light, and His leading for the sake of our marriage. Our marriage is our primary service to the Lord and if that falters, all of our other serving will also be deficient. The same would hold true of raising our children.

Unfortunately, we often bypass this crucial process of prayer, seeking, fasting, accepting the Lord’s discipline, and following or obeying the Lord’s leading in our marriage or family life. It is not the churches’ responsibility to be one with our wives or to raise our children. It is not the school’s responsibility either, or anything or anyone else’s. It is our responsibility before the Lord and He will ask us to give an account for the lives of our wife and children!

When a man loves one woman with his whole heart, he is free and simple in his marriage to operate without suspicion, but rather based on loyalty, trust, and companionship. Christ desires a marriage that is a partnership, not an entrapment that is complicated and confused because of a lack of harmony. Today, close to 50% of marriages end in divorce. How tragic! Yet, of the 50% that remain married, how many live in complete, absolute, and wonderful harmony? This is what Paul is exhorting when he writes that a leader must be the husband of one wife. Consider 1 John 4:20-21, “**20 Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.**” Loving our wife is the most important relationship other than Christ. If we cannot love our wives who we can see, how can we love God who is invisible? If our marriage has failed due to a lack of harmony, how can we so quickly think we can lead the saints into harmony with each other and with God?

3. Living in the Household

Paul lays the foundational virtues of a husband towards his wife (1 Timothy 3:2-5) as part of the husband learning how to conduct himself in his own household so he can properly conduct himself in the house of God, the church (1 Timothy 3:15). The nine remaining qualifications, the nine remaining fruit of leadership, all relate to how a husband should dwell together with his wife as his co-heir, his fellow heir, his joint heir of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7). These verses

also define how a father should raise his own children. In Titus 1:6-7 Paul strongly emphasized the relationship between a man with his family and the ensuing relationship towards the church.

c. Temperate / Vigilant

Temperate means to be abstinent, chaste, moderate, and ever watchful (vigilant) against temptations. A temperate person is self-controlled and not negligent of caring for others. He carefully restricts himself in order to care for others. He denies himself so that others can benefit. A husband and father must be temperate in his attitudes and actions towards his wife and children, putting their concerns high on his priority list. We cannot fall into the worldly trap of activity that sets our God-ordained responsibility to our family aside. Understand that the divorce rate among so called Christians is almost the same as that among unbelievers! How tragic that we ignore the truth and do not learn from God's word.

d. Sober Minded

A sober minded person governs his passions and appetites. There is a prudence and reasoning that denies the selfish, lustful things, and subdues rebellion within himself. We are constantly battling the flesh, the self-life, our natural understanding, the world, and Satan. Therefore, we must maintain a sober mind to recognize and subdue these elements by the grace of Christ. In a world of unbridled passions and appetites, being sober minded is a fruit that would testify of Christ's life operating within. It is common for a husband to deny himself by subduing his fleshly lusts, his selfish ambition to lord over them, his natural understanding of daily life, all for the sake of his wife and children.

e. Orderly

Orderly signifies modest deportment and conduct; being courteous to all; graceful and approachable. This is in contrast to a "big man on campus" or the "life of the party." Some brothers make themselves known by being boisterous or even unruly. An orderly man is characterized by goodness and stable behavior. A wife and child may like to see their husband or father elevated in others' eyes, but they would much rather know that he is good, kind, stable, reliable, and consistent, and will never forsake them or be drawn off by some whim (popularity, wealth, power).

In Titus 1:6, Paul tells the leading one to raise his children so they are not wild and disobedient, which is the fruit of his not being orderly. Children mimic their parents and normally, if they turn out wild and disobedient, they learned that from their parents! How many leaders in the church today have godly children who love the Lord wholeheartedly?

f. Hospitable

Leading brothers must love people with benevolence! They welcome strangers and those who are "different" without prejudice or bias. Romans 12:3 shows how we must not think of

ourselves more highly than the grace apportioned us by God. Hebrews 13:2 encourages hospitality. In the early church there were few “hotels” especially to the needy, persecuted, and destitute. What a training for the wife and children to observe hospitality in their husband/father because it renders love towards others versus selfish ambition. Hospitality dispels prejudice against race, nationality, culture, doctrinal preference, or other diversities in people and displays generosity and kindness when it may not be expected.

g. Apt to Teach

This is one of the most important virtues listed in 1 Timothy 3 because Paul used child-rearing as an overall prerequisite to being a church leader. He says that a leader must **manage his own family (household) well or how can he care for the church of God** (3:4-5)? The phrase “apt to teach” relates specifically to a parent with his children. “Apt to teach” includes the ability to explain with articulation and detail, to lay open what is not obvious or apparent, to break down into simple parts, and to scaffold (give step by step instruction) the truth or aspect of life so that the child can understand, absorb, and assimilate that into his/her being. This is an ability to articulate and convey truth to a child so they appreciate and receive it for themselves. Paul so strongly promotes this aspect of leadership that he wrote, “**a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient**” (Titus 1:6) in qualifying leaders in God’s house. The term “believe” in Titus 1:6 does not mean once for all, but a constant state of believing even into adulthood. True teaching from a father to a child yields a life of believing Christ apart from rebellion and disobedience.

So, we brothers must be honest before the Lord as we observe our children’s lives from birth through youth and into adulthood. Children are the fruit of our existence and living! Do our children love the Lord with all of their heart, all of their soul, all of their mind, and all of their strength? If we are honest before the Lord, it is likely that we as fathers have come up short in nurturing our children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:3-4). For this we should repent not only to God, but also to our children and wives for our lack of Christ.

h. Not an Excessive Drinker

According to the natural mind, we may write off this point because we may not drink or we may drink moderately, thinking that it only applies to alcoholics or “party-ers”. However, the intent is not related to drinking, but to the exercise of our freedom in Christ. Paul spoke in Galatians 5:13, “**You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.**” A leader in Christ controls his freedom and uses it to serve others, not to indulge oneself or abuse the privilege.

Paul admonishes us, “**All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient or necessary: all things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify or build up.**” (1 Corinthians 10:23) Our freedom in Christ should be used for service and for building others up in Christ. The meaning of not being an excessive drinker is best encapsulated by 1 Corinthians 6:12, “**I have the right to do anything, you say--but not everything is beneficial. I have**

the right to do anything"--but I will not be mastered by anything." In Christ, we control everything and are not controlled or captured by anything but Christ Himself.

Our household is the best place to learn self-control as described here. It is easy to abuse our rights, our freedoms, especially with our family because for some reason (the flesh and the self) we treat our own family as 'common.' We should see our wife and children as most holy and sanctified before the Lord (1 Peter 3:7; 1 Corinthians 7:14), deserving our highest standard of living. Peter told us to live, **"As free, and yet not having freedom as a covering for evil, but as slaves of God."** (1 Peter 3:16) Many husbands and fathers abuse their family behind closed doors with sarcasm, outbursts of anger, criticism, foul language, coarse joking, hypocrisy, neglect, preoccupation, serving others while leaving their family to themselves, and much more. Yet, in public they put on a facade of honesty, diligence, and righteousness. The reality of our daily living in our homes issues in the fruit of our labor outside the home. What we sow, we will reap (Galatians 6:7-8) and our own household is our greatest sowing field.

i. Not a Striker

Similarly, many brothers will overlook this aspect of leadership, assuming that it does not apply to them because they are not wife-beaters or child-abusers physically. However, the intent of "not being a striker" is deference and peace. A striker is a person who must prove his point and who insists on his point of view being the correct one. He "strikes out" or "hits" those who differ by sharp, severe admonitions, rebukes, and corrections. A striker stirs up strife, seeking to inflict injury rather than seeking to heal. How many brothers treat their wives and children in this way: insisting on their submission, rebuking and correcting constantly, and making sure his family knows he is right and they are wrong?

The contrast to a striker is one who is **gentle** or patient (1 Timothy 3:3). A striker insists on having his way, while a gentle man bears all reproach, injury, and opposition, yielding his rights before fostering contention and strife. The latter kind of husband and father elicits respect and honor from his wife and children rather than reaction, disdain, and false and temporary submission. He is gentle in correcting and tenderhearted when disciplining. He censures the admonitions of others for his family's sake. He is kind with a mild demeanor.

j. Not Contentious or a Brawler

A contentious man is obvious to everyone, but himself! He is quarrelsome to the point of brawling. This man forces his way so much that he would quickly take another to court to win his case rather than be defrauded (1 Corinthians 6:7). He operates by intimidation and others will succumb to his forceful nature ... until he is gone. A husband and father must learn to be gentle and peaceable towards his family by being quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger (James 1:19). This will train him to be a good leader in the house of God.

k. Not Fond of Money

A leader in Christ must not be fond of money or captured by it. The Lord Jesus told us that we cannot serve two masters, one being Himself, and the other being wealth, mammon, or money (Matthew 6:24). How do you know if you are fond of money? Look at the fruit of your life in terms of your motives, your intentions, and your actions. Matthew 6:21, **“For where your treasure is, that is where your heart is.”** So many place their job, their income, their future retirement, or even “getting the best deal” before their service to Christ. They need to live in the best neighborhood with the best school, having the best house, etc. that they can afford. They are willing to bend the rules to get ahead and are rarely truly generous.

When we make any decision without directly seeking God, we are serving another master. It is common in America to have enough money to go out to eat at a restaurant, to buy nicer things than we need, to covet what others have and then go buy it because we can, etc. It is easy in this age to try and buy love from our wife and children. We buy them gifts that keep them occupied rather than spend time with them personally. We buy them nice things with the hope that they will appreciate us for the gift, instead of cultivating honor and respect for us no matter how much money we possess.

Paul’s view of finance can be seen in 2 Corinthians 8:15 **“as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”** The context here was the care of one church for another. Imagine if we loved God this much so that when He gives us “extra” we would give to those in need rather than store it up for ourselves! A leader in Christ is generous to the point of giving all he has, charitable to the needy, and gracious to the downcast.

l. One Who Manages Well His Own Household

The top qualification of a leader is to be above reproach which encompasses all of the aspects mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:2-5. The highest asset within that sphere is managing well one’s own household. The family, especially our wife and children, is the training ground of leadership. Paul explicitly asks, **“If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?”** A man must learn to find grace in Christ to be a godly husband, father, son, brother, cousin, etc. before he is qualified to lead the church, which is God’s house. In this God-arranged environment, one learns all aspects of life. Surely, Luke 16:10 applies here, **“He who is faithful in the least [managing his family] is faithful in much [managing God’s family].”**

m. Having His Children in Submission with all Gravity

This proves that a man must learn how to raise his children in full partnership with his wife to qualify for spiritual leadership. What a beautiful person this is! He is not stern, severe or tyrannical towards his wife and children, but gracious, tenderhearted, and patient. He has trained the family so that each individual knows his/her place and operation in the corporate family. Everyone knows their duties and how it contributes to the whole in a cohesive manner.

Abraham ruled his household. **“For I have chosen him [Abraham], so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”**

(Genesis 18:19) On the other hand, Eli neglected his family by not training nor disciplining his sons. 1 Samuel 3:13, **“For I told him [Eli] that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God, and he failed to restrain them.”** Eli’s sons were wild, disobedient, rebellious, and evil because he did not raise them up as God desired.

It is an exposing thing to look at our fruit: our children, especially in the light of God’s word, but we need to honestly assess our spiritual relationship to our children. The Bible is clear that if we cannot establish healthy, spiritual relationships with our own children, we cannot expect to have healthy, spiritual relationships with those we are not so closely associated with, those with whom we do not have the potential of love for in the human realm.

“For why should we teach those not of our household, if we take no pains to preserve our own families in the love and fear of God? Paul says, "If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," 1 Tim. 5:8. (The Education of Children by Menno Simons 1496-1561)

“...For this is the chief and principal care of the saints, that their children may fear God, do right, and be saved ...” (From “Nurture of Children”, c. 1557. The Complete Writings of Menno Simons. c. 1956, Herald Press, Scottsdale, PA.)

Overseers, elders, bishops, leaders in the church are “stewards”, meaning they dispense what they have been given by God to others. And one of the most important dispensations is their marriage and family life (children). We learn how to be the transformed, spiritual vessels that God desires and approves of, in our marriage and in raising our children. Otherwise, we are deficient before God especially in the constitution of human virtues that express the Lord. Without this learning and manner of life one should not take the lead in the church.

3. How Do We Allow the Lord’s Dealing/Discipline?

As you read this in the light of the Lord, how can any of us fulfill the high standard of leadership lived out and set forth by the Lord Jesus through the apostle Paul? The author of Hebrews helps us, **“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as his son.”** **Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as His children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.”**

(Hebrews 12:5-8) The Lord allows many difficult circumstances, trials, persecutions, and various forms of suffering to discipline us. He rebukes us and “beats us” so that He can shape and mold

us into His image. This is an unpleasant process, but is absolutely necessary before we can know Christ deeply or serve Him with any effectiveness for His glory.

Practically speaking what does this process look like? Of course, the Lord works individually with all of us and He is the unique Designer who can create the perfect “narrow gate and constricted way” for us to walk through (Matthew 7:13-14). We must not avoid this pathway: **“¹⁴But narrow is the gate and constricted the path/road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”** Few are willing to allow the Lord’s true discipline in their life by taking such a road. The Bible records examples of ones who failed to meet God’s expectations and qualifications, but He dealt with them severely and they became leaders or continued to lead His people.

a. Moses’ Failure

Moses was called by God to lead Israel out of Egypt and ultimately into the good land. In his zeal Moses killed an Egyptian who was fighting an Israelite. Exodus 2:12, **“Looking this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.”** This verse shows that Moses knew in his conscience that his actions were improper before the Lord, but he went ahead anyway. What did God do? Seemingly nothing, but in reality, He drove Moses into his own wilderness for forty years! **“During that long period, ... the Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, ... to God. ²⁴God heard their groaning and he remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. ²⁵So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.”** (Exodus 2:23-25) God was concerned for Israel, not just the individual Moses. So, God sent Moses away for a “long period” (40 years) and then called him from the burning bush (Exodus 3). God used this long period in Moses’ life to deal with him, to discipline him, and to equip him for leadership according to His high standard.

b. David’s Failure

2 Samuel 11-12 gives the account of King David deciding he needed a ‘vacation’ from battle (his calling from God) and he became loose, unguarded, and vulnerable. When his lustful eyes observed Bathsheba bathing on the rooftop, he did the unthinkable. He committed adultery with her on a moment’s notice, ... and she became pregnant. Then, he tried to cover the matter over by coaxing Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, to sleep with Bathsheba so the baby she conceived by David would appear to be Uriah’s. Then, David used his army captain to ensure that Uriah would be killed in battle, thus murdering one of his own faithful companions. The story doesn’t get any better on David’s side ... it just kept degrading and falling downward. This is how sin works especially when we do not come into the Lord’s light. The Lord came to David like a sledgehammer, **“This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. ... ¹²You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’ ¹³Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’”** David’s response is the most important aspect of this entire story! He repented and took full responsibility before the Lord. He went off by himself and allowed the Lord’s light to shine fully

on him to discipline him. This is recorded in Psalm 51. **“The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. ... ²⁴Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, who gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him.”** God forgave David and honored his marriage to Bathsheba and they brought forth Solomon, which means “peace.”

c. Paul’s Need of the Lord’s Discipline

Paul was a Jew who assumed he knew God, but he eventually admitted to persecuting, imprisoning, and killing God’s people (Acts 26:10-11). 1 Timothy 1:15-16, **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. ¹⁶Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.”** Paul became a pattern to the flock of God’s mercy and the effectiveness of God’s grace. Yet, he held onto the title: “chief of sinners” based on his former actions against God’s church. How did God discipline Paul? He sent him away for years, a minimum of three years (Galatians 1:17-2:1), and some scholars believe it was the full fourteen years of separation. **“But when God, ... was pleased ¹⁶to reveal his Son in me ... my immediate response was not to consult any human being. ¹⁷I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia.”** What a testimony this is! Paul knew God had come to him. Paul also knew he was unqualified to lead God’s people based on his past. So, he refused to consult with any man, and went away to be under the Lord’s precise discipline and dealing in order to be prepared unto every good work (2 Timothy 2:22).

d. Peter and John Writing at the End of Their Lives

In principle, Peter and John had similar experiences of failure(s) and then being separated by the Lord. In Matthew 16:23 the Lord Jesus called Peter, “Satan” for his natural mind. Everyone in the world knows that Peter denied the Lord three times (Luke 22:55-65). Some realize Peter’s failure of hypocrisy and favoritism towards the Jews which produced a strong rebuke from the apostle Paul (Galatians 2:11-16). John was the son of Zebedee, but he and his brother James were given the title, “sons of thunder,” for their impetuous and impulsive zeal that did not honor the Lord (Luke 9:54). God set them aside in His own way, not allowing them to write their epistles until after many years of dealing. Peter wrote in A.D. 64-67 and John wrote near A.D. 90 after being exiled to an Island (Patmos). It took much time and discipline for them to know the Spirit and the Lord’s full gospel without prejudice or bias from their Judaistic background and “old man” dispositions.

e. When are We Ready to Lead? – Brokenness

As we look at our lives, we must confess many errors, many incidents of rebellion and disobedience after being regenerated by Christ’s grace. Can any of us truly say we are “patterns

to the flock” of Jesus Christ and His grace? What needs to take place before any can be qualified to lead? One simple thing: brokenness before God. Jacob wrestled with God all night and it was God Who realized: “... **that He [God] could not overpower him [Jacob]**” ... so, “**He [God] touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched.**” Jacob was so strong in his old man (flesh, self, natural mind, world, Satan) that God did not overpower him. But rather, God broke his hip! This slowed Jacob down, and eventually through further harsh dealings Jacob became a leader of God, even blessing Pharaoh, the ruler of the world (Genesis 47:10).

David’s story unveils that he spent the time needed in the Lord’s presence to be broken and humbled so that the Lord could infuse him and send him back to lead His people. Psalms 51, “**4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; ... 7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ... 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ... 17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart.**” Brokenness by the Spirit in the Lord’s light is the only way to humility, lowliness, meekness, and submission to God, which are the foundation stones of leadership. I believe this is the context of Peter’s word in 1 Peter 1:22, “**22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth [through the Spirit] so that you have unfeigned love for each other, love one another fervently, from the heart.**”

4. What is the Pattern to the Flock?

“**Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.**” (Hebrews 13:7) The pattern to the flock consists of a person who holds forth the word of God, one who is obedient to that word of God so that all can observe his life, and one who lives by the faith of Christ moment by moment (Galatians 2:20). The author of Hebrews tells us to imitate our leaders. If the leading ones are not following the word of God, do not have a life that backs up that word, and do not live by the faith of Jesus every day, what do we imitate? This brings confusion especially when we are told, “**Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account.**” (Hebrews 13:17) Brothers must be sober before the Lord concerning their daily lives and especially regarding their own weaknesses or failures that allow reproach from others. Peter tells the leading ones to be examples to the flock (1 Peter 5:3).

The standard of leadership is not just high, it is heavenly, and the true pattern of the flock is Jesus Christ Himself. Those who lead must be one with Jesus Christ in His life, nature, and work through the grace apportioned them in the Holy Spirit. Paul said it best in 1 Corinthians 15:10, “**But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.**” The true spiritual leader receives everything from the Lord Himself. Therefore, all the glory will go to the Lord one day.

Conclusion

Leaders are men who live Christ in particular ways that are manifested for all to see. Whether good or bad, leaders are patterns to the flock they serve. The household is the foundation for all experiences of Christ, meaning that our relationship with our wife and children is paramount to having relationships in the church, the house of God. So, who can live up to such a standard? Only Christ! We all need the Lord's light, the Lord's discipline, and the Lord's leading to conduct ourselves in His house, the pillar and base of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

According to the apostle Paul, a man who is above reproach is married to one wife whom he loves to the uttermost and has learned to live in harmony with her as a co heir with Christ. He carefully observes the needs of others and sacrifices his own well-being to provide for them. He subdues all the enemies of his soul (flesh, self, natural mind, world, Satan) by the Lord's grace through the Spirit. He does not have to be the head of every meeting, and he loves all kinds of people in every walk of life, including his enemies. One of the most important aspects of being without reproach is his ability to teach in such a way that the learner can receive and assimilate the lesson into their lives. A Christ-leader must be without reproach by not abusing his freedom in Christ nor by insisting on his own way, but by being gentle and kind, not contentious or serving another master (money) besides Christ.

Titus 2:11-12, "**For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.¹² It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly lives in this present age.**" We need constant reminders that the countercurrent of the world and our old man is strong and ever opposing God's will for our lives. The author of Hebrews told us to "**Exhort one another each day as long as it is called 'today', that we would not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin** (3:13)." It is easy to look around and feel defeated and hopeless in our cause to love Christ with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength. It often seems even more impossible to lead others to love Christ with all of their hearts. However, Paul exhorts us, teaches us, reminds us, admonishes us ... that the grace of God is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) and that if we live by grace (1 Corinthians 15:10) we can and will live soberly, righteously, and godly in the midst of this evil age (Philippians 2:15-16). We should not and cannot compromise the holiness of Christ, but must be diligent to seek, pursue, and lift high the standard of Jesus Christ for all to see. This must be our pattern to the flock!