

looking for leaders

Introduction

We'll rarely find the perfect leader, ready made and raring to go. But what are we to look for? The Bible gives us some helpful guidance, and using this we will then need to weigh up a number of factors as we make our choice.

- **Level of responsibility** Leadership of a church requires far more than leadership of a home group. So what is the appropriate range of qualities for the particular role we are considering?
- **Level of maturity** It isn't appropriate to look for an adult level of maturity in a 16 year old, but a 16 year old can still be a great leader.
- **Level of risk** There is always a risk involved in putting people into leadership roles. We can never get rid of risk, but we can reflect carefully on what is the appropriate level of risk to take. As a colleague of mine asks 'How can you tell the difference between an unlikely prospect and a dangerous choice?'

It is also worth noting we are far more likely to make an unwise decision if we select leaders on our own. Involving others in the process ensures we are gaining a wider perspective on an individual and are therefore less influenced by our own bias or prejudice.

Look for those whom God is calling (call)

When Jesus chose the twelve to be his apostles, he spent a night in prayer (Mark 3:13-19). We can only assume he was seeking his Father's leading. Not a bad place to start! God's choice is often unexpected. The temptation will be to choose 'people like us'. That is a poor basis on which to invite people. Take time to be open to his leading, and to God prompting us towards

people we wouldn't initially have selected. It is normally best to discern who God may be calling to leadership with others and not on our own (see Acts 1:24, Acts 6). Here are some things to look for:

- Sense of God's call, willingness to serve in this way.
- Committed to the church, loyal.
- Gratitude, someone with a sense of privilege of being called.
- Confirmed by others, seen as a leader or potential leader in the area of ministry for which leadership is a possibility.

Look for those of good reputation, full of the spirit and wisdom (covenant)

Acts 6:3,5 offer us three things to look for, those who are 'of good reputation and full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom'.

- Good reputation, in good standing with others, trustworthy, people of integrity.
- Full of the Holy Spirit, people who are Christians, open channels for God to use. Evidence of the Spirit includes fruit and gifts, both of which are present when we are 'in the vine'.
- Wisdom, appropriate to age of life and stage of Christian faith.

Look for those growing in Christ-likeness (character)

The following passages give guidance for what to look, although some aspects apply to specific roles and some are more generic across all leadership roles. Luke 22, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-4.



- Above reproach (integrity); faithful in marriage, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money (1 Timothy 3:2-3) See *Growing Leaders* pp.167-172 for a fuller description.
- Good reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7).
- Trustworthy, reliable, faithful (2 Timothy 2:2).
- Humility, someone who isn't caught up with themselves, but is genuinely humbled by what God is doing in others and through them (Philippians 2:1-11).
- Servant-heartedness, someone who serves people through their gifts, rather than enslaves people to their gifts or glorifies themselves through their gifts (Luke 22:24-30).
- Willingness to change, someone with an appetite to become more like Christ, teachable, and who is open to feedback.
- Appropriate confidence, positive 'can-do' attitude.
- Discipline, ability to act according to their decisions.

Look for those with the right abilities to lead (competence)

Here are some generic qualities for competent leadership.

- Influence, able to lead others.
- Energy, action orientation, able to get things done, initiates, contagious enthusiasm.
- 'Big picture' mind-set, able to see beyond the immediate, challenges assumptions.
- People skills, able to relate well to a range of people, respected by others within the community. Good honest relationships. Desire to see others develop. Cares, considerate.
- Team player, not a solo operator, able to work with others, belief in leadership within community. Draws together a team.
- Learner, seeks to grow and develop.

For overall Christian leaders (i.e. Ministers):

- Able to teach.
- Able to manage their own household. Interesting to note that the word Paul uses here is the same as the word in Romans 12:8; the ability to be responsible, out in front.

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For reflection

- Who are you currently investing in as a leader? What is the next thing you can do to help them grow as a leader?
- How might you share your leadership with others?
- Who are the potential leaders, young and old, in your situation? What would encourage them into leadership?

