

Biblical Leadership for Ministers

It is necessary not only to find biblical leadership, but also to seriously discuss and apply what leadership is needed for church ministry. This is not just a problem for the minister oneself, but also has a great impact on the relationships with colleagues, especially the local people. It entirely begins with the minister's own paradigm shift. Accordingly the starting point of leadership development is the awareness and decision to change boldly from the pattern of life one has lived.

The term “paradigm” was used by Thomas Kuhn, a physicist and historical scientist and professor at the University of Chicago in 1962, and understood a paradigm as a pattern for better experiments. Also, this term was used to mean not only making scientific achievements but also providing a basis for practical things. The term “paradigm shift” came to be applied due to the importance of change when dealing with management or leadership issues.¹

It would be more appropriate to view a paradigm shift as a change in fundamental thinking, or worldview, rather than simply showing it through certain actions. In other words, it should be called a comprehensive approach from a supra-cultural perspective that goes beyond the culture of the minister and the cultural elements of the missionaries, too.

When talking about biblical leadership, we can see that Jesus is the one who applied the most radical paradigm shift. This is because he is the one who broke the leadership paradigm of the existing Jews as well as Pharisees. He proposed and demonstrated a “new leadership.” There are a number of leaders in the Bible, but we will focus on Nehemiah in the Old Testament and Jesus as “the Model” in the New Testament.

¹Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago, 1970).

I. Nehemiah²

According to the Book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament, when the Israelites were captive in Babylon, he was chosen as the king's cupbearer. The fact that he was serving next to the king shows that he was in an important position and was trusted by the king. Meanwhile, it records in considerable detail how a leader should act through the process of God touching Nehemiah's heart and entrusting him with the task.

First, Nehemiah heard the news that Jerusalem was in trouble, with its walls collapsed and its gates burned and left in ruins (Nehemiah 1:3). After hearing the news, he fasted for several days and wept and prayed to God (Nehemiah 1:4-5). After that, we can see that it took about four months for Nehemiah to report his plan to king Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:3-8). Considering the post-war situation, it is clear that Nehemiah was not sitting still during those four months, but was making plans to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Before Nehemiah reported to the king that he intended to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, he thought about the materials needed to rebuild the city in advance, and also recognized the fact that rebuilding the city of Jerusalem was a long-term task that would require a very long period of time, and built his own residence. Definitely a plan was also established (Nehemiah 2:8).

After obtaining the king's permission, as soon as Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, he first began fieldwork to establish a short-term plan (Nehemiah 2:11-12). We can see that a lot of thought was put into systemizing the given task by considering various situations (Nehemiah 3:1-32). At the same time, he demonstrated his leadership by persuading the people living in Jerusalem to start the work and explaining the necessity of the work (Nehemiah 2:17-18). Nehemiah was not a short-sighted fanatic who went to war without realizing

²ER Dayton & DA Fraser, 『World Mission Theory and Strategy』 (Seoul: Presbyterian Church of Korea Publishing, 1991), 61ff.

that doing something would require sacrifice. He was not a person who just started work quickly and was eager to finish it right away.³

No matter what to do, we will encounter obstacles, and Nehemiah also encountered barriers despite doing God's work. In the process of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah encountered people who slandered him from outside by giving him rumors or fear that they were trying to kill him (Nehemiah 6:10-14). In addition, there are those who encourage division and ridicule those who do such things within themselves (Nehemiah 4:1ff.). When rumors spread that he was trying to dominate his Jewish people and there were signs of internal discord, he tried to persuade them (Nehemiah 5:1ff.).

Also, in the process of Nehemiah's work, he encountered new events and modified the existing plan to deal with other attacks when they appeared (Nehemiah 4:10-14, 21-23). Looking at a leader carrying out God's work of rebuilding the collapsed walls of Jerusalem and examining and applying what kind of leadership was demonstrated will be meaningful in developing biblical leadership.

First, Nehemiah was a person who collected practical data. When carrying out a task, he did not simply tackle it with passion, but researched and figured out what actual and specific data were needed for the task.

Second, he was a person who knew how to express his emotions. He did not try to hide the difficulties and difficult situations in his heart and was honest with his emotions. And he released it through fasting and prayer before God.

Third, above all, he was a man of prayer. If we look at Chapter 1 of Nehemiah, most of it is filled with prayers. Rather than confessing his complaints through prayer, he praised God for his righteousness and confessed his sins. He also confessed what problems he had, repented, recalled the promise he had given to God's people, and sought God's grace.

³Loring W. Batten, "The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah" In *The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1972), 202.

Fourth, he was a person with strong faith in God. Like other biblical leaders, they had a bold belief that God's work would be done by God first: “Our God will fight for us” (Nehemiah 4:20).

The leadership seen in Nehemiah was balanced in his beliefs, thoughts, and actions. Nehemiah clearly showed that for those who carry out God's work, going forward with only the passion of faith is insufficient as a leader. On the other hand, it shows that even if you have detailed plans and data, if you do not have faith in God, it is also not biblical. What is required of a leader is a sense of balance.

Having a vision does not necessarily require immediate action. To achieve this, patience is always needed. Perseverance also requires the courage to endure any pain and difficulties to achieve your vision. ⁴In particular, the task given to Christian leaders is not to satisfy their own desire for achievement, but to build “the walls of the kingdom of God,” not just rebuild the walls of Jerusalem like Nehemiah did.

The success that God gives you is not just for you. It is a means to a much greater end. It is a means to a holy and eternal purpose. There is potential for holiness in everything you do. When the surrounding nations saw the completed wall, they concluded that it had been done with God's help.⁵

Nehemiah clearly established and put into practice the standards of value toward God. That's because the purpose of the vision was not to achieve one's own ambitions, but for the glory of God. Just because the goal of rebuilding the collapsed wall was achieved, it did not mean that everything was over. It was a time of spiritual recovery for the Israelites. This is what Christian leaders must remember when carrying out any project. God is ultimately the plan of the vision, and God's glory must be the destination of the vision.⁶

⁴Andy Stanley, 『Achieving a Vision with Nehemiah: Visioneering』 (Seoul: Timothy Book Publishing, 2001), 28.

⁵Ibid., 305.

II. The Model of Jesus

When we talk about Christian leaders, we cannot help but mention the leadership of Jesus Christ. This is because, as God who came to the human world entirely in human form, he showed a clear model of how followers of Jesus should live and how they should lead people. Jesus was incarnated as a Jewish person and lived within Jewish culture, showing leadership that transcended that culture. Above all, “Jesus established a loving relationship with each of his disciples, not only serving as an example of life, but also showing them how to live God-centered on this earth.”⁷

Ronald Habermas considered several qualities of a leader and derived biblical leadership through the incident that Jesus showed while attending the wedding feast in Cana in Chapter 2 of the Gospel of John.⁸

First, a good leader should not be a loner but should mix well with others. Because Jesus possessed perfect divinity, he could have lived in social isolation. However, he was always physically close to the public and showed social acceptance to the extent of participating in a wedding feast. Contrary to the world's belief that a leader must be somewhat distant from the public in order to maintain his dignity, he actually met and interacted with people from various walks of life.

Second, good leaders are celebrators. Jesus was also invited to the banquet, not as a miracle worker or “Son of God,” but simply as one of his relatives. We

⁶Ibid., 314.

⁷David Huget & Joyce Huget, “Jesus Christ: The Core of Member Care,” 『Missionary Member Care: Global Perspective and Practice』 Cheon (Seoul: CLC, 2004), 395.

⁸Ronald T. Habermas, “Producing Extraordinary Wine and Extraordinary Leaders,” In *With an Eye on the Future: Development and Mission in the 21st Century*, eds. Duane Elmer and Lois McKinney (Monrovia, Calif.: MARC, 1996), 201-7.

can see that Jesus attended the feast to enjoy and celebrate. A leader should not be arrogant to maintain dignity or status, but should be able to positively interact with people and enjoy them.

Third, a good leader is submissive, not subversive. Jesus showed obedience to these two authorities as the Son of God and the Son of Mary. Rather than pushing the dual obligations into a confrontational pattern, he was told which took priority and he obeyed. For today's ministers, it may also mean the need to engage in ministry with a sense of balance rather than judging it with a dualistic concept of either this or that within the responsibilities of ministry and physical family relationships.

Fourth, good leaders are not wasteful and are interested in resourceful use. Jesus made as much wine as needed for a joyous feast. In another example, when he made bread for more than 5,000 hungry people, he made them eat enough. "After they were full, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Gather up the pieces that are left over, Let nothing be wasted' (John 6:12). A good leader must be concerned about difficult places in the world and must be aware that the problems of insufficient resources and pollution in the world will have a lasting impact not only on the world we live in but also on our ministry.

Fifth, a good leader does not do everything on his own; he also involves others. At the wedding feast in Cana, we can get a glimpse of Jesus' educational philosophy when he had the servants fill jars with water and turn it into wine. Jesus values teaching through "participatory experiences" rather than simply doing something by commanding it. In other words, it shows there is a valuable thing in participatory learning. In the case of Jesus' ministry as shown in the Bible (Matthew 10:1-42; 26:41; Luke 5:24; 10:1-24; 17:11-19; 20:23; Mark 8:7-8; John 13 :6-11), a participatory response is required.

Sixth, a good leader is not one who occupies the center, but one who works behind the scenes. The wedding feast was a place where many people gathered, so although it was an opportunity to show off his supernatural power in a

worldly way, he did so humbly in a place where only servants were present. Getting the world's attention was not Jesus' idea of success. In contrast, when talking about many modern Christian leaders, we can see that there is an erroneous tendency to measure them by their popularity.

Seventh, good leaders do not seek any reward. Because they are satisfied with a job well done. Jesus did not seek praise from others after completing a task, nor did he seek material rewards. Jesus was satisfied that God was glorified and that others were led by him on the path of faith.

Eighth, a good leader should try to provide first-class service and not perform second-class service. Jesus also offered the highest quality wine to the people at the wedding feast, filled to the brim with six jars. When Jesus faced a problem, he did not try to solve it with inferiority.

Ninth, a good leader does not look at external things but focuses on important human needs. It was a great example to run out of wine to serve to guests at a wedding, and Jesus responded sensitively to this need. Jesus did not overlook their needs. Before considering whether it was this or that, he looked at the needs of the people. A good leader looks at people's needs rather than categorizing them.

Tenth, good leaders are not short-sighted; they see the big picture of their calling. Jesus did not end with showing a miracle, but had a vision of what his disciples would ultimately follow with faith. Jesus saw the trees and the forest at the same time. Not only was there a message given through immediate ministry, but he also showed great interest in what he was accomplishing during his earthly ministry and how he enabled those who followed him to have faith. As seen above, although it was an incident that occurred at a wedding feast, it can be said that the model of Jesus provided great motivation on how to act as a leader. Looking at what Jesus Christ showed as a leader, "After God created us, He continually cares for us, nurtures us spiritually and emotionally, loves us, gives us grace to love Him, and serves His people and His ministry. It means

loving.”⁹ In other words, the Lord has already shown us an example and has taught and guided us. The Lord was not impatient to achieve any goal. Even when people around him flocked to him and his popularity reached its peak, he never felt superior or conceited. Rather, he delegated his authority to his disciples (Matthew 28:18–20). Jesus entrusted his disciples to have a vision. As a leader, Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit and dedicated to empowering those who followed him.

As Jesus prepared to send out his disciples, he was filled with enthusiasm, inspiring them with his passion and vision. Jesus was like a teacher sending out perfectly prepared students into the world or a king sending highly trained and inspired ambassadors to carry out his commands and speak for him. This way of preparing the team gave the disciples a sense of privilege and worth and value.¹⁰

Jesus even gave his disciples the authority to boldly act in his name even though they were not fully qualified to be delegated authority. Jesus chose workers, gave them authority, and gave them clear guidelines for what to do with that authority.¹¹ The Lord's words that should be most fundamentally applied to Christian leaders are, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave.” (Matthew 20:26–27)

III. Leadership Problems

Partners International, which researches and supports partnerships in the

⁹David Huget & Joyce Huget, 397.

¹⁰Ibid., 408.

¹¹Laurie Beth-Jones, 『Jesus the Chief Executive』 (Seoul: Korean and Korean Press, 1995), 280–281.

mission field, points out seven common errors made by leaders when conducting partnerships.¹²

Error 1: Expecting others to think the same way you do. Difficulties in collaborative relationships arise because of the assumption that other people share their thoughts and expectations.

Error 2: Promising more than you can deliver. When doing something, there are cases where the emotional aspect plays a big role rather than making a decision based on planning and research, and you commit to a project that is beyond your capabilities. This phenomenon not only occurs among new missionaries, but also occurs among experienced, long-term missionaries due to overconfidence in their abilities.

Error 3: Not having an overall road-map . This is like going on a trip without a destination in mind. Of course, things may start out ambiguous and without full agreement. However, if the understanding of values and interests in a relationship is not satisfied over time, it cannot be said to be normal.

Error 4: Underestimating cultural differences. In particular, if you want to build a good cooperative relationship with ministers from other cultures, you need at least an understanding of their worldview, mutual exchange relationships, and way of existence.

Error 5: Trying to take shortcuts. There are times when you try to find a way too quickly and end up in trouble. When you try to do something easily by believing in your own brilliance, you end up being deceived.

Error 6: Forgetting to improve dependencies. We can make the mistake of underestimating how much dependency hinders people's development. Efforts are needed to continuously develop organizational decision-making, relational independence, and financial independence.

¹²A Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 286-7.

Error 7: Losing your sense of purpose. Short-term missions can be undertaken with the desired goal of being carried out within a short period of time. However, in the case of long-term ministry, when the current cooperative relationship is progressing well without any major problems, there may be cases where the long-term purpose to be established becomes unclear.

In particular, since most leaders are in a position to teach others, it is important to look into the problems of leaders from an educational perspective. The following five issues are also important points associated with leadership.¹³

First, a problem of passivity. Sometimes it comes from a loss of responsibility given to oneself, and it can be a phenomenon that results from loss of the concept of God's work and indifference. Fundamentally, it is an attitude that is seen in the tendency to turn work into a profession rather than working out of a sense of calling.

Second, awareness of the authority system. Any organization has a hierarchy. Without exception, the church also has its own hierarchy, although there may be slight differences in form in each country. However, the problem is that when this hierarchy falls into authoritarianism. In particular, Christian organizations started with the concept of "equality for all people" before God, calling each other brothers and sisters. The position given to each is essentially a gift of the Holy Spirit given for the church. The gifts are given to serve God's people rather than as authority given only to certain groups. In other words, from an internal as well as an essential point of view, it is clear that authority can be granted in saying that God has chosen and entrusted a necessary and special mission, but in the process of carrying it out, it must appear in the form of serving others.

Third, a matter of intellectual meritocracy. In church leader education, we

¹³Ted W. Ward, "Servants, Leaders, and Tyrants," In *With an Eye on the Future: Development and Mission in the 21st Century*, eds. Duane Elmer and Lois McKinney (Monrovia, Calif.: MARC, 1996), 28-30.

see that many parts are operated as a system to enhance intellectual ability. Even when assigning a certain position, there are cases where it is based on how much a person knows rather than what kind of person he or she is. In the Bible, we can understand better if we look at whether deacons, elders, and pastors are appointed based on how much they know, or based on what kind of person they are. If the system is running based on intellectual ability, another aristocracy will be created within the church.

Fourth, a question of pride and status. This is a case where, when given leadership within the church, one becomes conceited and possessed by a sense of entitlement. This is a problem that occurs when you forget the role and function of why you were given that position and become satisfied with the position itself. One more thing to point out in relation to this is that we must have an attitude of service to the community, but this is not temporary. One should not assume the appearance of a lowly person for a while as a way to become a great person.

Fifth, the issue of using manipulative tactics as a means of leadership. The idea that it is okay to use any means and methods to achieve a goal is a very dangerous idea for the Christian community. No matter what achievements have been made, not all means and methods can be justified or rationalized. There are cases where this aspect is neglected in many church leadership. Some leaders' lack of awareness of how to reach people as efficiently as possible leads to an obsession with trying to get something done, even if it means using unwise means. Therefore, they rely on cunning methods rather than true leadership.

These problems occur almost cyclically. Any one problem is related to other problems, and when you look at the overall problem, you realize that it started with the first problem. Therefore, while discussing leadership, we discover that it is not easy to break the cycle of these problems.

Many of the problems pointed out above are symptoms that appear in an

autocratic form of leadership. They believe that only one leader has much knowledge and ability, and force members to obey implicitly. Therefore, rather than collecting and completing the thoughts of members, other members are driven to follow the leader's goals. In fact, this pattern is common in church leadership.

In contrast, there are problems with the laissez-faire style of leadership. There are cases where people lose control of the organization because they place too much emphasis on individual creativity and individual respect. They don't know if the leader's good intentions are sufficiently reflected within the organization, but if he or she tries to utilize members with the wrong motivation, the organization will lose its sense of direction and the leader will act according to his or her own intentions.

Even in general society, there are arguments that point out problems with leader styles and that persuasive leadership is needed rather than proactive leadership. It is difficult for self-righteous and one-sided leadership to gain support from those around them. In the case of mission fields with different cultures and languages, it will be even more difficult. What emerges from this type of proactive leadership is the use of attractive language to emphasize authority and status, appeal to promote a certain ideology, present a grand blueprint, and assert its validity. However, in a society becoming more complex and pluralistic, it is difficult for proactive leadership to receive support. In particular, if you are the leader of an organization, "It is difficult, but it is time to avoid the temptation of one-sided leadership and aim for soft persuasive leadership through constant two-way dialogue with members."¹⁴ This kind of persuasive leadership is not something that can be created overnight, but a foundation for building trust must be laid through steady interpersonal relationships.

¹⁴Seongho Lim, "Leadership of Arrogance, Leadership of Persuasion," *Dong-A Ilbo* (November 25, 2006), A47.

IV. Leadership required for ministers

The same applies to general pastors, but in particular, we must look for application points based on the information discussed above to determine what kind of leadership is required for ministers working in other cultures. James Plueddemann presents several leadership models and explains what kind of leadership is needed in missionary work. ¹⁵When we see the history of missions, churches in all countries of the world have been established and have grown in some form over the past hundreds of years. Looking at this historical basis, missionary vision must look at the world from God's perspective. People with this vision make plans. First, once you have a purpose, you analyze the needs and opportunities for it, set goals that fit your vision, and establish practical action directions and guidelines. These processes can be called “visionary planning.” There are several metaphorical leader models to consider in this process.

First, the leading figure in making plans as a leader in the field is probably “the behaviorist model of a machine.” When making a plan to do something, you take the lead by thinking of the world as if it were done mechanically. In other words, it emphasizes accuracy in accomplishing tasks and proceeds in a calculated manner, placing great weight on predictions. Therefore, plans and results are judged largely numerically. Success is measured and judged through the shape of the graph.

Second, there is an existentialist model in the wild flower style. Leaders who plan according to a mechanical model of behavior have no tolerance for ambiguity. On the other hand, people who like to make plans and like behavior patterns that can be likened to wild flowers tend to enjoy things that are

¹⁵James E. Plueddemann, “Visionary Planning for World Mission,” In *With an Eye on the Future* ; 125-131.

ambiguous. The former tends to analyze it through a slide rule even when referring to church growth, while the latter can sympathize emotionally and is interested in the appearance of some miraculous or unusual phenomenon. For this reason, many leaders with a wild flower style may even think that planning is a waste of time. The overriding goal for them is to stay busy. The result is often a lack of vision of direction.

Third, it presents a developmental model that demonstrates pilgrim-like leadership. In contrast to the mechanical model of the leader, the pilgrim figure is interested in a possibility. You may not be able to see any results right in front of your eyes, but you push forward with your work by seeing the possibility of discovering something even in unexpected things. As work progresses, the following questions are asked: how to take on the challenge, what is the vision, and what are the action steps. Pilgrims are realists with a vision. They are intentional and persistent in the pursuit of clear goals. However, they are aware that they may encounter difficult obstacles and difficult situations along the way. People who plan a pilgrimage recognize situations and needs and prepare for them by being prepared to take advantage of resources and opportunities.

A leader who moves forward with a pilgrim-like heart is someone who makes a plan but has a vision at the level of God's kingdom. Rather than working to achieve one's own ambitions, one has a vision of how to expand God's kingdom on this earth. Such a leader has a great vision, relying on God's sovereignty, with progressive ideas to build God's church and transform its community.

A vision by itself has no value. Vision must be put into action, not just sitting around dreaming. Those who plan a pilgrimage do not assume that there is only one sure way to reach their vision. It is because they have a sense of direction that allows them to be incredibly creative while working with various strategies.

This requires participatory leadership. Nehemiah did not just present a

vision, but also made it concrete through planning, participation, and encouragement. A participatory leader is a person who shares responsibility for decision-making, persuades members, and makes plans. Recently, partnership has been emerging in the field. It emphasizes the need to accomplish any task cooperatively with local leaders and members, rather than relying on the abilities and resources of a single minister or missionary.

There are many leaders in the Bible, but when we look at Nehemiah and other figures in history, there are several examples to apply. ¹⁶First, leadership requires preparation. Nehemiah also needed to prepare to become a spiritual leader, and he also had to take time to make plans for practical needs. Although he or she dedicated oneself as a minister, the process of consolidating, inspecting, and cultivating necessary skills through the training cannot be overemphasized.

Second, Christian leadership must have a sensitive mind, especially in spiritual matters. In carrying out the given task, Nehemiah did not view it as merely a human achievement. It was something that God allowed in his heart, and he first fasted and prayed for it. Those who do God's work are not interested in external things, but what is more important is where the center is pointed; "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

Third, leadership requires skill. Of course, leadership and administrative power are not synonymous, but both are necessary for those who do God's work. In order for leadership to function effectively, the functions that come with it must also be active. Nehemiah is a person who utilized all of this appropriately. Throughout the book of Nehemiah, he organizes, plans, sends, supervises, mediates, recruits, trains, and ultimately evaluates.

God gives vision to leaders. When a leader becomes convinced of that fact,

¹⁶Kenneth O. Gangel, "Biblical Theology of Leadership," *Christian Educational Journal*, Vol. 2(1991),

he or she must select the people who will participate in carrying out that vision and share with them a sense of God's calling. The need for spiritual sensitivity means that we must first wait for God's response and the response of those who participate together.¹⁷

It may be easy for a leader to shout out to others to follow, but it is difficult to show them as actual followers. In particular, Christian leaders must practice the model of “the leader as a follower.”¹⁸In other words, Christian leaders must first and foremost recognize themselves as followers of Christ. Leaders who do not know what discipleship of the Lord is cannot teach others what discipleship is. Christian leadership comes from recognizing and practicing “followership”.

A leader must not only lead but also act as a facilitator. Just as Jesus did, a leader as a servant gives utmost priority and attention to how to empower members.¹⁹ A person who does not recognize what a follower is cannot effectively fulfill the role of a helper.

V. Conclusion

What is required in the leadership for ministers is not the fear of failing at something, but the recognition of the fear of succeeding at something that has nothing to do with God as D.L. Moody mentioned. A leader leads people, not drives them. True leadership begins with those who have been called by God taking responsibility for obeying that calling. These are people who recognize the importance of preparation time, hoping for the help of the Holy Spirit to develop an inclusive and persuasive mind and abilities in the field assigned to them.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Eugene B. Habecker, “Power, Authority & Christian Organizational Leadership: A Call for “Followership,” *Crux*, Vol. XXVI (February 1990), 14.

¹⁹Ibid., 15.

These are people who seek a clear theological perspective from the Word of God, are keenly aware of the current problems that members actually need, and seek God's will to carry out their leadership roles with confidence. Above all, it is a time when it is necessary to exercise leadership not only as a servant but also as a steward by sharing the authority given to oneself with the members without asserting oneself.

It is clear that if you are appointed as a leader, you are given authority and power, but these become safe only when they are used with a humble heart to serve other members. It is time to recognize that each other is a different member of the one body called Christ, and to be considerate of one another and to set a practical example of the spirit of membership as Christians.