

LEADERSHIP

This subject has become a bit of a taboo among many. It is not a popular word in many different circles within the western world of today. Nevertheless, in society as much as in the Kingdom of God, leadership is not only unavoidable but extremely necessary. The confusion and abuse come from the wrong understanding of what leadership is supposed to be.

If we think about the concept of the Kingdom of God, the concept of leadership is nothing but logical. What is a Kingdom without structure, authority and responsibility? We are all of course of equal value before God, but we have different roles and responsibilities. Just like in marriage, man and woman are of the same value, but they play different roles.

Let's take then a deep look into what the Bible says about leaders, their heart and their roles.

LEADERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The New Testament speaks in different occasions about those leading the way, and uses different words to describe them. These have been translated in different ways, since it is not an easy task to find a modern word that catches the full meaning of these terms. Nevertheless, we can see from the way these same words have been used in different contexts the nature of their meaning, and the implicit role they described.

PROISTEMI

This word is composed by two terms, which literally mean "to-stand-before", or "those-standing-before" as a noun. Of course, that doesn't mean that this term was used with that literal meaning. It was basically used in the sense of manage, be in charge of, be responsible for.

*Faithful is the Word, and as to these things, I desire that you strongly affirm that those believing God might be careful **to maintain good works**. These things are good and profitable to men.*

Titus 3:8 MKJV

*And let ours also learn **to maintain good works** for necessary uses, so that they may not be unfruitful.*

Titus 3:14 MKJV

The verb *maintain* in these two texts is this the word *proistemi*, which to my opinion is better translated in Young's Literal Translation of the Bible. There is says **to be leading in good works**. This verb is used to refer to Biblical leadership in the following texts:

Modern King James Version	International Standard Version
<p><i>Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in Word and doctrine.</i></p> <p><i>1 Timothy 5:17 MKJV</i></p>	<p><i>Elders who handle their duties well should be considered worthy of double compensation, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.</i></p> <p><i>1 Timothy 5:17 ISV</i></p>
<p><i>or ministry, in the ministry; or he who teaches, in the teaching; or he who exhorts, in the encouragement; or he who shares, in simplicity; or he who takes the lead, in diligence; or he who</i></p>	<p><i>If your gift is serving, devote yourself to serving others. If it is teaching, devote yourself to teaching others. If it is encouraging, devote yourself to encouraging others. If it is sharing, share</i></p>

<p>shows mercy, in cheerfulness. Romans 12:7-8 MKJV</p>	<p>generously. If it is leading, lead enthusiastically. If it is helping, help cheerfully. Romans 12:7-8 ISV</p>
<p>And, brothers, we beseech you to know those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and who admonish you, 1 Thessalonians 5:12 MKJV</p>	<p>Brothers, we ask you to show your appreciation for those who work among you, set an example for you in the Lord, and instruct you. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 ISV</p>

You see that this word has been translated in different ways, but always keeping the same nature of “standing in front of others,” as leading by example and taking the responsibility of certain duties. The word leader was not a direct translation of this term.

ruling his own house well, having children in subjection with all honor. (For if a man does not know to **rule** his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)
1 Timothy 3:4-5 MKJV

Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, **ruling** their children and households well.
1 Timothy 3:12 MKJV

In these two other texts, the same word *proistemi* is being used to describe the role of a father in regards to his family and his children. It has the feeling of someone who stands in front of people who are supposed to follow his example, and of someone who takes the responsibility to look after those who are following him. He is not just telling them what to do, but showing them how, teaching them how, caring for their integral development, and letting them do it. Just as Paul would say:

Be imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.
1 Corinthians 11:1 MKJV

HEGEOMAI

This word has two main meanings. One is to consider, to regard as. Look at these texts:

But whatever things were gain to me, those I **counted** loss for Christ. But no, rather, I also count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and **count** them to be dung, so that I may win Christ
Philippians 3:7-8 MKJV

Yet do not **count** him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.
2 Thessalonians 3:15 MKJV

My brothers, **count** it all joy when you fall into different kinds of temptations,
James 1:2 MKJV

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each **esteem** others better than themselves.
Philippians 2:3 MKJV

and to **esteem** them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.
1 Thessalonians 5:13 MKJV

Therefore I **thought it** necessary to exhort the brothers that they would go forward to you,

and make up beforehand your blessing, it having been promised that this would be ready, thus as a matter of blessing, and not as of covetousness.

2 Corinthians 9:5 MKJV

The other meaning is indeed people that rule, based on the same idea of *esteeming* or *holding on high esteem*. Look how it was used in the following verses:

*and plucked him out from all his afflictions, and He gave him favor and wisdom over against Pharaoh king of Egypt. And he appointed him **governor** over Egypt and all his household.*

Acts 7:10 MKJV

*And they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury, because he was the **chief** speaker.*

Acts 14:12 MKJV

*Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men from them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; Judas, whose last name was Barsabas; and Silas, **chief men** among the brothers.*

Acts 15:22 MKJV

*"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the **governors** of Judah. For out of you shall come a **Governor** who shall rule My people Israel."*

Matthew 2:6 MKJV

In these texts the same word *hegeomai* has been used to describe someone in a position of authority above other people. The example of Joseph is very clear, when he was "put in a place of high esteem" above Egypt. Judas and Silas were "people held in high esteem" among the brothers in Jerusalem, and Bethlehem as a "prince" of Judah, from which the Lord would come as a "prince," or "governor."

So this word does denote someone with a position of esteem, and therefore with authority and responsibility over certain task. Would this be then a sort of boss? Look at how the Lord Jesus described such a person:

*And there was also a dispute among them as to which of them seems to be greater. And He said to them, The kings of the nations exercise lordship over them. And they who exercise authority on them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so: but the greater among you, let him be as the lesser, and **he who governs**, as one who serves.*

Luke 22:24-26 MKJV

The Lord said that those who are to be in high esteem within the church, that govern, rule, and are responsible for the welfare of the rest, should not be like the leaders of this world. The leaders of this world "exercise lordship" (literally *rule*) and "exercise authority" (literally *control*). The Lord Jesus said **that was not the way to lead**. On the contrary, He explained, those who govern the church, should be like the one who serve (*diakonia*, please read the note on this word in the lesson about Five-fold ministry).

This is the word used in the so-often used texts of Hebrews 13:

*Remember **those leading** you, who have spoken to you the Word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conduct:*

Hebrews 13:7 MKJV

*Yield to **those leading** you, and be submissive, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.*

Hebrews 13:17 MKJV

Greet all **those leading** you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.
Hebrews 13:24 MKJV

This same word is built from the term *ago*, which means to lead by taking someone by the hand, or as to move an animal with a leash. So, the feeling of this word is clear: it is, just as in *proistemi*, to lead by doing, showing, being an example, and as the Lord put it, by serving. The following verse shows this more practically:

Now I urge you, brothers—for you know that the members of the family of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to serving the saints—to submit yourselves to people like these and to anyone else who shares their labor and hard work.
1 Corinthians 16:15-16 ISV

Here it is not spoken of leading as authority being exercised in the sense of ruling and controlling, but rather as showing a servant example.

RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

The right kind of biblical leadership was supposed to move the brothers to make their own free choice of submitting themselves to such people. There are also a couple of words in the Bible that regard the reaction of the church to their servant foregoing, example-giving, caretaking leadership.

One of these words is what has been mostly translated as submit (*hupotasso*). It literally means to place oneself under, and is, in this context, a voluntary choice of placing oneself under the care of another one. The other word is yield (*peitho*), as in Hebrews 13:17, which literally means *let you be persuaded*, implying listening and considering the advice or admonition given by those who take care of us in the Lord.

In either cases, it was not an attitude demanded by those in responsibility, but rather a response of the church after regarding their example, the fruit of their walk, their faith, integrity, and love.

LEADERSHIP ROLES

The Bible is clear in describing the two leading roles for a church, being church a local body of believers who would work together. These two roles had very little to do with what today is called the five-fold ministry, and they had nothing to do with the gifts of the Spirit. The two roles were these:

ELDER

This word means simply older, and denotes a person with longer experience through practice and age. The Greek word used for elders was *presbiteros*, and denotes as much the elderly in age as the more mature brothers in the church that had a role of leadership.

*Therefore take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **feed the church of God** which He has purchased with His own blood.*
Acts 20:28 MKJV

Feed the flock of God among you, **taking the oversight**, not by compulsion, but willingly; nor for base gain, but readily; nor as lording it over those allotted to you by God, but becoming examples to the flock.
1 Peter 5:2-3 MKJV

These two texts, one spoken by Paul and the other one written by Peter, reveal two deeply interesting aspects of the role of elders. Both texts are addressed to elders (read the context of the verses for reference), so everything said here pertains their role in the church.

First of all, they are called to **take oversight** or **oversee**, *episkopeo* and *epikopos*, respectively. This terms mean literally supervision and supervise. This is the task of having the know-how, also allowing people to get the know-how, letting them put it to practice, and supervise that they do it well. This is the role that ensures the church works well in all their dynamics.

Besides that, there is a second commandment of **feeding the flock/church of God**. The word translated here as feeding is actually the word *shepherding*. Shepherding implies much more than feeding: it is guiding the sheep to places with good pastures, protecting them from wolves, and getting back the ones who are astray. Besides this, it is always clearly stated that the church or flock belongs to God and not to the ones shepherding.

Thus, an elder was supposed to supervise and shepherd. They were not addressed as pastors, but were called to *shepherd*. Shepherding was the heart of an elder, supervising was his function, and elder his qualification. They worked always as teams, and served an entire community.

DEACON

This is another Greek word that Bible translators have not translated unto its regular meaning. It has been kept in Greek. Deacon means simply a servant, someone who serves. It could be someone who serves tables, someone who serves a master, someone who serves someone else's needs.

A deacon was anyone carrying out a *diakonia*, a service to the church. Within the community of the church, they would be responsible of different things. In that sense, the 7 men of Acts 6 were not called deacons, but they were appointed to serve (*diakonia*) the tables. In that sense, since they were doing a service to the church (*diakonia*), they were deacons.

*His mother said to the **servants**, Whatever He says to you, do it.*
John 2:5 MKJV

*And I say, Jesus Christ has become a **minister** of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,*
Romans 15:8 MKJV

*For the rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the bad. And do you desire to be not afraid of the authority? Do the good, and you shall have praise from it. For it is a **servant** of God to you for good. For if you practice evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword in vain; for it is a **servant** of God, a revenger for wrath on him who does evil.*
Romans 13:3-4 MKJV

*if indeed you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard and which was proclaimed in all the creation under Heaven, of which I, Paul, became a **minister**,*
Colossians 1:23 MKJV

*If anyone **serves** Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also My servant shall be. If anyone **serves** Me, the Father will honor him.*
John 12:26 MKJV

*Did not even Satan marvelously transform himself into an angel of light? Therefore it is no great thing if his **ministers** also transform themselves as **ministers** of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.*

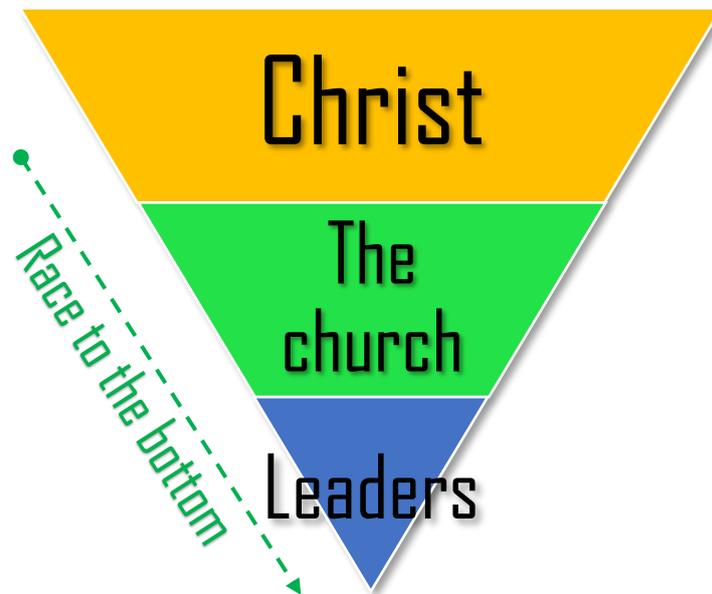
2 Corinthians 11:14-15 MKJV

All the words in bold in these passages are the Greek word *diakonos* or *diakonia*. Nevertheless, they have been translated as a function and not as a title. But as you see from these other translations, a deacon is nothing more than anyone responsible of any sort of service to the church, either practical (serving tables, bringing money, etc.) or spiritual (teaching, preaching, healing, etc.).

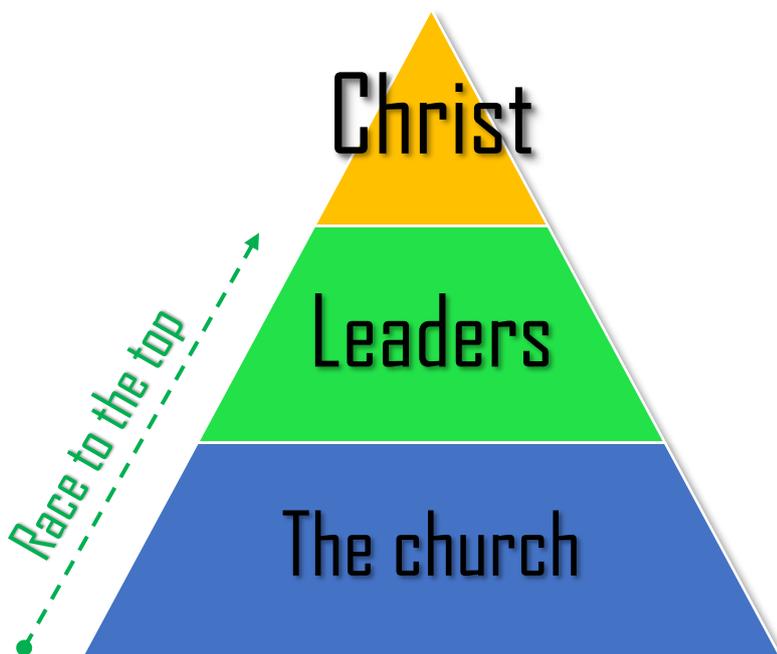
HIERARCHY

If we were to make a graphic of the hierarchy within the church of the Lord, it should look as follows:

If you analyze this chart, you will see that Christ remains head of His church. Then comes the church in its entirety, and the least ones are the leaders. They are there to serve the church and bring it closer to Christ. If



anyone desires to be a leader, it will be then a race to the bottom and not to the top. Those who desire to lead strive to disappear from the picture, and do not seek followers after themselves. Compare this to the hierarchical structure that unfortunately many religious institutions have nowadays:



Unfortunately, many institutions that profess Christianity have their leaders as a kind of priest, who stand between the church and God. The leaders have to compete to outstand, and they control and rule the church instead of serving it.

APPOINTED

Elders and deacons –older brothers and servants— would always be officially appointed by apostles and/or the whole assembly. There was usually first a need, then prayer, there were chosen by the church as a whole, tested, and then appointed by the laying on of hands.

Why is it necessary to officially appoint them? Aren't they just naturally fulfilling a role? Yes, they are. Nevertheless, babies in the faith lack discernment between good and evil (Heb 5). Wolves can come in the flock disguised as sheep and lead the sheep astray with worldly leadership qualities, as charisma, talents or strong personalities. Godly leaders, appointed at the right time with good understanding of their role and the need they are to meet, are the best protection for the Body of believers.

Note that Paul appointed leaders as one of his last actions in the development of new communities of believers.

And having hand-picked elders for them in every church, and had prayed with fastings, they commended them to the Lord into whom they believed.

Acts 14:23 MKJV

REQUIREMENTS

There are two main texts that speak about the qualifications for being or an elder or a deacon. The texts are the following:

Faithful is the Word: If anyone reaches out to overseership, he desires a good work. Then it behooves the overseer to be without reproach, husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, well-ordered, hospitable, apt at teaching, not a drunkard, not contentious, not greedy of ill gain, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous, ruling his own house well, having children in subjection with all honor. (For if a man does not know to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being puffed up he may fall into the condemnation of the Devil. But he must also have a good report from those on the outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the Devil. Likewise the deacons are to be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of ill gain, having the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be tested, then let them minister without reproach. Even so their wives are to be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and households well. For they having served well gain a good grade for themselves, and much boldness in the faith, those in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 3:1-13 MKJV

For this cause I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you, if anyone is blameless, husband of one wife, having believing children, not accused of loose behavior, or disobedient. For an overseer must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not full of passion, not given to wine, not quarrelsome, not greedy for ill gain; but hospitable, a lover of good, discreet, just, holy, temperate, holding fast the faithful Word according to the doctrine, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convict the gainsayers.

Titus 1:5-9 MKJV

Feed the flock of God among you, taking the oversight, not by compulsion, but willingly; nor for base gain, but readily; nor as lording it over those allotted to you by God, but becoming examples to the flock.

1 Peter 5:2-3 MKJV

There are three things to point about these requirements. The first one is that the requirements had to do only with character and not with gifting. The only gift we could convey that is needed would be teaching. The second one, is that these requirements demand time and selflessness. It would be impossible to figure out if anyone meets these expectations if he has not shown them for an extended period of time. Family life, patience, wisdom, etc. require a close observation of someone's behavior. The third point is that both roles are only for men. Nonetheless, these were required to have a wise and respectful wife. In that sense, we could count it as a team under the direction of the man.

Leaders of the church could exercise one of the five ministries from Ephesians 4, but that was not related to their responsibility as older brothers or servants to the church.