

# Leadership

# 4



**N**EW YORK CITY REPORTER JACOB RIIS MADE IT his business to let the world know what being poor was like. His vivid descriptions of ghetto life in 19th century New York horrified a generally complacent public. His “magic lantern show” of photographs taken of the poor in New York so stunned lecture halls that his audiences felt they were present in the tenements themselves. Many fainted, and it is said not a few talked aloud to the people in the photos.

Riis’s book, *How the Other Half Lives*, combined his writing with his own photographs to paint a picture so vivid the public could not escape the certainty of its existence. The third of fifteen children, Riis wrote so effectively because once upon a time he lived in that world of terrible despair.

Shortly after the release of his book, a card was delivered to Riis from a young man only then beginning his political career. The card read simply, “I have read your book, and I have come to help. Theodore Roosevelt.”

Hard-nosed, skeptical, world-weary Riis immediately became a disciple of the future president, for life.

Why would Riis respond so strongly to this simple act by Roosevelt?

What characteristics of leadership does this brief note by an as-yet-not-famous politician demonstrate?

What kind of leader are you more likely to follow?



## Scripture Passages

Titus 1:7-9

Isaiah 58:5-7

Daniel 2:30

John 13:5

Matthew 11:27-29

I Timothy 5:17

I Peter 5:3

Matthew 18:1-4

Matthew 20-20-28

## Study

In recent business history, much has been made of the concept of servant-leadership, as if another kind of leadership existed. The Bible does not speak often about leadership, but when it does it rarely describes it as something to be sought. Leadership as described in Scripture has service as its central tenet. One cannot be a true leader without being a servant-leader.

Often workers who aren’t managers tune out when the subject turns to leadership, but the truth is we’re all leaders

somewhere in our world. In our roles as parents, uncles, aunts, coaches, committee chairpersons, etc., we have opportunities to exhibit the leadership skills Scripture describes as appropriate.

### ***Qualities of a leader***

Scripture has much to say about employer–employee relationships, which we deal with more fully in volume three of this series. But what about leadership? Titus 1:7-9 delivers a list of qualities that elders or leaders in the church should have. Why do you think it's appropriate to use this list as the basis for establishing leadership principles elsewhere?

*“For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward...”* Read Isaiah 58:5-7 and discuss the following statement: How we use our God-given resources leads others to or away from God.

*“...not self-willed...”* Teachers are most effective when they are focused on the needs of those they're teaching instead of on themselves. How might that apply to leadership roles?

*“...not quick-tempered...”* Managers who use anger as a default tool are leaders without control or skill. From floor leaders in manufacturing to the board room, anger often serves as a tool in the tool belt of leaders feeling in limbo. Even Christian managers sometimes fall prey to the temptation to delight in the power anger gives them over others. Describe some of the reasons why a good leader must not be quick-tempered.

Beside each item in the list below, describe why you think Scripture includes each characteristic in the list of good leaders, and why that characteristic is useful to leadership in other places, like managing in business.

*“...not addicted to wine...”*

*“...not pugnacious...”*

*“... not fond of sordid gain...”*

*“... hospitable...”*

*“... loving what is good...”*

*“...sensible...”*

*“... just...”*

*“...devout...”*

*“...self-controlled...”*

*“...holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”*

***Added thoughts from Scripture on leadership***

Here are other passages which offer thoughts on leadership principles. Describe the principle you think emerges from each passage. (Note: If you find you're having trouble identifying the principles on your own, we've included our thoughts on each passage at the end of this lesson.

Daniel 2:30

John 13:5

Matthew 11:27-29

I Timothy 5:17

I Peter 5:3

Finally, examine these two passages, and describe what you think these verses suggest is Jesus' central idea of a good leader.

Matthew 18:1-4

Matthew 20:20-28

The same qualities of humility, compassion and selflessness that make good spiritual leaders also make good managers. As a final exercise before leaving this topic, discuss why you believe a sound knowledge of the Bible and its principles might be useful in improving your management skills.

***Author's notes on passages identifying leadership traits:***

Daniel 2:30 — Humility

John 13:5 — Serving even at the expense of dignity

Matthew 11:27-29 — A willingness or desire to lighten the load of those being served/led

I Timothy 5:17 — Hard workers

I Peter 5:3 — Absence of arrogance

Matthew 18:1-4 and 20:20-28 — HUMILITY

## *Common Sense and Eternal Principles*

- Leadership as described in Scripture has service as its central tenet.
- The same characteristics that make for good spiritual leaders also make good managers.
- Humility and service are the key ingredients to effective leadership.
- To be most useful in God's economy, a business leader must be committed to a working knowledge of the Bible and its principles.