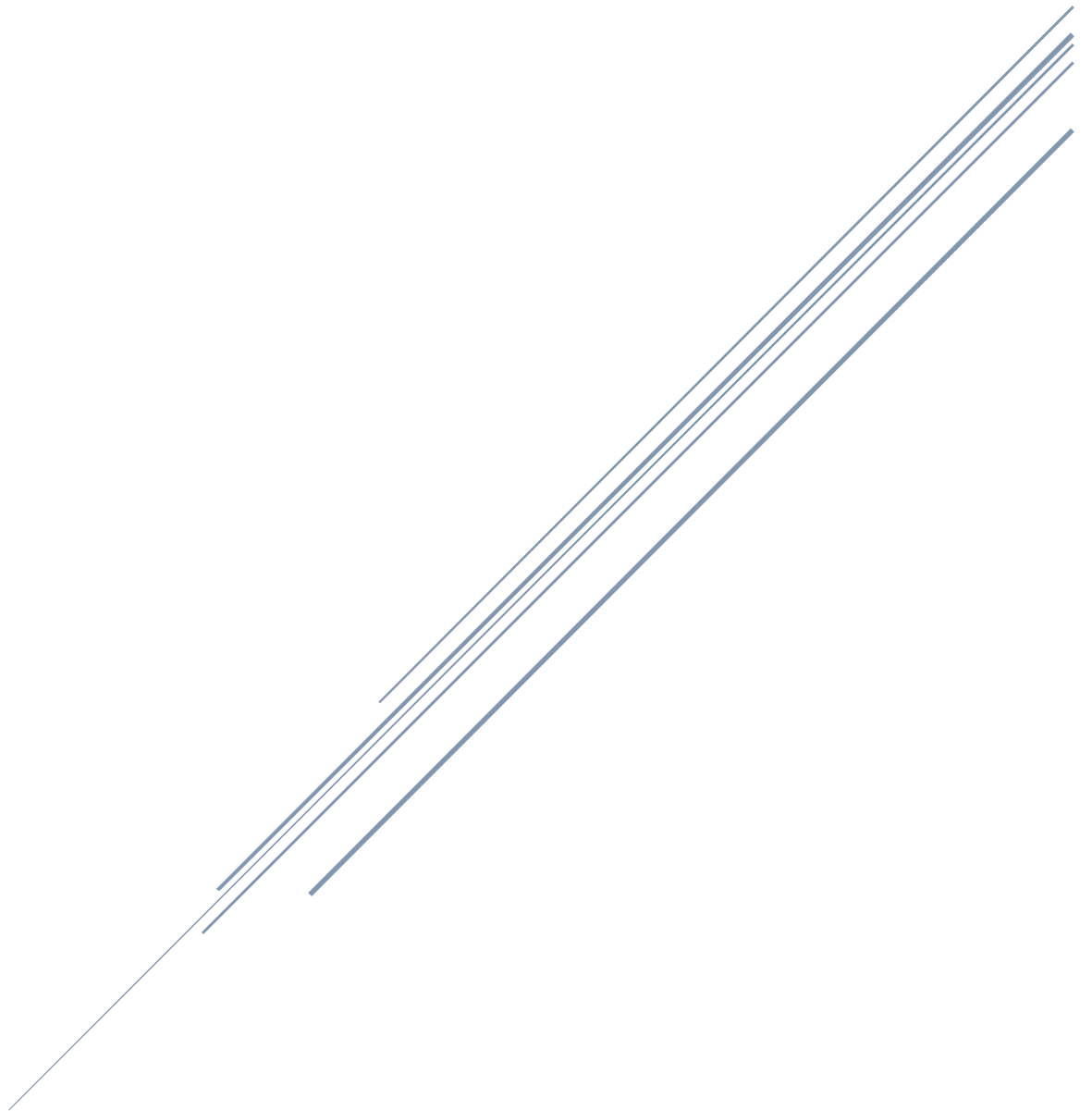


LEADERS WITH SUBSTANCE

30 indispensable traits of legitimate spiritual leaders.



Del Wells



This course is part of the Life Transformation series available online from:

Freedom in Christ Assembly
1643 Bleams Road
Kitchener, ON N2E 3X8
Canada
Email: info@freedomkw.com

Leaders With Substance

Copyright © 2021 Del Wells

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without written permission from Freedom in Christ Assembly.

Scripture quotations taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version[®], NIV[®]

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011, by Biblica, Inc[®]. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

About the Author:

Del Wells is an ordained minister with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada having served the local church for 37 years as a pastor. His vision is to see people transformed daily by having their minds renewed with the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Utilizing his teaching gift and drawing on his many experiences and spiritual insights, Del has written numerous courses, studies, and articles to help followers of Christ learn to live well, be godly and impact the world around them for Jesus.

These resources form the Life Transformation series and are available online at freedomkw.com.

Table of Contents

Leaders With Substance	4
Introduction	4
Leaders With Substance Profile	7
1. In step with the Holy Spirit	7
2. Prays continually	8
3. Knows and does God’s Word instinctively	9
4. Lifestyle worshipper	10
5. Spiritual protector	11
6. Capable teacher	12
7. Credible reputation	13
8. Godly character	14
9. Mature attitude and actions.....	15
10. Wise discerner	16
11. Obvious influencer	17
12. Proven stamina	18
13. Unusual perseverance	19
14. Prepared for unfair treatment	20
15. Active initiative	21
16. Passionate about ministry	22
17. Humble demeanour.....	23
18. Predictable Integrity	24
19. Deep relationship with Christ	25
20. Comfortably self-aware	26
21. Confident in Christ	27
22. Competent for Christ	28
23. Clear sense of calling	29
24. Spiritual gifts and skills utilized effectively.....	30
25. Generous living.....	31
26. Informed anticipation.....	32
27. Genuinely accountable	33
28. Wise stewardship	34
29. Proficient communication skills	35
30. Life-long learner	36
Summary	37

Leaders With Substance

30 indispensable traits of legitimate spiritual leaders.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to identify and comment on the indispensable essentials for an effective spiritual leader – ‘substance’. These are the tangible qualities that constitute the people who find themselves in positions of influence over others. No one excels in all of them, but there will be evidence of each quality to some measure in the maturing leader.

This document is offered to assist you in one or more of three ways. The first is for you as a leader to use it for self-evaluation of your leadership qualities and make necessary adjustments. The second is if you are an aspiring leader, to help you gain a better understanding of what is required to lead so you can make an informed decision about pursuing it. The third is to help those of you tasked with finding leaders to fit into oversight roles by giving you a tool to use to assess the suitability of potential candidates.

It is true that there are countless books and articles written about leadership, both in the secular and church contexts. Many of them are useful resources that offer insights into various dynamics of what leaders are and do. My goal for this essay is to offer my observations about spiritual leadership and create a profile for evaluation purposes. These real-life insights have been gathered from decades of leading others in both volunteer and paid positions.

Having personal experience in church culture my whole life has given me a realistic understanding of how things are done in both the local and broader contexts of organized ministry. As such, I perceive numerous shortcomings in how spiritual leaders are formed and positioned overall. Expectations for leadership are often based more on traditions, personalities, and preferences than on Biblical teaching and directives.

An example of this deficiency is in how pastors are trained and placed many times. A young person can go to Bible college directly after graduating high school and, four years later have a degree that enables them to obtain ministerial credentials. Two years after that, having completed a full-time ministry position or four years doing it part-time, allows them to apply for ordination and potentially secure an appointment to a lead role in a church or organization. As a result, many people have found themselves in over their heads leading others because they lacked real time life and ministry experience and formation of spiritual maturity that require extended periods of time to actualize.

It is my contention that developing spiritual leadership has a Biblical pattern to follow and that the local church is the best environment for identifying, equipping, and releasing leaders into kingdom service. Theological education is important and should be the major function of Bible colleges and other teaching institutions, whether delivered in-house or by extension. However,

practical formation of spiritual leaders happens best in the local church context where training is designed to put theology into practice.

The Biblical foundation and building blocks for spiritual leadership training are clearly defined in Scripture and are vital to implement for best results. As a baseline, being Biblically qualified to be a deacon is a reasonable minimum standard for leadership appointments for board members and ministry directors in a church. Shouldn't someone then given a church staff position at least be legitimately eligible to serve as a deacon as a minimum requirement? (Refer to 'The Deacon's Qualifications' LT article for a profile in more detail.)

Ideally, all staff members should be able to qualify for Biblical eldership which exceeds deacon requirements substantially. Pastors, who are spiritual overseers, have increased responsibilities that are extremely demanding and will test their competencies to the limit. That is why thorough spiritual eldership equipping should be completed before appointments are made rather than after the fact. (Refer to 'The Overseer's Qualifications' LT article for more detail.)

Many times, people have been placed in leadership positions because of their charisma and natural abilities rather than their actual Biblical qualifications to lead. This becomes a problem over time both for the leader and for those being led. Reliance on natural abilities alone will limit any leader's potential to produce genuine kingdom fruit and will set a poor leadership example for others to learn from.

Self-discipline and substantial effort are required for anyone desiring to mature and develop as a legitimate spiritual leader. Coasting on inherent abilities is a recipe for personal and ministry disaster with countless examples past and present as proof. Much of the damage done because of inexperienced and under-developed leadership is preventable with a thorough process of producing qualified leaders.

God-given abilities should be developed as good stewardship practice. Spiritual maturity plus trained abilities will allow you to fit well into a ministry context. Your longevity of leadership will be enhanced by giving close attention to being properly equipped to lead by those qualified to do so and becoming more spiritually mature in the process.

Spiritual leadership is about much more than facilitating one's personal fulfillment and hitting ministry vision targets. Ultimate leadership purpose is imbedded in Jesus' Great Commission for every Christ follower. Making disciples for Christ must be the goal for all ministry including everything a leader does. (Refer to 'The Disciple of Jesus Profile' LT article that identifies the essentials of being a true Christ follower.)

Daily spiritual disciplines are necessary for developing as a faithful disciple of Christ and able mentor of others. A leader is always committed to growing as a follower of Jesus. The quality of your character affects your impact and influence on others, both positive and negative. Your spiritual maturity and immaturity will be exposed by how you lead and respond to others whatever the situation. The more that ministry pressures and expectations intensify, the clearer the actual character of the leader becomes.

So, why become a spiritual leader if it is so demanding? Why would you subject yourself to the disciplines required for growth and the difficult challenges faced? The best answer is because it is something that you feel compelled to do, an unshakable sense of calling. To confirm that God wants you to be a spiritual leader you must take the necessary time to hear from him. The Holy Spirit will reveal whether you should get involved in the leadership training process to prepare yourself to influence people to know, love, and serve God.

It is important to note that there are significant benefits to being a leader for you and for those you impact in any way. Research has shown that leaders are more likely to experience accelerated spiritual growth compared to non-leaders because of the heightened expectations that add accountability for their ongoing development to function at a higher level. Intentional self-disciplines produce positive results that enhance personal growth and ministry fruitfulness. As well, those being led are blessed by God under being under the spiritual covering of a mature and competent spiritual leader.

The responsibility someone feels for equipping others is a leadership thing that you either have or do not have. If you are considering an opportunity to lead others in any capacity, you should investigate and consider what is involved by conferring with those you know and trust as spiritual leaders. Take the time to learn from capable practitioners what is involved in the process of becoming a fruitful spiritual leader over the long term.

The qualities listed in this article are the observations of my hands-on experience in kingdom service for several decades as a pastor, presbyter, lay leader, and church member at various times throughout. You may notice that the list is not exhaustive and could include other characteristics that are part of a leader's life. However, for the purpose of this article, 30 major qualities were chosen that the author deems essential. That said, you will see that some of the possible additional traits not singled out are included as part of one or more of the major qualities that are identified.

Keep in mind as mentioned above that The Deacon's Qualifications, The Overseer's Qualifications, and the Disciple of Jesus Profile are examined in separate articles and identify indispensable criteria for spiritual leadership. This article focuses on what substantial leaders look like in practical terms assuming the deacon, elder, and disciple qualities are already part of the leader's ongoing commitment and experience.

The initial four qualities identified in Leaders With Substance are essential for every disciple of Christ to become spiritually mature and fruitful, whether serving in leadership or not. They are always the priority for one's godly living and fruitful ministry. The rest of the traits examined are practical proficiencies necessary for a spiritual leader to accomplish their God-given kingdom assignment effectively.

1. In step with the Holy Spirit

Definition – being in sync with the Holy Spirit’s desires, directions, and workings.

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh...Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:16,25.

A spiritual leader is above all to be a person of the Spirit. Learning to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit precedes the privilege of leading others. Living in step with the Spirit safeguards the leader from sinful choices and behaviour unbecoming.

The Holy Spirit is the one who has perfect knowledge and insight for every situation and is always ready to lead you the right way. The Spirit gives you power and spiritual resources to lead well beyond your human capabilities.

Evidence of someone being in step with the Holy Spirit:

- Spirit-filled – continuously asks for and depends on the fullness of the Holy Spirit.
- Godly – trained to know and represent Christ well in every situation by default.
- Anointed – is a living testimony of God’s favour in life and ministry.
- Faith-filled – anticipates miraculous intervention and provision as needed.
- Boldness – leads others confidently and fearlessly with words and actions.

* See ‘Life in the Spirit’ LT course for Holy Spirit living basics.

* See ‘Pentecostal Essentials’ LT course for characteristics of Spirit-filled disciples in community.

Practical steps:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with his presence and power continually.
- Get to know the Holy Spirit intimately by learning about him in the Word and communicating with him by listening to and speaking with him.
- Learn to discern what the Holy Spirit desires always and do it without hesitation.
- Get involved in kingdom service that requires dependence on the Holy Spirit to do.

2. Prays continually

Definition – being in constant communication with God.

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Praying is a lifestyle rather than an event. There is never a moment that God is not to be involved in what you are doing. Praying is essentially acknowledging and including God in all things. You must remind yourself constantly he is in charge and has the answers to every question you have and the solutions to each situation faced.

You willingly learn to pray all the time because that is what God expects you to do. It is God’s will that you give your thoughts and attention to him and his ways without stopping. And you pray joyfully and thankfully because you recognize how blessed you truly are by God.

Evidence of someone praying continually:

- Stays connected to God by including him in every detail – the God-first approach.
Matthew 6:33
- Prays in the Spirit on all occasions – is guided and assisted by the Holy Spirit.
Ephesians 6:18
- Prays righteously in close relationship with God – prayer is powerful and effective.
James 5:16b
- Refuses to be discouraged by how impossible things appear – hopes in what’s unseen.
Hebrews 11:1
- Believes that God regularly rewards faith that trusts in him – is earnest and diligent.
Hebrews 11:6
- Prays God’s Word intuitively – their words reflect the Word. (See Trait #3 below)

Practical steps:

- Talk with God about everything you are doing.
- Ingest God’s word so that it informs and influences your thoughts and words.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to pray through you always in accordance with God’s will.
- Remind yourself regularly of your favoured position and potential ‘in Christ’.

3. Knows and does God's Word instinctively

Definition – being fully equipped by God's Word to do God's will proficiently.

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."
2 Timothy 3:16,17.

Knowing what the Bible actually says requires life-long study. God has revealed himself to you in various ways including through Creation, the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and his written Word. You know this by reading God's word to you, the Bible. The more you acquaint yourself with God's word, the more you know who God is and what he does.

God's word is what you go to as your resource to shape your beliefs, values, and choices. As you consistently apply yourself to knowing and doing God's word, you find it profoundly affects the way you see the world around you and how to respond to it.

Evidence of someone knowing and doing God's Word instinctively:

- Internalizes the Word by reading, memorizing, meditating on, and hearing God speak.
- Does what the Word says by putting it into practice. James 1:22
- Prospers in everything they do – produce spiritual fruit that glorifies God.
Psalm 1:1-3 / Joshua 1:8
- Worldview is shaped by the Bible – looks at everything from God's perspective.
- Disciples themselves and others utilizing God's Word. – 2 Timothy 3:16,17
 - Teaching – communicates God's truth.
 - Rebuking – exposes error in beliefs and conduct.
 - Correcting – gives directions for godly behaviour.
 - Training in righteousness – practices spiritual disciplines that foster Christlikeness.
 - Thoroughly equipped for every good work – does life and ministry well.

Practical steps:

- Establish a daily discipline of absorbing God's Word.
- Consider how God views everything generally and specifically.
- Develop a reputation for knowing God's word by your talk and walk.
- Pray God's word into every situation.

4. Lifestyle worshipper

Definition – being fully surrendered to God for his purposes at all times.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:1,2

Worship is your response to God in light of his goodness to you. You focus on him and seek to live your life in the way that pleases him at all times. You recognize that the world you live in and its values are mostly opposed to God and will and want to turn your allegiance away from God. To discern God’s best, you need to have your mind constantly renewed by the Holy Spirit so that you are transformed to live like Jesus.

Worship of God is a lifestyle of surrender to God. Worship can be expressed in many ways, but those expressions are not to be the main concern. Whatever you do must be done to bring glory to God. Only then can you have confidence of being in perfect alignment with God’s will for your life and his kingdom purposes.

Evidence of someone being a lifestyle worshipper:

- Is in awe of God and acts accordingly in all aspects of life – Hebrews 12:28,29
- Is self trained to recognize and avoid worldly patterns. – Romans 12:2
- Is transformed and determined to conform to godly patterns by renewing their mind.
- Willingly tries to please God in every way. – 1 Corinthians 10:31
- Balances spirit and truth in worship expressions and styles. – John 4:23,24
- Leads others in lifestyle worship by example.

Practical steps:

- Humble yourself before God always aware of his awesome holiness.
- Love God above everything else with all your faculties – Matthew 22:37,38.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to transform your mind daily through the Word and prayer.
- Treat everything you do as a sacrificial offering to God to please and glorify him.

5. Spiritual protector

Definition – being spiritually aware of and guarding against the devil’s schemes.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” Ephesians 6:10,11

A spiritual leader must be able to overcome the devil’s attacks and serve as a covering for those they lead. This is one of the many often overlooked realities of spiritual leadership that carry a heavy weight of responsibility with them. The enemy is relentless in trying to deceive and ensnare every person for his evil purposes. It is essential to be fully equipped by the Holy Spirit with supernatural power, spiritual armour and weapons, to defeat the devil at all times.

A proficient leader is aggressive in maintaining their protective preparedness through rigorous spiritual discipline and dependence on the Holy Spirit. Those who follow authorized spiritual leaders are blessed to be under the powerful spiritual covering they provide.

Evidence of someone being a spiritual protector:

- Takes responsibility for spiritual protection of themselves and others.
Hebrews 13:17 / 1 Timothy 4:16 / 1 Timothy 6:20,21
- Guards their heart from evil influence by the Spirit and God’s word.
Proverbs 4:23 / 2 Timothy 1:14 / Psalm 119:11
- Protects their family from worldly influences inspired by the enemy.
Joshua 24:15b
- Watches out for those they lead by equipping them to be spiritually fit.
1 & 2 Timothy / Titus (Pastoral Letters’ instructions)
- Guards the gate to their church family against anything or anyone that brings division.
Acts 20:28

Practical steps:

- Equip yourself daily with God’s power and spiritual armour and weapons.
- Accept the responsibility God has given you to be a spiritual protector.
- Train yourself to be able to distinguish between what God approves of and does not.
- Be fearless in the face of enemy attacks and in opposition of those who are divisive.
- Be willing to sacrifice self interests for the spiritual well being of those you lead.

6. Capable teacher

Definition – being able to explain and make practical God’s word.

*“Therefore go and make disciples...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”
Matthew 28:19a,20*

Jesus expects every one of his followers to be teachers of everything he has commanded. That requires taking the time to learn Jesus’ teachings, putting them into practice personally, and communicating them to others so they will in turn be able to obey them and teach them to others. That is basic discipleship and spiritual leaders must be Christ’s disciples to the core.

The writer of Hebrews reinforces this expectation for anyone who has been a believer for any length of time: “...it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand...though by this time you ought to be teachers...” Hebrews 5:11b,12a.

Authentic spiritual leaders are committed to growing up by learning, applying, and teaching God’s word: *“But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” Hebrews 5:14.*

Evidence of someone being a capable teacher:

- Knows God’s word deeply and explains it to others effectively.
- Utilizes God’s truth to help people experience daily life transformation in Christ.
- Teaches trainable disciples how to teach others Biblical truth.
“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” 2 Timothy 2:2
- Focuses on making disciples through teaching as the overall ministry goal.

Practical steps:

- Be a full-time student of God’s word generally and Jesus’ teachings specifically.
- Be involved in helping others grow as disciples of Christ utilizing the Word.
- Use whatever teaching tools you have to pass on God’s truth to others
i.e. speaking, writing, audio, video, etc.
- Keep adding to your Word discoveries as someone that is hungry for more.

7. Credible reputation

Definition – being known as the ‘real deal’ in life and ministry

“A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.”
Proverbs 22:1

Having a good name is priceless. It takes time to show others that you mean what you say and stick to your commitments regardless of the cost. You must also be vigilant at guarding your reputation every moment because one misstep can damage it and diminish its value.

Being esteemed for your character and conduct is a foundational requirement for being appointed to spiritual leadership. People should never be given responsible positions until after they have established a track record of mature living. The forerunners to deacons were given ministry responsibility if they were “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). NT elders and deacons are to be people who have proven to be reliable, trustworthy, dependable, and sincere (1 Timothy 3:1-13 / Titus 1:6-9).

Evidence of someone having a credible reputation:

- Has sufficient ministry currency to spend when needed as earned by real life experience.
- Has a track record of consistency, being predictable regarding decisions and responses.
- Has a habit of doing the right things at the right times.
- Makes good decisions based on thoughtful research and consideration.
- Has legitimate ministry credentials earned without short-cuts, confirmed by overseers.
- Can speak to issues as an experienced practitioner.
- Is known as a truth teller whose word is trusted and respected.

Practical steps:

- Commit to being truthful at all times with yourself and others.
- Treat every promise you make an essential to keep at all cost.
- Value the trust given to you in all responsibilities you accept.
- Make sure every life and ministry experience adds credibility to your reputation.
- Be someone that people refer others to as an example of reliability and consistency.

8. Godly character

Definition - exhibiting Christ-like qualities that please God and positively influence others.

“Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” 1 Timothy 4:7,8

A true follower of Christ is easily identifiable. They live in obedience to Jesus’ teachings instead of the ways of the world. They believe that God has set them apart to serve him. They learn to think and act more like Christ in everything they do.

Godly people are known for moral excellence that sets a high standard of conduct for themselves and others. They have learned to distinguish between right and wrong and choose to say no to ungodliness by being self-controlled and upright by God’s grace (Titus 2:11-13). They immerse themselves in God’s word, prayer, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit to be progressively sanctified for God’s purposes.

Evidence of someone having godly character:

- Pursues godliness and flees from ungodliness – 1 Timothy 6:11
- Adds growing in godliness to their spiritual training – 2 Peter 1:3,5-8
- Displays the Fruit of the Spirit consistently – Galatians 5:22,23
(See the LT Course ‘Produce’ about developing the Fruit of the Spirit)
- Stands out from the crowd as being set apart by and for God – 1 Peter 1:15,16

Practical steps:

- Be a daily lifestyle worshipper of God (See Leadership Essential #4 above).
- Set Jesus as your example to follow.
- Restructure your life to conform to what pleases God in everything.
- Train yourself to be godly through the Word, prayer, and Holy Spirit fullness.
- Periodically evaluate your influence on others to know and love God.

9. Mature attitude and actions

Definition - acting like a responsible adult even if others are being childish.

“Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:4

Every person starts their life as a newborn baby and for the first years is expected to act like a child. However, as people get older, they must learn to act their age throughout the years with the eventual goal of becoming responsible adults. It is not helpful for anyone involved when an older person acts childish. Conversely, mature behaviour fosters an environment of constructive dialogue and healthy relationships.

The same principle applies to our spiritual lives. Every believer begins as a new baby in Christ and will predictably act childish, depending on others for most things and not being responsible for their immature behaviour. However, over time, each Christ follower must grow up and learn to mature in spiritual matters. Each believer is responsible to train themselves to care more about what God wants than what they do. That requires making and keeping a commitment to becoming a spiritual adult.

Evidence of someone displaying mature attitudes and actions:

- Dependable – you can count on them to act and react properly in any situation and are determined to see things through to completion.
- Unshakable – they operate from a solid foundation of faith and values and are not prone to wavering when tested or being indecisive when called upon for a decision.
- Prepared – they are not easily caught off guard when messy stuff happens.
- Realistic – they know they live in the real world where people do not often play nice.
- Reasonable – they listen to others respectfully without compromising their core beliefs and values.
- Influential – they take on responsibilities and show others how to behave.

Practical steps:

- Choose to grow up and not be childish emotionally and spiritually.
- Be aware of your selfish nature and practice selflessness until it becomes natural.
- Choose a mature person to learn from and be accountable to for growing up.
- Step up and take a leading role in something and influence others to be mature.

10. Wise discerner

Definition – seeing through how things appear to understand how they really are.

“The wise in heart are called discerning, and gracious words promote instruction (make a person persuasive).” Proverbs 16:21

Mature leaders are often noted for being wise beyond their years. They seem to be able to make good decisions at the right time that produce desirable results. They appear to have laser vision that focuses on the matter at hand while setting aside the distractions and chaos. When they speak, people tend to listen and pay attention. The last words of the verse above can be translated “gracious words make a person persuasive” which is a significant leadership asset.

Spiritual leaders have a clear advantage over non-spiritual ones. God gives supernatural abilities like wisdom and discernment to those who are open to receiving them. Discerning leaders can stay spiritually and mentally sharp by the daily disciplines of praying, studying God’s word, and keeping in step with the Holy Spirit.

Evidence of someone being a wise discerner:

- Discriminate – is a keen observer who can distinguish different forces at play.
- Can simplify and clarify situations that others find complex and confusing.
- Makes common sense decisions about both small and large things.
- Prudent – is circumspect, sober, and judicious in all matters.
- Is not careless with attitudes and actions that could have negative consequences.
- Discreet – goes about business without creating fanfare, noise, or self-attention.
- Studies the Word as the ultimate standard of wisdom for living and leading.

Practical steps:

- Desire to be wise and discerning in everything.
- Involve God in every situation by acknowledging him and inviting him to fill you.
- Study Proverbs and James specifically to understand wisdom and discernment better.
- Practice spiritual disciplines daily to keep your mind and heart focused on Christ.
- Ask God for his wisdom in every situation – James 1:5-8.

11. Obvious influencer

Definition – consistently affects the beliefs, opinions, behaviours, and actions of others

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” 1Corinthians 11:1

You are influenced by other people in various ways whether you realize it or not. Those that you talk with and listen to have a huge impact on what you believe and think. Be sure to have wise and mature believers as your primary confidants and mentors to stay clear-minded and focused on Christ and his teachings. As you do this, you will also show others how to live their lives faithfully for Christ practically.

To be an example of consecrated Christ-following, position yourself to influence others to pursue godliness like you do. Spiritual leaders understand that others put weight in what they say and do and are therefore careful about how they live and what they teach in words and by their example.

Evidence of someone being an obvious influencer:

- Is someone others want to be like and follow.
- Is someone who knows who they are in Christ and where they are going.
- Is a godly role model for others to emulate (1 Corinthians 11:1).
- Is someone people listen to because they have something worthwhile to say.
- Has developed a reputation for persuading others to live for Christ.
- Consistently reproduces their faith in Christ in others.

Practical steps:

- Invest in your growing relationship with Christ every day as priority one.
- Always keep in mind that other people are watching you as an example to follow.
- Learn the commands of Christ and live them out faithfully.
- Learn to speak the truth in love to others as normal conversation.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you confidence to influence everyone you can for Christ.

12. Proven stamina

Definition – demonstrates depth and resolve of personal convictions and has sufficient energy to persevere and persist completing assignments and tasks.

“but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” Isaiah 40:31

Spiritual leadership is demanding. It requires the extraordinary ability to hang in through every attack and challenge the enemy unleashes. Verbal abuse, intimidation, opposition, betrayal, unreasonable expectations, physical danger, and spiritual oppression are some of the ways Satan comes against those who lead others for Christ. Discouragement can sap the life out of anyone who does not take their stand with God’s supernatural help.

The Holy Spirit will continually refuel spiritual, emotional, and physical power to those who stay surrendered to him and open to the ongoing filling of his presence. Seasoned spiritual leaders are noted for their ability to stand tall when others are failing. They acknowledge their dependence is on the Lord for constant renewal and power to endure.

Evidence of someone with proven stamina:

- Demonstrates remarkable resilience while enduring hardships and challenges.
- Maintains sufficient physical, spiritual, and emotional energy through continual refueling.
- Persistently promotes God’s agenda without fading or falling back from the mission.
- Possesses unmoveable faith and conviction believing in the value of kingdom service:
“Therefore...stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”
1 Corinthians 15:58

Practical steps:

- Be realistic about the cost required to influence others for Christ and pay it willingly.
- Proactively build refueling times by God into your regular routines.
- Train yourself to be able to recognize the enemy’s strategies and resist them.
- Value kingdom work and always give your best effort to advancing it.
- Continually ask the Holy Spirit to provide everything you need to boldly stand tall.

13. Unusual perseverance

Definition - sticks to the mission without giving up.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4

Perseverance is closely linked to stamina (Trait #12 above). In a way, perseverance is the process of staying the course until completion and stamina is what it takes to do so. Both qualities are given by God to those who rely on the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

The process of persevering offers significant benefits for those who embrace it: maturity, completeness, and no lack of anything important. Your faith in Christ will be put to the test constantly by the trials of life that you go through. You must choose to believe that Jesus is more than enough for you in every situation and act accordingly. When you do, you will be able to stick to your commitments to the end and will reap the rewards that are only possible through persevering.

Evidence of someone with unusual perseverance:

- Has deep confidence in Jesus’ superiority in every circumstance faced.
- Can drown out negative noise that accompanies every challenge and test.
- Embraces the process of personal spiritual formation produced through trials of faith.
- Expects spiritual maturity and kingdom fruitfulness by staying the course.
- Anticipates eternal reward from God for faithful service: *“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” James 1:12.*

Practical steps:

- Embrace the long game of life and ministry with deep devotion to Christ.
- Invest in your relationship with Jesus daily to deepen your faith in him.
- Turn every challenge of your faith into a personal and kingdom growth opportunity.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to keep filling you with his presence and power to endure to the end.
- Keep in step with the Holy Spirit so that you are always positioned to be used by God.

14. Prepared for unfair treatment

Definition - is not easily upset by criticism or malice received from others.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5:11,12

Life generally is unfair. People can be mean spirited and vindictive towards you for reasons that have little if anything to do with you. It is wise to become as unoffendable as possible by not being over-sensitive to negative treatment by others. You overreacting to unfairness may be what the offender is hoping for. Ask God to help you respond in a measured way which can demotivate the offender to take further action.

Living as a follower of Christ multiplies your potential to be treated unfairly by those who do not like you because of your faith. Being prepared to handle hurtful attacks is essential for staying on track as Jesus’ disciple. You must learn how to not hold onto offenses and keep on living like Christ as your example. This is especially important for spiritual leaders who are easy targets for all kinds of abuse. With God’s provision, you can anticipate and handle the enemy’s assaults by those under his spell.

Evidence of someone prepared for unfair treatment:

- Can move past an offense without harbouring hurts or unforgiveness.
- Does not allow hurtful attacks to take root in their mind as resentment and drain their reserves of stamina.
- Is careful to not be constantly annoyed, irritated, or angry with people and situations.
- Has developed thick skin and a tender heart simultaneously – is neither hyper-sensitive about criticisms nor uncaring towards those behaving inappropriately.

Practical steps:

- Set Jesus as your example to follow in everything including handling mistreatment.
- Anticipate being criticized and abused by others just because they do not like you.
- Recognize you are a target for the enemy because you follow Christ.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you continually with his presence and make you mature like Jesus so that you respond appropriately in every situation.
- Lead others by example so they can see in you how to not be defined by how others treat you but by how you treat others.

15. Active initiative

Definition – ready to find solutions to problems and implement actions as required.

“...they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. And they exceeded our expectation: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.” 2 Corinthians 8:3-5

The passage above describes fully engaged participants in the kingdom cause, ready, willing, and eager to do whatever is needed next. Often, they go above and beyond expectations at personal cost without having to be coaxed or coerced. Sometimes they ask permission to do even more than they appear capable of doing. The example in this Scripture is the Macedonian believers giving their resources generously to help meet a ministry need. This sacrificial initiative underscores the principle of doing everything with excellence willingly (see v.7).

Effective spiritual leaders stand out from the crowd by their willingness to make every opportunity count for the overall cause. They do not wait around to be told what needs to be done and how to do it but identify the challenges, formulate a response plan, and get things going of their own volition. These are the people that bring a ‘can do’ attitude to the team and influence others to join them in making a positive difference in whatever they get to do.

Evidence of someone who shows active initiative:

- Is a self-starter that finds the next constructive thing to do when tasks are completed.
- Is motivated to take on a challenge that may intimidate others.
- Can move past feelings of being overwhelmed by the challenge.
- Recognizes a need, formulates a solution, and assumes responsibility for the execution of the plan.
- Is not lazy – walks quickly with purpose in their step like they are on a mission.

Practical steps:

- Give yourself in full devotion to the Lord and be helpful to those in authority over you.
- Keep your mind Spirit-renewed to be able to think and active proactively in all situations.
- Do not wait to be told what needs to be done but figure it out and start doing it.
- Assume that others are following your lead and set the pace for them.

16. Passionate about ministry

Definition - possesses inner drive to know God more and do his work well.

“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.”
Romans 12:11

You cannot be an effective spiritual leader without spiritual passion for the things of God. The absence of interest and emotional investment in Spirit-filled living and ministry is detrimental for any Christ follower. Spiritual apathy is self-defeating and destructive for individuals and negatively impacts ministry team morale and attitudes.

The above Scripture commands every Christ follower to be full of spiritual zeal and fervor in life and ministry. Spiritual leaders must set the pace with enthusiastic diligence and earnest devotion towards the things of God. Enthusiasm for engaging in kingdom service with eager anticipation of people being transformed by God is something that you cannot just work up or manufacture on your own. Staying full of the Holy Spirit's presence and power is the key to possessing and maintaining spiritual passion for ministry.

Evidence of someone being passionate about ministry:

- Has intense devotion to fulfilling their ministry mandate empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- Willingly makes investments of time, energy, and resources in kingdom endeavours.
- Exudes enthusiasm, zeal, and fervor for serving that is contagious and motivates others.
- Actively participates in their home church's body life and mission.
- Learns to avoid things that kill their passion and sour their attitudes about ministry.

Practical steps:

- Do whatever it takes to know God more and know what he wants you to do whenever.
- Continually do the things that fuel your spiritual passion and stop things that do not.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to saturate you with his presence and power constantly.
- Make yourself available to enthusiastically serve in your church family's mission.
- Celebrate regularly that you get to be a partner with Christ in his kingdom's work.

17. Humble demeanour

Definition – is not prideful or arrogant about their abilities or accomplishments.

“...Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” Romans 12:3

Self-promotion is popular these days. Selling yourself as being amazing is the new norm for resumes, athletes, entertainers, politicians, and preachers. From a young age we are told to look out for our own interests and become the best at whatever we want to be. Considering the needs and feelings of others before your own is counted as weakness that can diminish your self worth. This rationale is the opposite of what the Bible commands us to do. Focusing on ourselves diverts our attention away from Christ and hinders our spiritual growth.

Spiritual leaders must follow the example of Jesus who humbled himself to the extreme, sacrificing himself for the sake of others. The Scripture above directs us to take a realistic view of ourselves and remember that who we are and what we have is only by God’s grace to us. Boasting, showing off, demanding attention, taking all the credit, and dominating conversations have no place in any Christ follower. Humble leaders may not become famous, but they will exhibit character that God blesses.

Evidence of someone displaying a humble demeanour:

- Is unpretentious, modest, unassuming, and courteously respectful of others.
- Accepts responsibility for personal actions without making excuses or blaming other people or things when things go poorly.
- Is willing to admit weaknesses and shortcomings that require help from God and others.
- Accepts recognition and praise from others with grace, acknowledging God’s favour and enabling to do all things.
- Promotes Christ as the focus of praise in every situation without hesitation.

Practical steps:

- Gain a realistic view of yourself by submitting to the Holy Spirit and Biblical teaching.
- Learn from Jesus’ example how to be a humble servant (see Matthew 11:28-30).
- Affirm the contributions of others without seeking any of the credit for yourself.
- Give other trusted spiritual leaders permission to be honest about your demeanour.

18. Predictable Integrity

Definition – exudes wholeness, undiminished in thought, words, and actions.

“The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.”
Proverbs 11:3

A person of integrity is hard to find in our culture of overpromising, exaggerating, self-preservation, unfaithfulness, and immorality. People are skeptical of those in positions of authority because of the constant failures of keeping promises by society members in general. That is why someone with integrity stands out from the crowd as being different in an honourable way. They get people’s attention.

Gaining and maintaining integrity as a spiritual leader requires effort, focus, and consistency. Every moment is treated as an opportunity to build a reputation of being legitimate in all matters whatever the personal cost. Other people begin to anticipate what you will do and say even before you act because you live by a set of godly values with boundaries that you will not cross. You assure people that what they see in you is what you are. There are no surprises beyond you doing everything possible to please God and bring him glory. The Scripture above highlights God’s direction for the upright as an ongoing benefit.

Evidence of someone with predictable integrity:

- Exemplifies sound moral character with bottom-line values that cannot be bought.
- Others know what they will think, decide, say, and do in advance.
- Possess unimpaired moral faculties to make the right decisions.
- Has incorruptible character that is resistant to compromise of conscience.
- Always keeps their word and refuses to make excuses to not do so.

Practical steps:

- Study and know God’s word and hide it in your heart to guard you from sinning.
Psalm 119:9,11
- Stay accountable to God through daily transparency with him in prayer.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with his presence and power to keep you true to God.
- Consider every decision large and small as a test of your integrity.
- Train yourself to be godly and stay accountable to godly people you can trust.

19. Deep relationship with Christ

Definition - is rooted in and growing intimate with Christ.

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.” Colossians 2:6,7

The depth of your relationship with Christ is something you must always give serious attention to. Everything you need to live life well and be godly is made available to you ‘in Christ’ (see ‘Everything You Need’ LT course). Above all else, you must get to know Christ more so that you are intimately connected to him. This was the apostle Paul’s deep desire even as a seasoned ministry leader (Philippians 3:10). The Scripture above notes that you are established, rooted, strengthened in faith, and overflowing with thankfulness by continuing to know Christ more.

A spiritual leader’s depth of faith is essential for long-term faithfulness to God and his kingdom agenda. That requires daily devotion to the foundational practices that promote spiritual growth and maturity: Holy Spirit fullness, studying and applying God’s word, and praying continually about everything. Do these things consistently and you will deepen your roots in Christ and be prepared for every situation. Not only will you be confident in faith, but you will lead others by example to go deeper with Christ as well.

Evidence of someone with a deep relationship with Christ:

- Is serious, not casual, about knowing Christ personally – is a focused pursuer.
- Knows how to be Spirit-filled, Word-wise, and prayer-prone – is a practitioner in faith.
- Has bottom-line faith in Christ and his abilities to do anything – is fully convinced.
- Can show reverence for Christ and be comfortable with Christ at the same time.
- Is someone others look to for spiritual counsel and life lessons – is a mature mentor.

Practical steps:

- Commit to knowing Christ more each day doing whatever it takes.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to keep filling you, illuminating the word, and praying through you.
- Study up on what you have available ‘in Christ’ and access it by faith as needed.
- Show those you lead how to go deeper in their faith life daily.

20. Comfortably self-aware

Definition – knows oneself well and is okay with it.

*“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”
Psalm 139:13,14*

This Scripture assumes belief in God as Creator and Sustainer of all things which is foundational to living faith that God rewards (Hebrews 11:3,6). All of God’s works are wonderful, including giving you life from start to finish. God does not make mistakes which means you are no accident but have been created with inherent value and purpose by God’s design.

Every person is uniquely created by God for his own reasons. You are wise to take time to know yourself as you have been put together. Understanding and embracing your personality type with its natural strengths and weaknesses, your talents and aptitudes, your physical make-up, your emotional tendencies, and your preferred learning style is instrumental for becoming self-aware and thankful for who God has made you. The more comfortable you are in your own skin, the less likely you will be stressed out that you are not like someone else.

Evidence of someone being comfortably self-aware:

Shows absence of envy towards others who are gifted in ways they are not.

Recognizes their temperament with its inherent tendencies and learns how to utilize their strengths while being aware of their weaknesses.

Readily partners with others who are strong in their weak areas and vice-versa.

Is content with affirmation from God by his Spirit and Word even when not appreciated or applauded by others.

Practical steps:

- Affirm and strengthen your belief in God as Creator and Sustainer of all things.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you who you are and embrace it when he does.
- Surrender your strengths to the Holy Spirit to work through.
- Do not allow your weaknesses to define or dominate you.
- Be thankful that God knows exactly who you are and what your potential is in him.

21. Confident in Christ

Definition – is convinced that God will provide whatever is needed for success of calling.

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:13

This verse is not a promise to dream big and go for it and God will make it happen. In the passage, Paul is discussing God’s abundant provision to him to obey God’s calling. He is confident that whenever he is doing the Lord’s will, he will be given everything he needs to do it. That relates to specific ministry assignments as well as general godly living in all aspects of life. When you believe that God’s supply is a sure thing, you have confidence in whatever you are doing according to God’s will.

The key for maintaining your confidence is growing daily in your relationship with Christ (see Trait #19). Paul says his strength comes “through him”, referring to the Lord who releases everything we need to live well and be godly ‘in Christ’. The importance of being intimate with Christ cannot be overstated for what it brings to us. When you are in sync with the thoughts and values of Jesus, you experience a supernatural confidence in any situation. You are certain that God’s blessing will be upon your efforts, and you are bold with your witness of Christ and the gospel. “Such confidence we have through Christ before God.” 2Corinthians 3:4.

Evidence of someone being confident in Christ:

- Stays alert and sober-minded to stay focused on God’s agenda -1 Peter 4:7.
- Displays unwavering belief that God will do what he says he will do when asked - James 1:5-8.
- Is not embarrassed when others question their child-like faith in God and his Word.
- Readily accesses from God whatever is needed to be obedient to Christ.
- Counts it an honour to represent Christ anytime, anywhere.

Practical steps:

- Proactively enhance your relationship with Christ through spiritual disciplines.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to be a bold witness and minister of Christ.
- Know God’s promises and live them out as being ‘Yes’ in Christ - 2 Corinthians 1:20.
- Trust the Lord wholeheartedly and live with full assurance in him – Proverbs 3:5,6.

22. Competent for Christ

Definition – has sufficient skill, knowledge, and experience for each God-given task.

“Such confidence we have through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 2 Corinthians 3:4,5.

Your competence is directly linked to your confidence ‘in Christ’ (see Trait #21). It is natural to feel you are not up to the task God is calling you to do. Even living a consistent life obeying the commands of Christ can seem beyond your abilities. However, you do well to remind yourself regularly that while you are incapable of being godly and ministering effectively, ‘in Christ’ you are fully capable to succeed. In these verses, Paul points out this reality as a faith statement.

As a spiritual leader, you will be put in the position often of having to do and say things that you know you are not ready or qualified for in yourself. Every one of these occasions is an opportunity to remind yourself that your potential to move ahead proficiently is ‘in Christ’, not in you. As you stay connected to Christ through the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the ingesting of God’s word, and the practice of prayer, you experience a sense of preparedness and enough knowledge for every situation. Tell God you depend on him regularly as a good practice.

Evidence of someone being competent for Christ:

- Is very open about their need for God to equip and enable them for every task.
- Tends to say and do the right things at the right times in a God-honouring way.
- Consistently proves to be a capable and godly kingdom server.
- Is known for developed and proven skill levels that require God’s enabling.
- Has a reputation as a ‘go to person’ who can read situations and find solutions.

Practical steps:

- Remind yourself continually of your need to depend on God for everything.
- Keep your relationship with Christ healthy and growing through spiritual disciplines.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you constantly with his presence and enabling power.
- Thank God for his provision every time you access it for living and ministering.
- Stay humble as your competence increases.

23. Clear sense of calling

Definition – has a strong belief of being sent by God to serve his kingdom.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

Every person alive has been called by God to enter a relationship with him through faith in Jesus Christ. Each one who has responded to that invitation is then called to live a godly and productive life as a child of God. And further to that, God assigns work to every Christ follower to do as determined by the Lord. The verse above affirms the active involvement of God with everyone who loves him and lives out their calling faithfully.

Rather than view God’s calling as a position or place, a spiritual leader is wise to see it as a lifestyle of service to God. When you are prepared to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit every moment, you will be right where God wants you to be to work through to accomplish his purpose. Sometimes that can result in taking on a leadership role or going to a designated place of service. Often it means simply being a faithful witness for Christ in your present sphere of influence. What is clear is that everyone as creations ‘in Christ Jesus’ have good work to do for God that he has prepared us for (see Ephesians 2:10).

Evidence of someone having a clear sense of calling:

- Is obsessively and joyfully obedient to Christ’s commands.
- Is surrendered to and dependent on the Holy Spirit to equip with the necessary ministry tools and lead to the right place at the right time for the right reasons.
- Asks and trusts God for supernatural intervention in any situation.
- Is willing to take risks and make sacrifices considered costly by others.
- Considers it an honour to be favoured and used by God for the sake of the kingdom.

Practical steps:

- Eagerly make your calling and election sure by growing up ‘in Christ’ – 2 Peter 1:3-11.
- Surrender yourself continually to the Holy Spirit to prepare, equip, and work through.
- Willingly seek God for direction, provision, and confirmation for your assignments.
- Be openly grateful to God that he has called you for his purposes.

24. Spiritual gifts and skills utilized effectively

Definition – uses God-given abilities for productive kingdom service.

“Each one should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.” 1 Peter 4:10

Spiritual gifts are supernatural endowments operating through believers to build up the church body and disciple the world for Christ. Skills are those special abilities and talents that some people seem to have naturally while others do not. All unique aptitudes and dispositions are given by God by his grace. They are not earned or deserved but are determined by God alone. They are to be regularly utilized and maximized for God’s purposes through faithful service.

Effective spiritual leaders are ordinary human beings that allow the Holy Spirit to enhance their inherent qualities and operate supernatural abilities through them. They learn not to lean on their own natural advantages of personality and skills but on God who empowers, sanctifies, and activates whatever is needed to undertake the task at hand.

Evidence of someone utilizing spiritual gifts and skills effectively:

- Stays Spirit-filled and open to be used by God however he chooses.
- Looks for opportunities to put their God-given endowments to productive use.
- Surrenders natural skills and abilities to God to be matured and maximized.
- Uses gifts and skills to build up the church family and disciple the world for Christ.
- Thanks God openly for their unique aptitudes and dispositions to serve with.

Practical steps:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you continually with his presence and power.
- Keep in step with the Spirit to be in the place God wants to work through you.
- Thank God for how he has uniquely given you special abilities and talents.
- Be active in doing whatever you can to strengthen your church family.
- Be a faithful disciple of Christ that intentionally reaches and discipled others for him.
- Be an open channel for the Holy Spirit to always work through supernaturally.

25. Generous living

Definition – ready and willing to give unselfishly to benefit others.

“A generous man will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.”
Proverbs 11:25

This Scripture is a time-tested observation about how to prosper in life. Generosity towards others is beneficial for both the receiver whose need is addressed and the giver who is rewarded by God with an abundance of the things that matter. Sometimes the return is material but often it is the intangibles that contribute to the quality of life like peace, wholeness, joy, and favour. Refusing to hold onto what one has and willingly giving it away for the greater good is following the example of Jesus who unselfishly sacrificed everything to provide salvation for humankind. Every time you are liberal with your time, money, talents, and resources you bless others and position yourself to receive God’s blessing.

A spiritual leader must model Christlikeness all the time. People are more apt to follow your lead when they witness your benevolent spirit. The favour of God upon a generous person is something that anyone can experience themselves by being generous also. The goal should be for everyone in the church body to be generous which would result in abundance of blessing for all. Even outsiders take notice when God’s favour is poured out on devoted followers of Christ. Spiritual leaders should be known for their giving spirits and abundant blessing from God.

Evidence of someone practicing generous living:

- Is blessed by God – their life is marked by God’s favour.
- Is refreshed – they are free from the stress of tight-fistedness and are joyful in being able to give generously.
- Has an attitude of gratitude to God in all circumstances.
- Is gracious with giving time to others to influence them for Christ.
- Liberally gives their money and resources to God’s work without being coerced.

Practical Steps:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to transform your heart to be generous on all occasions.
- Re-dedicate everything you are and have to God for his use as an act of worship.
- Thank God continually for the privilege you have to be generous and blessed.

26. Informed anticipation

Definition - thinks ahead and prepares for contingencies.

“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” Proverbs 16:3

The old adage ‘fail to plan, plan to fail’ has some merit. There is nothing spiritual about not thinking ahead and putting plans in place. Without a strategy to implement and a goal to reach, an individual and team will be confused and frustrated. It is always wise to prepare for the future by gathering good information and designing a blueprint to follow. An effective leader takes the time needed to develop a clear plan of action. That requires being aware of opportunities, obstacles, resources needed, and available and preferred outcomes for any endeavour.

The mature spiritual leader understands you need God’s approval, favour, and provision to accomplish anything eternal. The Scripture above is good advice for everything you do. Think about what you hope to accomplish, research the realities of where things stand, consider what it will take to move forward, and create a design and strategy to execute for best results. To ensure success that glorifies God, diligently include the Holy Spirit in your planning, preparation, and undertaking from start to finish. Always be asking the Lord to let you in on what is ahead and be ready to adjust the plan as required.

Evidence of someone having informed anticipation:

- Thinks ahead - pictures preferred outcomes for individuals and ministries.
- Is a planner – deliberately organizes people, resources, and activities around goals.
- Is an adaptor - knows things rarely go as planned and deals with each challenge by finding solutions and implementing them.
- Is flexible – adjusts to ongoing changes while staying true to the mission.
- Is Spirit-led – cooperates with the Spirit’s direction and insights about the Lord’s will - (see Proverbs 19:21).

Practical steps:

- Prepare yourself and your team with a plan to follow with measurable kingdom goals.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to keep you filled with his presence to inform, guide, and enable you.
- Do not settle for doing things the same way if it is consistently ineffective.
- Be intentional about thinking ahead to what is next and surrender every plan to God.

27. Genuinely accountable

Definition – willingly answers to others for personal conduct and ministry faithfulness.

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Ephesians 5:21

There are no superstars or untouchables in the body of Christ. Every believer stands on equal footing before God and must give an account to him for everything said and done. No one gets a pass on answering for their actions because of special status or traditions. Every member of God’s family is connected in Christ and has a responsibility to help build each other up with loving devotion and truth telling. Reverence for Christ demands willing accountability for one another regardless of our ministry roles.

An effective spiritual leader is not off limits but is within reach of those they serve with. There are dozens of NT injunctions for believers to interact with one another for mutual benefit and personal growth. Admitting faults, acknowledging weaknesses, encouraging, praying for, sharing burdens, showing patience, forgiving, and spurring on are some of the many ways believers stay connected and accountable to one another. A spiritual leader is to be a pacesetter in all these areas, modelling a submissive attitude towards God and to his church out of reverence for Christ.

Evidence of someone being genuinely accountable:

- Stays connected to a local church family and accepts membership responsibilities.
- Is not a lone ranger type that acts independently of the church’s mission and vision.
- Submits to godly authority as an example to others:
 - Obedient to Christ and his commands as a disciple (Matthew 28:20.)
 - Obedient to Christ’s appointed leaders over them (Hebrews 13:17).
- Owns up to mistakes without making excuses or blaming others.
- Lives an examined life that is honest with God and others.

Practical steps:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to keep filling you with his presence and transforming power.
- Know the commands of God and practice them as an act of reverent submission.
- Love your church family like Christ and stay connected with its body life and ministry.
- As your responsibilities increase, remain humble and overwhelmed by God’s grace.

28. Wise stewardship

Definition - manages well the trust God has given in all facets of life.

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”

1 Corinthians 4:2

A steward is a manager of that which belongs to its owner. An effective steward takes good care of the master's things, treating them as they would their own valued possessions. Faithfulness as a manager is the ultimate success for a steward. Reward for a job well done is at the discretion of the owner and considered a bonus beyond the compensation received by the steward for doing their job.

A spiritual leader is first a disciple of Christ that has been gifted by God with many things to take care of. Every disciple will give an account one day of their service for their master. Jesus stresses the importance of being faithful with everything each believer has been entrusted with. That means putting it to good use for the sake of the kingdom, and then surrendering it to Christ on reckoning day along with the increase of fruit produced (see Matthew 25 as an example). Jesus will commend every one of his followers for faithful stewardship and reward them generously with eternal inheritance. A spiritual leader should be a compelling example of a wise disciple practically managing their time, talents, gifts, and resources well, bringing pleasure to Christ and building God's kingdom.

Evidence of someone practicing wise stewardship:

- Thinks about how to use time, abilities, position, and money wisely and then does it.
- Considers God the owner of everything they have and handles it all accordingly.
- Tithes as a minimum of giving generously to God's work to honour him.
- Treats every day as the possible time of reckoning and reward by Jesus.

Practical steps:

- Seek God's kingdom and righteousness first in every situation for ongoing perspective.
- Ask God to continually give you wisdom to make good choices with everything.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to keep filling you with his presence and power to manage well.
- Always stay alert, expecting Jesus to return and begin your review and reward.
- Constantly show your thanks to God for trusting you by proving yourself faithful.

29. Proficient communication skills

Definition - able to express thoughts, feelings, and information effectively to others through various means like public speaking, team meetings and writing in any form.

“The hearts of the wise make their mouths prudent, and their lips promote instruction (make a person persuasive).” Proverbs 16:23

Communication skills are vital in all relationships including friendships, marriages, partnerships, and teams. Messages are being sent to one another constantly but often go unheard or misunderstood causing confusion, wrong perceptions, and mistrust. Developing good communication helps everyone to be on the same page and work through issues productively. Learning to communicate well takes work but is worth the effort for everyone involved.

A spiritual leader must be proficient at communicating with others to be effective. The Scripture above notes that the heart is the command centre of good speech. The last phrase can be translated “make a person persuasive” which is a leadership asset. Understanding who your listeners are develops by respecting them and showing empathy for their situation. What a leader says carries a lot of weight when it is expressed with clarity, confidence, warm body language, measured tone, and cohesion. Every conversation and communication encounter has the potential to strengthen relationships by promoting unity of purpose and shared mission. Every disciple of Jesus is expected to learn how to teach others to obey Christ’s commands at a minimum (see Matthew 28:19,20). The spiritual leader must advance beyond basic truth telling in love to a level of communicating proficiently in public gatherings and private meetings.

Evidence of someone proficient in communication skills:

- Can give a message with clarity, confidence, and concision.
- Their listeners can articulate the main points of what was said.
- Knows and understands their audience and speaks to them in a relatable way.
- Is likely to influence their listeners towards the intent of the message.

Practical steps:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to transform your heart and give you confidence to communicate.
- Always prepare sufficiently to communicate your message clearly and concisely.
- Encourage feed-back from your listeners to ensure that you have been understood.
- Learn to build every communication piece upon what you have previously stated.

30. Life-long learner

Definition – relentlessly acquires knowledge and enhanced skills through study, training, and hands-on experience in real life and ministry.

“Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning.” Proverbs 9:9

The person who intentionally lives well and keeps learning has a clear advantage dealing with demands and tasks over those who do not. Every day is another opportunity to put increased knowledge to good use and each experience has lessons to teach you. Are you ready and willing to learn from them and add to your growing inventory of helpful insights about how things work in the everyday world? You are wise to do so.

The Scripture above observes the potential gains of learning for a spiritual person. Perfect wisdom comes from God so keep asking him for it (see James 1:5-8 / 3:17,18 as examples). Also keep in mind that being righteous by ongoing connection to Christ increases your ability to learn and understand what God teaches you through his Word (see Proverbs 3:32 / 21:21 as examples). Gaining knowledge through life experience is good while growing in righteousness by pursuing God and his will is even better.

Evidence of someone being a life-long learner:

- Is a student / teacher that keeps adding wisdom and righteousness to their credentials.
- Has actual real job experience – realizes the impact of doing the daily grind and can understand and identify with life challenges that affect people.
- Is wise to the world’s ways under the devil’s control and how to live God’s way instead.
- Is informed about how church actually works and still believes in its potential to impact.

Practical steps:

- Be righteous and live righteously ‘in Christ’ with the enabling of the Holy Spirit.
- Be an avid reader of constructive writings – The Bible, practical theology, and godly examples in life and ministry are indispensable resources.
- Practice being an approved servant of God who speaks God’s truth – 2 Timothy 2:15.
- Train yourself to know good from evil by consuming God’s word – Hebrews 5:14.

Summary

As stated in the Introduction, the purpose of this article is to focus on the things that constitute the substance of legitimate spiritual leaders. Hopefully having these qualities identified and commented on has helped you appreciate the many ways that leaders are formed for effective service and have been inspired to measure your own life to them as an assessment tool. Knowing the breadth and depth of the essentials of being a godly influencer and mentor should humble anyone that aspires to leadership. It is at the same time encouraging to know that with God's provisions available, you can grow up and mature as a spiritual leader over time.

You have noticed references to other articles and Scriptures throughout this essay. Take time to do further study of these topics to amplify the dynamics of the essential traits explored in this work. Being aware of necessary qualifications to be deacons, elders, and ministry leaders provides a valuable standard to assess someone's suitability to lead and gives a list of proficiencies worthy of developing systematically. Always remember that disciple making and lifestyle disciplines relate to every follower of Christ whether in a leadership role or not. The Scriptures included are thereby worth a closer look for anyone to better appreciate the usefulness of biblical principles to learn and apply for maximized living and serving for all.

As previously mentioned, there are many other dynamics of spiritual leadership that could be discussed but were beyond the scope of this article. A few examples would be how to handle negative criticism constructively, how to learn and become fluent in the language of spiritual leadership, how to show respect for the people you serve, and counting the cost of making personal sacrifices to lead. These topics will be the focus of future LT studies.

Much of the literature available today for Christ followers focuses on what is dysfunctional and broken in people and how to deal with it. While bringing attention to personal issues can offer initial relief, it can become an unhealthy fixation on an endless cycle of self-improvement as the model to follow. This article instead focuses on the ideal model to work towards while recognizing that no one will ever fully reach. However, with God's help, you can get closer to living it out day by day. This approach is designed to give something positive to strive for with ongoing benefits actualized in the process.

Hopefully this document assists you in one or more of three ways. First, if you are a leader, you can do a self-evaluation to determine how you are measuring up in the traits that enable you to lead well and make necessary adjustments accordingly. Second, if you are an aspiring leader, you can better understand what is required of you and decide if you are willing to put yourself in that position or not. You can see what your strengths and weaknesses are and address them as a personal growth program. And third, those who are looking for leaders to assume roles of all types can use this tool as a grid to evaluate potential candidates for suitability.

I trust this document will be a helpful resource to facilitate kingdom building and personal growth regardless of your current ministry position.

Del Wells