

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP
J. Oswald Sanders
Summary by Mark R. Elliott*

Chapter 1: An Honorable Ambition

[In the first century] Rewards for the work of leading the church were hardship, contempt, and rejection. The leader was the first to draw fire in persecution, the first in line to suffer.

Ambition that centers on the glory of God and welfare of the church is a mighty force for good.

True greatness, true leadership, is found in giving yourself in service to others, not in coaxing or inducing others to serve you. True service is never without cost. Often it comes with a painful baptism of suffering.

The great leader Count Nikolaus Zinzendorf (1700-1760) . . . before missionary work was popular or well-organized, the Moravians established overseas churches which had three times as many members as did their churches back home—a most unusual accomplishment. Indeed, one of every ninety-two Moravians left home to serve as a missionary. [SBC would have 174,000 missionaries]

Chapter 2: The Search for Leaders

If the world is to hear the church's voice today, leaders are needed who are authoritative, spiritual, and sacrificial.

Often truly authoritative leadership falls on someone who years earlier sought to practice the discipline of seeking first the kingdom of God. Then, as that person matures, God confers a leadership role, and the Spirit of God goes to work through him.

People travel together, no one lives detached and alone.

Chapter 3: The Master's Master Principle

Mere acts of service could be performed with motives far from spiritual. In Isaiah 42, we read about the attitudes and inner motives that the coming Messiah would demonstrate as the ideal servant of the Lord: Dependence, Approval, Modesty, Empathy, Optimism, & Anointing.

None of these qualities. . . are sufficient for the task. Without the touch of the supernatural, those qualities are dry as dust. And so the Holy Spirit comes to rest upon and dwell in the ideal Servant.

As we become empty of self and dependent on God, the Holy Spirit will use us.

Chapter 4: Natural and Spiritual Leadership

Leadership is influence, the ability of one person to influence others to follow his or her lead.

We can lead others only as far along the road as we ourselves have traveled.

The best test of whether one is qualified to lead, is to find out whether anyone is following.

Montgomery outlined seven qualities necessary for a military leader, each appropriate to spiritual warfare: the leader must (1) avoid getting swamped in detail; (2) not be petty; (3) not be pompous; (4) know how to select people to fit the task; (5) trust others to do a job without the leader's meddling; (6) be capable of clear decisions; (7) inspire confidence.

John Mott moved in student circles, and his tests covered different territory. One should inquire of a leader whether he or she (1) does little things well; (2) has learned to focus on priorities; (3) uses leisure well; (4) has intensity; (5) knows how to exploit momentum; (6) is growing; (7) overcomes discouragement and impossible situations; and (8) understands his or her weaknesses.

Chapter 5: Can You Become a Leader?

[The chapter has a couple of good check lists.]

Chapter 6: Insights on Leadership from Paul

[The major headings in the chapter are (1) Social Qualifications (2) Moral Qualifications (3) Mental Qualifications (4) Personality Qualifications (5) Domestic Qualifications, and (6) Maturity

Chapter 7: Insights on Leadership from Peter

I am not sure which of the two occupies the lower sphere, he who hungers for money or he who thirsts for applause

Chapter 8: Essential Qualities of Leadership

Jesus did not ask the twelve to sit down and take notes in a formal classroom. Jesus' classrooms were the highways of life; His principles and values came across in the midst of daily experience.

DISCIPLINE—Before we can conquer the world, we must first conquer the self. . . We must be willing to receive from others as well as give to others. Some sacrificial souls delight in sacrificing themselves but are unwilling to allow others to reciprocate. They do not want to feel obligated to others. But leadership requires openness to others.

VISION—includes optimism and hope. The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.

WISDOM—If knowledge is the accumulation of facts, and intelligence the development of reason, wisdom is heavenly discernment.

DECISION—a visionary may see, but a leader must decide. . . The spiritual leader will not procrastinate when faced with a decision, nor vacillate after making it.

COURAGE—always moral courage and often physical courage as well.

HUMILITY—The spiritual leader will choose the hidden path of sacrificial service and approval of the Lord over the flamboyant self-advertising of the world.

INTEGRITY AND SINCERITY—Paul spoke of his failures and successes with an openness few of us are prepared to copy. . . A prominent businessman once replied to a question: “If I had to name the one most important quality of a top manager, I would say, personal integrity.”

*Mark R. Elliott served as a Director of Missions (Associational Mission Strategist) in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska for almost three decades. He is a strong advocate for obedience and Biblically based disciple making. As such, he knows that making healthy disciples requires Christian leaders to be constantly pursuing spiritual maturity—be lifelong learners. Because of the time constraints of ministry, most pastors focus their reading list on resources that assist them in teaching and preaching the Word of God. As such, books focusing on church health, leadership development, and church growth tend to find their way to the bottom of the stack. With that reality in mind, Mark has written discussion summaries on several books that have helped him to personally grow in Christ and that tend to find themselves on the bottom of most pastor’s stack. Many pastors have found them helpful as they are able to more quickly process great insights from other pastors and authors.