



The tribe of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do

Issachar Ministries UK seeks to be a people who understand the times, listen to the Lord and know what should be done

## *Resourcing for Prayer Network*

# SPIRITUAL GUIDELINES (12)

# The Gift of Leadership

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June 2014

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: 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.

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; **if it is to lead, do it diligently**; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

*(Romans 12:3-8 New International Version)*

In previous Spiritual Guidelines we have been looking at the seven gifts as listed in Romans 12 and discovered that they are the ones that come naturally to people. They are also the gifts which help create a good community spirit and should be present in each community no matter how small or big it might be. They are all very practical gifts and we can easily identify them in others which is the healthy and affirming way. When we can recognise these in ourselves we need to exercise caution as we can so often exercise them with the wrong motives and can even forget that they are gifts from God.

The gift of leadership appears in Romans 12 but not in any of the others - the NIV has an alternative rendering as *'to provide for others'* which puts leadership in its right context. The five ministry roles in Ephesians 4 are often referred to as those necessary for leadership - but then the kind of leadership advocated as a 'ministry' is also in the right context - *'to equip God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up'*. So spiritual leadership is not seen as a status symbol neither does it have worldly values but it is supporting others who are on the front line.

It is often helpful to read other translations and interpretations. The Message has wise guidance on these seven gifts: *'If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile'*

As you can see The Message equates '*leading*' with '*being put in charge*' which can often lead to the greatest misuse of power. There is a great difference between '*ascribed*' leadership which is imposed or inherited, and '*achieved*' leadership which is earned. 'Ascribed' leadership can often have disastrous consequences if the leader is not sensitive in the exercise of power; whereas the most effective leadership is that which is 'achieved' and is fully recognised and accepted by the people. The Amplified Version expands its definition of leadership as '*he who gives aid and superintends, with zeal and singleness of mind*'.

## What is Leadership?

Leadership is a 'people skill'. Mahatma Gandhi once said 'I suppose leadership at one time meant muscles; but today it means getting along with people'. John Quincy Adams, 6th President of the USA, rightly understood that 'if your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader'.

Leaders need followers. If you think you are a leader and no-one is following you, you are just taking a walk! So leadership always needs to be affirmed by others.

There are many examples of worldly leadership using wealth, might, power, intellect and privilege; but spiritual leadership needs to have a servant element. As we have said, spiritual leaders need to be those who empower others.

The difference between a leader and a boss is that the leader leads while the boss drives. The New Testament shepherd leads his sheep who follow willingly because they know his voice and trust him, while so many Western shepherds drive their sheep!!

Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of those who follow them. If people believe in themselves and that God is with them, it is amazing what they can accomplish - not to give themselves glory but to give the glory to God.

Many commentaries limit the Romans 12 gift of leadership to that of 'Administration'. While this is important, leadership is much more than just management - it should be about nurturing and enhancing and these are the aspects that should be seen to be important and relevant in Christian circles and especially in small groups.

## How should Leadership be Exercised?

Most biblical translations say that leading should be exercised 'diligently' - the opposite of negligently. Leaders should be actively or fully engaged or occupied, exercising caution, or showing care and attention, which is characterized by hard work and perseverance. But although in English 'diligent' has always meant careful and hard-working, it comes from the Latin *diligere*, which means '*to value highly, take delight in*'. The translation 'The Voice' says leaders should be '*eager to get started*'!

But leaders not only need to know where they are going, with a vision of what might be achieved, which is embraced by all, but they also need to be able to help define the strategy for achieving that vision. That vision always needs to be biblically based. The passage in Proverbs also says '*Without vision the people perish*' and The Voice defines this even more clearly '*If people can't see what God is doing, they stumble all over themselves*'.

**All groups need leadership - what kind of leadership is being exercised in your group and is it what is needed?**

*This paper come to you as part of the Issachar Ministries Resourcing for Prayer e-mail in June 2014  
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