



Lewis Center
for Church Leadership

Leading Ideas

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Good Leadership is Essential by Bishop Jonathan Gledhill

The words “leader” and “leadership” may not be prominent in the New Testament, but the concepts are certainly there. The metaphor of discipleship as a walk or pilgrimage presupposes someone who will guide and lead. When the Epistle to the Hebrews talks of Christ as the pioneer of the faith, and tells us to strengthen our weak knees, it assumes that to be a disciple is to follow in Christ's footsteps, and to encourage us the Spirit has left human leaders for us to follow on the way.

Good leadership is essential in any congregation, as all church-wardens know. It is not a concept to shy away from. Just because the word “leader” has unfortunate associations, it does not mean that Christians can dispense with it. We have to think about leadership in the way that Jesus and the apostles taught and modeled it. It would be ironic if, at a time when industry and commerce have become increasingly convinced of the importance of “servant leadership,” the Church were less clear in its thinking about this subject. There will always be something of the now and not yet about human leadership. It will always be derivative, more illustrative of what is wrong with human nature than of what is right with Christ. And yet, however dimly, we are called to reflect the glory of Christ, and the promise is that God will keep on working away at us, polishing up the reflection.

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