LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES
There are many images of leadership in today’s world. The most prominent image of leadership is the head of a company. The head of a company may listen to other people before making a decision, but when the decision has been made everyone else is expected to act in compliance with what has been decided. Another leadership image, prominent in western countries, is based on the idea of democracy. In this case, the decision is made on the basis of the popular opinion of the people, and the leader is the person who has responsibility for carrying out the decision of the people. A third image, prominent in Asian countries, is leadership by consensus. In this case, everyone decides together what should be done and then everyone works together to accomplish what is decided. A fourth leadership image, based on the ideal of individual freedom, emphasizes the right and responsibility of each person to guide his or her own life. Every person is encouraged to have a dream of what he or she would like to become, and then to follow that dream.

While all of these leadership images have value, they all contrast with the biblical image of leadership. According to the biblical image, leaders are called by God. These leaders submit to Jesus’ authority and lead the church to carry out Jesus’ will. Christian leadership is done by service and example rather than by exerting pressure and manipulation. Christian leadership is done on the basis of spiritual gifts which God gives through the Holy Spirit to the church. Finally, Christian leadership is empowered and driven by love. This is God’s love revealed to us through Jesus Christ which now motivates the church and individual Christians to accomplish the five purposes which God has given to us: worship, fellowship, evangelism, discipleship and ministry.

Read John 13:1-17

On the night before Jesus was crucified, Jesus gathered with His disciples to celebrate Passover. Passover is a Jewish festival in which they remember the time when God freed their people from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 1-12). As the evening meal was being served, Jesus took off His outer clothing, wrapped a towel around His waist, and began to wash His disciples’ feet.

According to John 13:1-3, what two things did Jesus show by washing His disciples’ feet?

First, Jesus “showed them the full extent of his love” (John 13:1). In first century Palestine, the roads were very hot and dusty. Most of the people wore sandals which offered little protection from the dirty roads at that time. As a result, when people arrived anywhere their feet were very dirty and needed to be cleaned. So the custom of the time was for a servant to wash the feet of visitors before the beginning of a meal. In this case, however, Jesus washed His disciples’ feet. Through this action Jesus showed His disciples the extent of His love. Because of His love for His disciples, Jesus was concerned about all of their needs, and He was willing to do whatever was necessary to provide for their needs. This even included taking on the role of a servant and washing His disciples’ feet.
Second, by washing His disciples’ feet Jesus showed that God the Father “had put all things under his power” (John 13:3). In the world, power is the opposite of service. People who have power are served, and people who do not have power serve those who have power. But Jesus taught that in the case of Christian leadership, power is shown through service. In Matthew 20:25-28 Jesus said to His disciples:

“You know the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus taught that Christian leaders exercise authority by giving themselves to meet the needs of other people. It is through acts of service based on love that Christian leaders encourage other people to follow Christ. It through the giving of themselves that Christian leaders empower other people to use their own talents and spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church and the Kingdom of God.

What are two things that Jesus did for His disciples by washing their feet?

When Jesus washed His disciples’ feet He accomplished two things. First, Jesus served His disciples by meeting a real need. Jesus disciples really had dirty feet; their feet needed to be washed. So Jesus washed their feet.

Christian leaders follow Jesus’ example of serving other people by meeting their needs. Jesus said, “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet” (John 13:13). This does not mean that you need to literally wash other people’s feet, unless they have dirty feet. What is does mean is that you need to be aware of the needs of your people, and then you need to commit yourself to doing what is necessary to provide for those needs. You may think, “How do I know the needs of these people? And, how can I possibly meet all of their needs by myself?”

The only way that you can know the needs of other people is to know the people. In order to know them, you must spend time with them. You must get to know how they think and feel. You need to know about their lives. You need to know about both the good things in their lives and their problems. You need to know where they are on their spiritual journey. Then you will know what they need and how you can help them.

Second, Jesus taught His disciples by giving them an example to follow. As the leader you are responsible to meet their needs, but this does not mean that you have to meet all of their needs by yourself. Jesus did not continually wash His disciples’ feet. Rather, He taught them to wash each other’s feet. Jesus said to them, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15). In the same way, you will be most effective as leader when you teach other people to meet one another’s needs. They can do this by using their spiritual gifts and abilities for ministry to one another and the whole church. The best way for you to accomplish this is for you to show other people how to serve by serving them. Show other people how to use their own spiritual gifts by using your spiritual gifts to serve them. Teach
by example, not by command. You cannot expect the people you lead to be superior to you. In most cases, they will become like you by following your example. As Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor a messenger greater than the one who sent him” (John 13:16).

In summary, John 13:1-17 teaches three important principles for Christian leadership.

1. **A Christian leader submits to the authority of Jesus Christ.** Those you lead will learn about the Christian faith and life by watching you. So you can only learn how to lead others in their walk with Christ by following Jesus yourself.

2. **A Christian leader serves on the basis of love.** Since you love the people you are trying to lead, you will get to know them and their personal needs. And then you will do everything possible to meet their needs. When service is based on love, no act of service is too great. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Jesus Himself lived out His own teaching by giving His life for us. “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1 John 3:16).

3. **A Christian leads by example.** You cannot tell people what they are supposed to do. You must show what to do by doing it yourself. By watching you love and serve them, they will learn to love and serve other people as well.

Jesus told us the result of following these principles of Christian leadership in John 13:17: “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” You begin the process of becoming an effective Christian leader when you commit yourself to doing what Jesus said. When you do these things you will be blessed.

**Application**
1. Ask God to show you a specific need of a person in your group.
2. Plan an act of service to meet the person’s need.
3. Do the act of service that you have planned.
4. Talk about your experience with your encourager.
SESSION TWO
LEADING BY GUIDING OTHER PEOPLE

Read 1 Timothy 4:1-17

Your most important responsibility as a Christian leader is to provide spiritual guidance for those you lead. Whether you serve as a small group leader, a Bible study leader, a worship leader, an evangelism leader, or a small group ministry leader, there are other people who consider you to be an example of what it means to be a Christian. These people will learn about being a follower of Jesus by watching how you apply the teachings of the Bible to your own everyday life.

Because other people learn about Christianity through your example, the way that you live and what you say and do are very important. You must do your best to live, act, and speak in a way that points other people to faith in Jesus. As a result of watching your actions and listening to your words, other people should be encouraged to trust Jesus as their own Lord and Savior. Through your example, they should be motivated to make their own relationship with Jesus the basis of their lives. As a result of watching your effort to serve Jesus, they should want to serve Jesus as well.

In 1 Timothy 4:1-17, there are six principles for providing spiritual guidance for other people. Through the application of these principles you will encourage other people to become Christians and to continue to grow in their relationship to Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

The first principle is: guard against false teaching. Here in 1 Timothy 4:1-7, Paul warns against those who teach that religion or spiritual life consists of following rules. These rules are designed to help the person maintain purity by being separate from the outside world. These strict rules include such things as not marrying and not eating certain foods (1 Timothy 4:3). Paul responds to these false teachings in two ways. First, he says that these teachings do not come from God. Rather, they are from “deceiving spirits and things taught by demons” (1Timothy 4:1). The broader principle here is that any spiritual teaching that does not come from God comes from evil spirits who are under the authority of Satan. These spirits use false teachings to deceive people in order to prevent them from experiencing the blessings of new life that comes through faith in Jesus.

False teaching includes other religions, such as Buddhism and Islam, and cults, such as Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Unification Church. However, false teaching also includes the misunderstanding of biblical teachings. One example of misunderstanding biblical teaching, which we find in 1 Timothy 4, is the idea that people are saved by serving Christ. As a result of this false teaching, many people believe that they can be Christian by trying to live a moral life in accordance with the teachings of the Bible. However, this is a false teaching which comes from Satan. The Bible teaches that we can only receive salvation as a result of faith in Jesus. In Christianity, good deeds result from our relationship with Jesus. This is because Jesus empowers those who believe in Him through the Holy Spirit so that they can serve Him.
Why would Satan try to get people to attempt to live a moral life according to the teachings of the Bible?

The answer is that trying to live in obedience to rules, even if they are good rules, is a form a **spiritual bondage**. Satan knows that people who try to obey religious and moral rules will always fail. As a result, rather than finding God they will find only failure and disappointment.

Also, Paul says that “**everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer**” (1 Timothy 4:4-5). The purpose of salvation is to enable you to fully enjoy all of the blessings which God has provided for you as a part of His creation. This takes place only when you realize that God created you, that He loves you, and that He has provided the blessings of this life for you to enjoy. Without God you have nothing, but because of God you have everything that you need and even more. As a result, the proper response to God includes **thanks** for everything that He has provided for you. It also includes **consecrating**, or setting apart God’s gifts, to be used in ways that glorify Him. This response of thanks and consecration to God for what He has provided is a form of **worship**. As you worship God in this way, those who follow your example may be encouraged to worship God as well.

**The second principle is: continue your own spiritual training.** The spiritual training described here is another word for **discipleship**. According to 1 Timothy 4:8, “**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.**” Here the Christian life is compared with the rigorous physical training which an athlete endures. Although physical conditioning has some benefit for the present life, spiritual conditioning has even greater benefit because it impacts both the present life and the life to come. This means that the time and effort that you put into activities for your spiritual health, such a prayer, Bible study, worship and fellowship with other Christians, evangelism, and ministry, are worthwhile because the results of these activities are eternal. Sometimes you may get tired of doing these things and want to give up, just as an athlete training for the marathon may want to give up. But you should not give up, because the prize for running the race is becoming like Christ.

“**Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**” (Hebrews 12:1-3)

**The third principle is: put your faith and hope in Christ.** 1 Timothy 4:10 tells us, “**For this we labor and strive, that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially those who believe.**” This verse contrasts Jesus whom you serve with the gods that other people serve. Of all of the gods, only Jesus is “**the living God.**” Since only Jesus has overcome death through His resurrection from the dead, only Jesus has the power to give life to those who believe in Him. So Jesus is the “**Savior of all men.**” This means that Jesus is the only one who can save
people, as Acts 4:12 explains, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Not everyone, however, has actually been saved. 1 Timothy 4:10 concludes that this salvation is “especially for those who believe.” The salvation which Jesus has provided for everyone is only experienced by those who have faith in Jesus. It is only when you believed in Jesus as your own Lord and Savior that you received the salvation which He provided for you.

How will putting your hope and faith in Christ affect what you talk about with other people?

As you continue to put your own hope and faith in Christ, you will speak of Him not only as your own Savior, but also as the only possible Savior for the whole world. You will use every opportunity to encourage other people to believe in Jesus as well. The most important way that you can do this is to tell other people your own story of how Jesus saved you and how He continues to guide and bless your life. When people become interested in Jesus, you can continue by telling them about how they can also experience salvation through faith in Jesus. As a result, evangelism will take place both within your small group meetings and outside small group as group members provide ministry to other people. For those who need additional training in evangelism, training is available in two toolbox units: Basic Evangelism and Relationship Evangelism.

The fourth principle for providing spiritual guidance is: set an example for other believers. 1 Timothy 4:12 mentions five areas in which you should provide an example for those who follow your leadership: “in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity.” As much as possible, you should try to imitate Jesus. In this way, other people will be able to learn how to follow Jesus by watching you. Ephesians 4:29-5:10, 5:15-21 provide concrete instructions on how to live in a way that imitates Jesus.

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly beloved children, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.
For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. . . .

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

The fifth principle for providing spiritual guidance is: use your spiritual gifts for service. Evidently, Timothy’s has the spiritual gifts of preaching and teaching, because Paul writes to him, “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given to you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands of you” (1 Timothy 4:13-14). This does not mean that every leader is gifted in the area of preaching and teaching. The Holy Spirit provides a variety of spiritual gifts which are to be used to build up and encourage other Christians. Some of these gifts include: preaching, evangelism, pastoral care, and teaching (Ephesians 4:11). Other gifts include service, encouragement, giving to the needs of others, leadership and mercy (Romans 12:5-8). No Christian has every spiritual gift, but every Christian has at least one spiritual gift.

All spiritual gifts are to be used as a means of ministry to other people. This should be a ministry of service based on Christ-like love for other people. "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (Romans 12:9-13).

According to Ephesians 4:11-13, what is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

The purpose of using your spiritual gifts, according to Ephesians 4:12-13, is that you will help other people to grow spiritually. This spiritual growth takes place as people participate in “works of service” (Ephesians 4:12) which results in all reaching “unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:13). The final result of this process is spiritual maturity which is “attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

The spiritual growth described here is not only the spiritual growth of individual Christians. It is also the collective spiritual growth of God’s people together as they participate in the church, the Body of Christ. As each Christian uses his or her own spiritual gifts to serve the others, everyone grows spiritually. The result is that the whole church together comes to reflect the image of Christ. So when people who are outside of the church look at the church they can see what Jesus is like. The church becomes like a magnet which draws people to Jesus.
The sixth principle is: persevere for your own benefit and the benefit of those you lead. Where you are going spiritually is more important than where you are now. Your goal as a leader should be to move closer to Jesus—to follow the One who said, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6).

“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” (1 Peter 2:21)

What does it mean to follow in Jesus’ steps?

In the Bible, walking is used as a metaphor for how a person lives his or her everyday life. It is not enough for you to try to reach the same destination as Jesus by walking the same road. You must actually learn to walk “in His steps.” That is, to imitate His manner and life, speech and action.

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace given to you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” (1 Peter 1:13-16)

Your own spiritual growth will help you to become more effective in discipleship. This is one reason that it is important for you continue to grow, both as a Christian and a leader. Since the goal of spiritual growth is Christ-likeness, those who follow your leadership will actually be drawn to Christ as they watch you grow in your relationship to Him. “Be diligent in all of these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, your will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

In summary, the primary goal of Christian leadership is to guide other people to become more like Christ through a process of spiritual growth. You can guide other people in spiritual growth by encouraging them to follow six principles.

1. Guard against false teaching
2. Continue your own spiritual training
3. Put their faith and hope in Christ
4. Set an example for other believers in speech, life, love, faith and purity
5. Use their spiritual gifts for ministry
6. Persevere in spiritual growth, seeking to become more like Jesus

Application

Do a half-day retreat in which you spend time alone with God. Begin the retreat with a time of worship and Bible study. During the time of Bible study read Paul’s instructions for leaders in 1 Timothy 1-6. Then have a personal reflection time. Ask God to guide you as you answer the following questions about yourself.

1. Have I guarded myself against false teaching?
2. What am I doing to continue by own spiritual training?
3. Is my faith and hope really in Christ? Or do I rely too much on myself, someone else, or something else?
4. Do I set an example for other believers in my speech, life, love, faith, and purity?
5. What are my spiritual gifts?
6. Do I use my spiritual gifts for ministry in order to encourage other people to grow spiritually?
7. Based on my answer to questions 1-6, what do I need to do more in order to continue to grow as a leader and in my own relationship to Jesus?

Conclude your half-day retreat with a time of prayer. Ask God to guide you so that you can continue to grow as a Christian and as a leader.

Reflection
1. In this unit what have you learned about leadership principles?
2. What questions do you now have about leadership principles?
3. What is your plan to share what you have learned about leadership principles with someone else?