Personal Qualities of the Christian Leader
By Mark Fillingham

This is a Bible study outline rather than an article with “all the answers”. It is suitable for a small group to study together and may be broken down into individual characteristics or groups of characteristics. It may also be of value for personal study. It will be of the greatest value if used with prayer - praying day by day for each quality to be developed in the individual believer. When time and resources permit, it will be helpful to identify other Bible passages that refer to each of these characteristics.

Leadership training is a familiar activity in the military arena, and good leadership is key to the selection of candidates at all levels from JNCOs/junior rates through to senior officers. Many of the values inherent in good military leadership also embrace Christian principles. Christian leadership springs from discipleship, is rooted in character, centred in service, working as a team and must be empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. The qualities of character of a Christian leader, as indicated in 1 Timothy 3: 1 - 15 and Titus 1: 5 - 9 should be the core of the NCO’s or officer’s approach to leadership:

Above reproof (1 Timothy 3: 2, Titus 1: 6). Someone whose exemplary life attracts people to Jesus. Just the sort of person that was chosen by the early church (Acts 6: 3); people who were of good reputation and therefore trustworthy.

Faithful to his wife (1 Timothy 3: 2, Titus 1: 6). The emphasis is not so much on whether the leader is married or single but whether his/her relationship with the opposite sex is above reproof. Christian leadership is costly and no Christian who aspires to leadership can afford to heed worldly rather than Biblical attitudes to sex and sexual relationships.

Temperate (1 Timothy 3: 2). This is less a matter of moderation or lack of self-indulgence but more that of having a clear perspective. Walking in the Light of God, rather than the darkness of men, gives a wholly different perspective on matters which to the world are of vital importance, eg: the Christian leader should be led and influenced by those things on which God places high priority.

Self-controlled (1 Timothy 3: 2, 3:8, Titus 1: 8). Prudence is a key characteristic of maturity and is related to good judgement, which is at a premium in all kinds of leadership. Prudence starts with a clear appreciation of one's own worth, balanced by a healthy recognition of one's proneness to sin and of one's complete dependence on Almighty God.

Respectable (1 Timothy 3: 2). Literally one whose behaviour, life-style, appearance and attitudes command respect even from those who do not share his/her Christian commitment.

Hospitality (1 Timothy 3: 2, Titus 1: 8). A practical sphere in which the love of the leader is demonstrated sacrificially. It should be recognised that this is not limited to married people; single Christians can demonstrate practical loving care in hospitality both to other singles and to couples.

Able to teach (1 Timothy 3: 2). There is a strong link between teaching and leading (1 Timothy 5: 17 & 1 Thessalonians 5: 12 where individually applied and corrective teaching is embraced in ‘admonishing”). Christian leaders must invest time and energy in learning so that they can teach; learning is as much a heart activity as a head activity!
Not a heavy drinker (1 Timothy 3: 3, 3:8, Titus 1: 7). This is not a command to total abstinence but rather that nothing should have the sort of hold on us that alcohol has for the drunkard; sports, hobbies, our work even, can demand and gradually achieve too high a place in our time and attention.

Gentle (1 Timothy 3: 3, Titus 1:8). "Blessed are the meek (gentle) for they shall inherit the earth", says Jesus (Matthew 5:5). A leader is much more effective, even in a secular context, when he/she treats his/her subordinates gently rather than harshly. Gentleness inspires affection, commitment and a willingness to be led.

Not Quarrelsome (1 Timothy 3: 3). This is vital to corporate leadership. Some who are successful leaders in professions, where they always have the final say, revert to being domineering when placed in a team. No one has a monopoly of God's knowledge and wisdom.

Free from the love of money (1 Timothy 3: 3). "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). When money, possessions, promotion, public recognition and the like tie us to our life on earth, we have disqualified ourselves from leadership of God's people. If anything tempts us to say, "Come back Lord Jesus, but not just yet", we should beware.

One who manages his own household well (1 Timothy 3:4, Titus 1: 6). Christian leadership, like charity, begins at home. If he/she is not respected and followed in his/her leadership at home, how can one expect him/her to lead God's people? God places a very high priority on this area and it is a frequent place of difficulty for Christians. We hazard the ministry of any group of Christians when we appoint leaders who are in trouble in their home relationships.

Not a new convert (1 Timothy 3: 6). It will be apparent that most of the previous qualities of character are not achieved overnight. A new convert is a spiritual baby. Secular leadership is not entrusted to infants; nor should spiritual leadership. There is a particular temptation to elevate someone to Christian leadership because of their rank or professional status. If they do not conform to the above criteria, we have no mandate to make such an appointment.

A good reputation with those outside (1 Timothy 3:7). This is a sign of someone whose Christian life is thoroughly integrated with his/her social life, his/her professional life, his/her financial life, his/her domestic life, Loving what is good (Titus 1: 8) "As [a man] thinks in etc. To live a compartmented life is to betray dangerous immaturity. We cannot all be brilliant, but we can all be faithful (1 Corinthians 4: 2).

Not pursuing dishonest gain (1 Timothy 3:8, Titus 1: 7). We are warned that dishonest gain ruins whole households (Titus 1:1) and dishonest money dwindles away (Proverbs 13:11). We are to ensure that all our financial dealings are above reproach.

Not quick-tempered (Titus 1: 7). "The fruit of the Spirit is . . . patience. . " (Galatians 5:22) - people and situations that confront the Christian leader will frequently impose frustration. Only a Christ-like response will achieve a Christ-like outcome.

Not violent (Titus 1: 7). This refers not only to physical violence but to verbal violence (gossip, bitter criticism, etc). We are blessed, according to Jesus, when people maltreat us for His sake (Matthew 5:11), so we have no need to respond aggressively. If we are tempted to be pugnacious for any reason, it is almost certainly a sign of sin in ourselves.

Loving what is good (Titus 1: 8). "As [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7, New Living Translation). This is a quality of Christ-likeness, not forgetting that to love good is to hate evil. As we meditate upon things that are true, honourable, right, pure, of good repute, excellent, and worthy of praise (Philippians 4: 8), we imbibe into our spirits that which is in tune with the Spirit of God.
**Upright** (Titus 1: 8). This is practical righteousness, which, because of its holiness, gives a fairness, and discernment that reflects the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2: 16). It is vital to leadership as is indicated by the failure demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 6: 1 - 6. (from the New Living Translation). “When one of you has a dispute with another believer, how dare you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter instead of taking it to other believers!  

1 When one of you has a dispute with another believer, how dare you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter instead of taking it to other believers!  

2 Don't you realize that someday we believers will judge the world? And since you are going to judge the world, can't you decide even these little things among yourselves?  

3 Don't you realize that we will judge angels? So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disputes in this life.  

4 If you have legal disputes about such matters, why go to outside judges who are not respected by the church?  

5 I am saying this to shame you. Isn't there anyone in all the church who is wise enough to decide these issues?  

6 But instead, one believer sues another—right in front of unbelievers!”

**Holy** (Titus 1: 8). The root of holiness is separation - for a purpose. It is both a separation from the world and a separation to God. Another word is consecration. The holiness that marked the life of Jesus, who, living in the midst of sinners, was totally undefiled. It is that holiness without which no man will see the Lord (Hebrews 12: 14).

**Disciplined** (Titus 1: 8). The disciplined life called for by the Bible will involve regular prayer, bible study, exercise, healthy eating and fasting. Such good habits allow us to focus on God rather than being drawn away by worldly activities. We need always to be clear that this approach is not a means of gaining credit with God, but is a heartfelt expression of our devotion to him. "Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (Ephesians 2: 9 - 10).