

What Traits Are Essential for Godly Leadership?

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Certain traits are common among Godly leaders, and in my opinion, are essential to Godly leadership.

I think I'm on solid ground when I say most leadership failures stem not from poor business decisions but from issues of character.

Consider these leaders within the Christian community.

- Ravi Zacharias (Ravi Zacharias International Ministries) accused of multiple accounts of sexual misconduct in the US, Thailand, Malaysia, and India, an extensive pornography collection, and misappropriation of ministry funds.
- Bill Hybels (senior pastor Willow Creek Community Church) accused of sexual harassment by numerous women spanning years.
- Dave Reynolds (pastor at Cornerstone Bible Fellowship Church) was charged with 70 counts of possessing or viewing child pornography.
- Doug Phillips (founder of Visit Forum Ministries) accused of sexual abuse and assault against a 15-year-old girl.
- Bill Gothard (Gothard Institute of Basic Life Principles) accused of sexual harassment, inappropriate touching, molestation, and rape by over 30 women.
- Bob Coy (senior pastor of Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale) admitted to multiple affairs and a pornography addiction.
- Mark Driscoll (founding pastor of Mars Hill Church) accused of plagiarism, followed by allegations of emotional abusiveness and misogyny, and misuse of church funds.
- Tony Alamo (founder of Tony Alamo Christian Ministries) accused of sexual abuse, transporting underage girls across state lines for sexual purposes, pedophilia, marrying an eight-year-old girl, and child rape.
- Ted Haggard (senior pastor New Life Church) was implicated in a gay sex scandal and drug abuse.
- Jimmy Swaggart (Pentecostal televangelist) was accused of having an ongoing relationship with a New Orleans prostitute and an extensive pornography collection.
- Jim Bakker (televangelist founder of the PTL Club and Heritage USA) was accused of drugging and raping a church secretary and fraud for misappropriating ministry funds.

All of these (and many others I could have listed) destroyed their reputations and lost their ministry because of moral failures. These men were on-fire men of God, yet they all succumbed to temptation.

If you think, *“I am a Christian, this won’t happen to me.”* Look back at this list. Yes, my friend, it **can** happen to you. Do you think for a minute, any of these Christian leaders at the top of their game ever thought they would fall? I can assure you they did not. They thought they could somehow balance being a man of God yet live a life immersed in sin. It turns out they couldn’t, and neither can you.

There are four traits essential for Godly leadership that stand the test of time, and they are all contained in a few short passages in the book of Zechariah.

Leadership Principles for Godly Leadership

Personal Purity and Integrity (Zechariah 3:1-10)

The first thing God directed Zechariah to do was prepare Joshua for leadership as the high priest of the Israelites.

The angel of God had Joshua remove his filthy clothes and said to Joshua, *“See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you” (Zechariah 3:4b).*

The removal of Joshua’s filthy clothes was symbolic of removing the sin in his life to prepare him to stand before God as the priest and leader of Israel.

The next step in preparing Joshua was putting on righteous, clean clothes (Zechariah 3:4-5). While this symbolic, the act of removing filthy clothes and putting on clean clothes speaks to the importance of a leader’s personal purity and integrity.

Once the personal cleansing was completed, the angel made this conditional promise to Joshua,

“This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here’” (Zechariah 3:7).

The act of taking off the dirty clothes (sin) and putting on clean clothes (righteousness) reminds us of Paul’s admonition to the Ephesians:

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

The first two traits essential for Godly leadership are personal purity and integrity. As leaders, we must toss out the sin of our old lives and put on the righteousness of God.

Justice and Righteousness (Zechariah 7:8-10, 8:16-17)

The second two traits required of Godly leaders are justice and righteousness.

Having dealt with sin by emphasizing personal purity and integrity, the Lord continues by instructing Joshua to lead with true justice, showing an abundance of mercy and compassion to everyone.

“This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other’” (Zechariah 7:8-10).

Finally, God instructs Joshua to be a righteous leader by being truthful, honest, and not plotting evil against others.

“These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other and render true and sound judgment in your courts; do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the LORD (Zechariah 8:16-17).

The theme of leaders promoting and pursuing justice and righteousness runs throughout the writing of Old Testament prophets (especially Isaiah, Amos, and Malachi). The example of Jesus reinforces it in the New.

The first two traits required of Godly leaders, personal purity, and integrity, are primarily focused on individual relationships. The second two traits, righteousness, and justice, primarily deal with group interactions. Ultimately, the personal traits of personal purity and integrity impact and drive leadership in the public traits of righteousness and justice. The interrelated nature of personal and public traits is why all four are essential for Godly leadership!