

# What Church Followers Should Know About Church Leaders

Although one's context may be larger than another's, leadership tasks are still leadership tasks—no matter how many followers are in the room.

For people who function primarily as followers rather than leaders, I have listed a few items below under the heading, "What followers should know about church leaders." Some of the statements are unique to the church setting, while others are true of leaders in general

Followers should know that no leader leads all of the time. Throughout the course of a day, nearly everyone has moments of leading and moments of following, and many more moments where neither is taking place. The key to performing well as a leader is to perform well as a follower, and perhaps most importantly, to prepare well when doing neither of those tasks.

Strong leaders recognize the varying degrees attached to leadership moments, as well as the importance of building relationships and building character while not leading.

Followers also need to know that confidence is a large part of leadership, and that confidence itself is 90 percent attitude. The one who believes he or she can do the proposed task often is the one given the first opportunity to try it.

Saying, "Yes, I'll give it a try," or acting on nudges from friends and nurturing from God, are often what turn followers into leaders. Most leaders got where they are by volunteering to do something, or rather many things, and then faithfully preparing to perform those voluntary tasks.

When in doubt, speak with confidence. A seminary professor once told me, "Whenever you are not sure how to pronounce one of those long biblical names,

say it with boldness; anyone else not sure will think you know what you're talking about."

Leadership is more about skills than it is about traits. While society commonly believes that certain individuals are born with particular personality traits that predispose them to leadership, the reality is that no one has ever been able to identify what those traits are! Traits serve merely to define one's *style* of leadership rather than one's *capacity* for leadership.

The reality is that anyone can learn the skills to function as a leader. Followers need to know that leadership tasks come in all sizes and shapes.

A mother may remind her children of the rules before dropping them off at a friend's house, portray the type of behavior expected while out of sight, invite that same child to brainstorm about his or her own appropriate discipline following an infraction of the rules, or celebrate good behavior with a special treat—all of which are leadership tasks.

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In the congregation, every follower needs to know that he or she is capable of doing something in ministry better than the church leader. While many settings encourage training, mentoring and discipling from their leaders, in the congregational setting, such tasks are absolutely essential to good leadership.

The role of the church leader is to help the follower discover his or her particular "calling" or "assignment" or "God-given responsibility." The local church, as an expression of the body of Christ, only functions well when all of the members are fulfilling their unique roles.

Thus, every follower must recognize that his or her own role in the congregation is central to the mind and actions of the congregational leader.

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