

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Leader's Guide

LEADERSHIP LIFESTYLE

LESSON 4: MANAGING FAMILY AS A SPIRITUAL LEADER

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled Leadership Lifestyle. The lessons examine the practical and spiritual requirements for those in Christian leadership. Being a leader is so much more than standing up in front of a group of people asking them to follow you! To be a great leader, one must maintain high standards in both public and private life. While every one of us struggles in many ways, a leader faces unique challenges. This module identifies some of these struggles and how to combat them, with practical advice from men and women who have experienced the trials and joys of following God's calling in leadership. Each lesson concludes with a Leader to Leader page. It features quotes from historical Christians, current Christian leaders, and people (not in leadership) who share their perspective on the topic.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is Christians who are maturing in their faith and desiring to serve God. The lessons will be especially helpful to those who are pastors, church leaders, mentors or teachers, but also anyone wishing to grow in their relationship with God.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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LEADERSHIP LIFESTYLE

LESSON 4: MANAGING FAMILY AS A SPIRITUAL LEADER

PURPOSE

To help spiritual leaders create a healthy balance in their lives between family and ministry.

LEADER'S NOTE

"There are only so many hours in a day!" is a phrase that expresses the many demands on one's time and energy. As a leader you may be passionate about the ministry God has called you to, but find it difficult to balance the demands of your ministry with the needs of your family. This lesson looks at managing and caring for your family well. While some leaders are single men or women without family and children, it is still an important topic of discussion for everyone. One of the major risks to accepting a call to ministry is that family life can be neglected while doing God's work. Regardless of how influential, powerful or gifted a leader is, their first priority is their relationship with God. Their second priority is family, and the third is the work of ministry. When these priorities get out of order, leaders lack a vital connection to God, families are hurt, and ministry is weak.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ Do you think it matters what a public leader does in his or her private life?
- ❖ If you were looking for someone to pastor a church or administer a school, what would you want to know about their home and family life? What would be some signs that they would not be a good candidate for the job?
- ❖ When someone is in a position of leadership, what can their family do to help and support them? What behaviours of family members might hinder or hurt them in their ministry?
- ❖ Is it possible to keep private life at home entirely separate from public life as a leader? In what ways does one affect the other?



STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH:

- ❖ **Faithful in Small Things:** A leader in any position can easily lose sight of what is most important in life. In serving God, the work can seem endless! There is always more evangelism and discipleship, another sermon or a person in poverty, another meeting or a class to be taught, and always more money to be raised. It is a problem when leaders neglect their families and devote all their time to ministry. This is not Biblical. When selecting a pastor or a leader, a major consideration is how they treat their families!

TASK:

Divide participants into small groups of 3 to 6 people and give each group a set of verses. Have them read each verse and then discuss how they apply to a leader managing their family life. Then each group should present their answers to the class.

- What should a church expect from those in positions of leadership?
- To what standard should we hold one another as leaders?
- What would a good leader who is following Biblical teachings do or not do?

Set 1	Set 2
1 Timothy 3:1-5 Luke 16:10-12 Ephesians 5:25	Colossians 3:23-24 Jeremiah 12:5 Ephesians 6:1-4

TEACH:

- **The Family is where we practise Leadership:** God trains His servants by giving them small tasks to accomplish before the big ones! Anyone in leadership should practise leadership over their own home first. The home is a small church within the larger church. The church is made up of relationships just as the home is, and learning to lead a family is excellent training for all types of Christian leadership (Luke 16:10-12).
- **The Family is where we practise Obedience:** As a leader, we obey and honour God by loving and leading our family. Our obedience is a model to our children who are commanded to obey their parents (Colossians 3:20). All our work and parenting should be done as service to God whether at home or in our place of ministry (Colossians 3:23-24).
- **The Family is where we practise Faithfulness:** Faithfully attending to the needs of our family (relationships, finances, etc.) prepares us to serve the entire family of God. If we stumble with one, we will not succeed with the other. Our homes should be a safe



place of peace and trust. We must be a good spiritual leader there before taking on more difficult and demanding challenges in the community (Jeremiah 12:5).

- ❖ **A Personal Ministry:** Every Christian leader is responsible to minister personally to their family, whatever type of family God has given them. To review our priorities, we are to nurture our own relationship with God first, care for the needs of our family next, and then lead with integrity those in the community we are called to minister to. God has given us specific commands to obey in leading our family. Neglecting these is disobedience to God.
 - **Children:** If you have living parents, you are called to honour your father and mother (Exodus 20:12, Ephesians 6:2, Luke 18:20). This includes obeying them, in so far as what they command does not cause you to sin (Colossians 3:20).
 - **Parents:** If you are a father or mother, you are responsible to bring your children up in the knowledge and instruction of God, to discipline them appropriately so they will know right from wrong, to set an example for them, and to not cause them to be embittered. Parents must provide for the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs of their family (Colossians 3:21, Ephesians 6:4, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Proverbs 29:15, 1 Timothy 5:8).
 - **Husbands:** A husband is commanded to love his wife as he loves his own body, to live sacrificially for her, to provide for her, to put his relationship with her above all others, and to live with her in an understanding way (Colossians 3:19, Ephesians 5:25, 1 Peter 3:7).
 - **Wives:** A wife is to submit to and respect her husband, care for him, be an example in conduct, bring him praise and honour through her actions, do good and care for their household (Colossians 3:18, Proverbs 12:4, 1 Peter 3:5-6, Proverbs 31:10-31).
 - **Everyone:** We must all exercise love for one another (John 13:34-35), forgive one another (Colossians 3:13), be an example to one another (1 Timothy 4:12), submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21), and provide for one another's needs (1 Timothy 5:8).
- ❖ **Qualifications for Ministry:** The Bible gives qualifications of character and conduct for those who serve in leadership within the Church. These attributes should be displayed first at home.
 - A person in a position of leadership must set a good example. Someone who is not faithful in serving, loving and supporting their own family will not be able to lead those they are not related to.
 - **Character:** Our character is often seen by how we behave when no one is watching, or when we let our guard down at home. When we are in a bad mood, do we have the self control to not take it out on family members? Do we manage our finances wisely? Are we people of integrity who follow through with commitments?
 - **Conduct:** What we do and how we behave is determined by our character. If we have strong Christian character, our behaviour will be more in line with God's will. We will



do what we say, and not behave in a shameful manner. A leader (though not perfect), should be a good example of what Christians strive to be.

TASK:

As a group, look up the following verses. Make a list of the qualifications for ministry that involve character, and another list of those which involve conduct. Then circle any qualification that has to do with life at home, or leading one's family.

1 Timothy 3:1-13 2 Timothy 2:1-13 Titus 1:5-9

Ask your participants the following questions and discuss as a group:

- If you were to select a good candidate for a leadership position, how would you assess his or her character? How would you assess their conduct?
- How can you identify someone who manages his or her family well, and is demonstrating obedience to God in their home life? What attitude will be prevalent in their family?

TEACH:

❖ **Five Ways a Leader Might Neglect Their Family:** Once a person begins a leadership position, there is tremendous pressure on their time. Sometimes this comes from church members, students, co-workers, elders, or from their own tendency to overwork. But even the most ardent servant of God can sometimes neglect their own family in pursuit of following God's calling on their life.

1. **Giving their Family Too Little Time:** Ministry can happen all hours of the day or night. Evenings and weekends are often primary ministry times, but they are also times for families to be together. When a servant of God cannot schedule time away from their ministry to spend with family, they are too busy. When family celebrations are neglected, or a parent is absent on a daily basis, that parent has neglected their duty. Reserve an evening or a day a week just for family time, and don't allow anything to displace it.
2. **Giving their Family Too Little of Themselves:** Your family might see your face daily and you may be able to join them for meals and celebrations, but your mind and heart may be elsewhere. If you are too tired after ministering to others to spend time in real conversation, to share yourself with your family, or to laugh and play with them, you are withholding a part of yourself that they need. Stress can rob your family of knowing the real you. Guard your stress level! You are a limited resource, so be careful to reserve time and energy for your family!
3. **Giving their Family Too Little Respect:** Children of pastors are sometimes used as sermon illustrations, or a private family matter could become public if it is used as a teaching example. These can be embarrassing and disrespectful to children. It is important to respect children and spouses – their time, their calling, their abilities, and their preferences. They are not tools to further your ministry; they are partners and loved ones.



4. **Failing to Provide for their Family:** In some places, those who devote their life to ministry make very little income, sometimes not enough to support a family. While we must not covet more than we need, it is a Biblical command that we work to provide for our families (1 Timothy 5:8). At the same time, we must do the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58). This may require multiple family members to work so that one can commit to full-time ministry. Other times this may mean working part-time to provide for the family (1 Thessalonians 2:9). Churches that require full-time hours from their pastor should provide the means to support their pastor's family.
 5. **Failing to Protect Their Family:** A leader's family is often under attack. Spouses of leaders sometimes receive unfair criticism: sometimes the way a wife dresses, how their children behave, or whether the family attends every function the church holds. When ministering in a particularly dangerous area, a leader's family may need to temporarily live elsewhere. If you are a leader, consider how to best protect your family from potential threats, and pray that they will endure and gain the victory over spiritual attack.
- ❖ **Feeding Family First:** Since our own relationship with God is of primary importance in our lives, it may feel natural that our service to Him should also take first place. However, it is dangerous to expect a pastor or other Christian leader to put ministry before the needs of the family. Every leader who has a family should:
- **Make Time For Family:** Leaders must schedule family time in order to make it happen. This includes certain days, evenings, and vacation times. While there are always emergencies and the need to be flexible, family is important enough to mark these times in the schedule. It may require discipline to take a day off each week to connect with family, but it should be a priority.
 - **Set Boundaries:** Some leaders may need to set boundaries, such as not counseling people at home, or not taking phone calls after a certain hour. Time together as a family must be protected. If family is a priority, you will sometimes have to say 'no' to other important things. Ask your spouse if they need more of your time!
 - **Pray:** You should pray that your family will be protected from all danger and evil, and that they would walk close to the Lord. Pray that they will persevere during difficult times. Pray that the stresses of ministry would not weaken their faith, but rather strengthen it.
 - **Consider Seasons of Life:** Be realistic – when children are young, you may be limited to the amount of time you devote to ministry. When they are grown you will have more time and perhaps more money to invest in your ministry. Consider your priorities in the various seasons of life. Young children are a priority as they require loving care, discipline, and sincere parental leadership in the home. The window of opportunity for a Christian leader to minister to his own children is a narrow one. If you are single, you have an excellent opportunity to devote yourself to the ministry of God!



- ❖ **How to Support Leaders:** Christians should consider the weight that a family carries if one or more is engaged in leadership. Expectations placed on a leader should not jeopardize time spent with their family. Leaders teach people to walk with God; they don't do the walking for them! Church members should:
 - **Provide Adequate Time Off:** Insist that your pastors and leaders take a day off each week, and receive adequate vacation time to rest and reconnect with family. This is an opportunity for others to take leadership responsibility. Jesus Himself took times of retreat, and God built times of rest and refreshment into the very nature of creation – we are not exempt (Genesis 2:2, Psalm 1:3, Psalm 104:19).
 - **Pray:** Pray not only for your leaders, but also for their families. Wives of pastors and elders often carry heavy burdens of stress that are unseen. They are also held to a high standard and often feel lonely. Children sense unrealistic expectations and spiritual attacks. Pray for wayward children, rebellious youth, and wisdom for your leaders as parents (1 Thessalonians 5:25, 1 Peter 5:8, Luke 22:31-32).
 - **Befriend:** Leaders and their families need authentic friendships that will build them up and encourage them in their work. They need supporters and champions. Consider how you can come alongside a leader's family and help them through a difficult time! Leaders may need help and support from others in order to put their families first. Leaders' families will have times of stress and struggle just like any family (Galatians 6:2).
 - **Respect:** When you call on a leader to help you, remember that their time is limited. While they are a servant of God, they also have responsibilities to their family and many other people. Do not expect so much from them that they will fail! They should be held to a high standard, but they are not perfect.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Family can be a tremendous source of strength and comfort for each of us. Home is a place of belonging and love. For the leader who pours his time and energy into the work of God, home is an especially important place and must be protected. Spouses of leaders can help them become successful at what they do through their love, support, and prayers. Lack of support can cause them to fail. Family is of critical importance for leaders, and putting relationships in the home first will allow for more successful ministry.

DISCUSSION

- ❖ How can a church help their pastor to serve and lead their own family first, yet not neglect the responsibilities God has given them?
- ❖ Why is it often difficult for ministry leaders to put their families first before their work?



- ❖ If you are a leader who is married, could someone tell by your actions and attitudes that you put your spouse before your ministry work? How is this revealed? Is there any Biblical evidence that would condone leaving your family to pursue ministry? Is this ever acceptable, and if so – when?
- ❖ What can you do to support the families of leaders in your life?
- ❖ What are your priorities in life right now? Where does family fit in?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Pray that each participant would value his or her family relationships and view family in its proper place. Pray that they would not become so busy leading others that they neglect the care and discipleship of those in their own home. Pray that churches would allow their leaders time to spend with family. Pray that Christian leaders would be Godly examples of family leadership in the community.



LEADER TO LEADER

QUOTATIONS FROM LEADERS PAST AND PRESENT ON THE TOPIC OF FAMILY LIFE AND MINISTRY

"As a young, ambitious, prideful pastor I almost destroyed my relationship with my wife and daughter because I neglected them and put my career first. The stresses of my job made it impossible to ever see my family and I felt as though I was not giving my all to God. I failed both as a husband and a pastor. Now after a time away from leading, my wife and I have healed our relationship. God has called us to plant a Church together. My wife is my biggest cheerleader; I need her by my side. This is a real problem for pastors – it is important that leaders have time for their families."

Jeremiah – Pastor

"I tell the young pastors I mentor that there are a thousand other men that can take your place as a pastor, but no one else can adequately take your place as a husband and father in your home. This is how it should be – Faith first, Family Second, Finances Third. Your work – even if it is for God - cannot come before family."

Paul – Seminary Teacher

"For a servant of God, family is number one! Why? Because relationships define the Church, and the chief qualifier for leadership in the church is healthy, nurturing family life – governing one's own household well."

John – Christian Ministry Director

"My family has been impacted for good by our positions of leadership, but it doesn't always look that way! Anytime my husband and I step into a position of leadership, we feel the attack of Satan. We have seen our children attacked, and those attacks have not diminished over the years – they just look different. However, all our children and their spouses are currently walking with the Lord, and our grandchildren are being raised for Christ. So, has Satan prevailed? No. In fact, just like in the story of Balaam who tried to curse the Israelites, God has blessed my family instead even in the midst of the adversities. Prayer for the family has been the key to overcoming Satan's devices. We have asked many people to pray over the years, and I believe those faithful hearts who cared for us have made all the difference."

Shawna – Christian Ministry Leader

"The impact of ministry on my family has been good, generally speaking. My children and wife have their own places to serve. I was taught both by precept and example in my apprenticeship to set boundaries so that I was able to devote appropriate amounts of time and energy both to my church responsibilities and to my family responsibilities. I set aside time during the year to get away with my wife. Although work-life balance is not unique to pastors, spiritual leaders are perhaps especially vulnerable to failure in this regard because of the personal and spiritual nature of the work demands. It can be difficult to separate the two!"

– Mike, Pastor