



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

This week we are exploring the theme of Empowering Leadership and Ministry. Bill Hybels writes: *"the local church is the hope of the world and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders"*

What does it mean to be a Church leader? Read Paul's exhortation in v1. What sort of life should a leader in the church of Christ live? Read Rom. 12 in the Message translation. A leader is one whose life is constantly being offered up and is one who is being changed from the inside out. *A close, humble walk with Christ never fails. It strengthens the heart, redirects the will, restrains the ego, and purifies the motives. It never fails.* More importantly a leader is one who seeks, to the best of their ability always to live under the Lordship of Christ, even though at times they fail. We all struggle to live under his Lordship. Ken Costa says this of his emerging faith. 'This faith came alive for me after an internal struggle as to whether God would be in charge of all my life -- it came clear to me that true freedom was to be found in full surrender to the love of God.' Surrender, a yielded life and motives touched and purified by the Spirit are the mark and qualities He requires of those He calls to leadership. It is also recognising that He is the one *who gave some to be apostles, etc v11*. It is his gift and not ours by right. It is he who chooses. Father Hughson, writes: "Don't trouble because you think you're not fit...The greatest saint is unfit ...but there is a wise saying that God does not choose what is fit but he chooses -- The sense of unfitness is one of the signs of vocation..." The calling that he places on our lives is for one purpose cf. v12, How does a leader do this? Firstly by being a person filled with the Holy Spirit. See Acts 1. It is Holy Spirit power that enables a courage above and beyond ourselves, to be more focused, more prayerful and provocative, more prophetic, more visible and involving, more courageous and more powerful. It is by being a person of vision. Prov. 29:18: to prepare people for works of service they need to see something above and beyond themselves that grips the heart, motivates the mind and inspires the will to God given action. Vision, It's the most important weapon in a leader's arsenal. It unleashes the power of the church. Cf.v12

What does this leadership look like? The leadership of Christ is the most revolutionary mind blowing kind. Read v 2. We are called to walk together with him and his people in humility. We are to be a people of gentleness, of patience and of forbearance, forgiving and loving one another. These are to be the marks of Christ on God given leadership. 1 Peter 5 in The Message puts it like this: *I have a special concern for you church leaders... Here's my concern: that you care for God's flock with all the diligence of a shepherd. Not because you have to, but because you want to please God... Not bossily telling others what to do, but tenderly showing them the way.* True leadership seeks to 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace'. It is not self seeking or self serving. This is what it has to look like and that is the challenge that we each face as we respond to his calling. Bill Hybels says this of what we should look like 'people supernaturally gifted to lead must yield themselves fully to God. They must cast powerful, biblical, God honouring vision. They must build effective, loving, clearly focused teams. They must fire up Christ followers to give their absolute best for God. And they must insist with determination that – the gospel be preached, the lost found, the believers be equipped, the poor be served, the lonely be enfolded into community and God gets the credit for it all. Scripture tells us exactly what will happen if leaders will do what God has called and gifted them to do. The forces of darkness will be pushed back. The Evil one, who has had his way in the world for far too long, will be forced to give ground. And the church will fulfill the redemptive purpose for which Christ called it into being. As described in v. 4 & 6.

How can I get involved? There are many different ways. Read v 7. In his love and mercy he calls each one of us to yield to his Lordship and respond to his grace so that we *all reach unity in the faith* v13. God is not calling us out to the same ministries; they are different for each one of us and just as valuable as each other. Everything is valued and everything is important. Edward Patey in his book 'A Call to Excellence' says: 'All orders are holy. Plumbers are as much in holy orders as the clergy, serving God and their fellows...Electricians, park-keepers, doctors and secretaries are all working as much with the things of God as the priest with the sacrament.' God has called each one of us out to a life of transforming service. The question that all those who are called to leadership to answer is this: Will the men and women who have been entrusted with leadership gifts take their gifts seriously, develop them fully, and deploy them courageously, so that the willing and gifted believers in the church can work together to make a difference in their families, to friends, work colleagues and in the wider world? So that we *all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God... , attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.* Bill Hybels says 'I am absolutely convinced that the church will never reach her full redemptive potential until men and women with the leadership gift step up and lead'. If God is calling you, how will you respond? Bill Hybels writes – 'Cancel your career plans; do something important with your one and only life. Lay it down for Christ and his church.' Can we really do that? Can I?



Witness: choose from these questions to discuss

1. Pray & worship together and ask God to speak to you about his calling on your lives. What is God calling each of you to at this moment in time?
2. Read through the passage, if you have the 'Message' read the beginning of Romans 12 and 1 Peter 5. Ask one another how you would respond to each of the 3 questions. In particular 'how can I get involved?'
3. How has God gifted you? Is there an activity or aspect of leadership that he is calling you to?
4. Is there such a thing as retirement in the kingdom of heaven on earth? How can we encourage one another in old age? Look at Psalm 92:12 -14
5. Do a Bible search to find references to Jesus working with and teaching his disciples. What lessons in leadership and ministry do you discern?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 14:1. "earnestly desire spiritual gifts" – Do we do this? If not why not? Would it make a difference to your life and ministry if you allowed him to gift you?