

Leadership by Example: An Exploration into Peterine’s Concept of Church Leadership in 1 Peter 5:2, 3 for the Nigerian Church

The Very Rev’d Emmanuel ADETUNJI (Ph.D)

Department of Religious Studies, Lead City University Ibadan, Nigeria
Adetunji.emmanuel@lcu.edu.ng

The Very Revd Adedotun KILA

Department of Religious and Intercultural Studies, Lead City University Ibadan Nigeria
<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4862-5864>

DOI: 10.56201/jpslr.v9.no3.2023.pg122.128

ABSTRACT

Leadership has been a problem both in the secular and sacred places. Most African leaders believe that leadership in the position of authority is to acquire wealth and see leadership as lordship. Leadership by example is first demonstrated by the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible. Peter, unlike other Apostles, portrays more on leaders of the church have to watch over those God has entrusted to their care. Peterine’s concept of church leadership is that leaders must do as God has called them to serve and not a duty force on them. Peter, however, admonished them that they should model their behaviours if they are to be examples to the flock. This paper aims at correcting the wrongdoings among people in the place of authorities whether secular or religious. It was found out that people that find themselves in position of authority are no longer representing the people they are leading. The paper concludes by recommending that strong ethics and high moral standard are essential qualities of a good leader.

Keywords: Leadership, Example, Behaviours, Peterine’s Concept

INTRODUCTION

Much of the contemporary debate about church leadership in modern society is caused by the fact that most people who have been entrusted with the sacred responsibilities of leadership have failed woefully. Moses in the Old Testament was described as the meekest of all men, on the other hand, succeeded as a leader. Indeed, we have the greatest and best example of leadership from Apostle Peter in the New Testament apart from Jesus Christ. Peter was like any of human being through his birth, and parentage. Although the Bible did not record that he had a formal education, yet he captained the 12 disciples and succeeded.

Leadership, according to Adamolekun (2003), is the power of leading. It has some qualities and responsibilities attached to it. It is the ability to inspire, direct, motivate, and encourage others positively to a targeted end. The term “leadership” has no single universal definition. Ologe (2000)

is of the view that “these are many and various definitions. Many authors have tried to examine the nature of leadership in various ways.”

Leadership, according to Rabbin (2009), is “the ability to influence a group towards achievement of goals.” Cassey (1989) sees “leadership as the process of guiding, directing, commending others to achieve a desired goal or version.” Akiola (2002) describes a leader as “an intelligent person, able to analyse things as well as anybody and make deductions and then complement.”

It is noteworthy that certain facts still remain common to most of the various definitions as given above. Good leaders are made not born. If you have the desire and will power, you can become an effective leader. Good leaders develop through a never-ending process of self-study, education, training and experience (Jago, 1982). Northouse (2007) defines leadership as a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. He then added that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

Leaders carry out this process by applying their leadership knowledge and skills. This is called process Leadership (Jago, 1982). However, we know that we have traits that can influence our actions. This is called process leadership (Jago, 1982) in that it was once common to believe that leaders were born rather than made.

Adeomolekun (2002) opines that there are some facts about leadership. He pointed out that for leadership to exist between two or more people for the achievement of goals and in which influence and power are not evenly distributed. It is observed by Rao and Narayama (2001) that “leadership” cannot flourish in a vacuum. The essence of leadership to Narayama (2001) is “followership”, which means followers must consent to be influenced. To him the implication of this is that leaders gain authority over a group among members of a group. There can be no team work expected in leadership.

Leadership involves setting of goals, setting of priority in order to make the reaching or achievement of such goals possible. It involves having a clear vision of one’s mission.

Jesus Christ (John 13:12-15) and Apostle Paul led by example (Phil. 3:17). Leadership involves efficient managing of resources. That is, managing people and materials. It involves understanding people and knowing what will inspire and motivate each of them to work harder towards the set goals. It involves appreciating how people will work together. A unique trait in leadership as discussed here is that leadership skills and ability are not acquired automatically but are learned. They are not inherited like traditional leadership such as chieftaincy titles.

To Rao and Narayama, leadership is a key factor in the success of any administration whether social, government, business or religions. Leadership is the anchor point for the success of an organization.

The Text 1 Peter 5:2, 3: tend that flock of God whose shepherds you are, and do it not under compulsion, but of your own free will, as God would have it, not for gain but out of sheer devotion:

not tyrannizing over those who are allotted to your care, but setting an example to the flock” (The New English Bible).

Contextual Biblical Leadership

Contextual biblical leadership is effective leadership that is informed by the context of scripture and the culture in which one lives endeavoring not to violate either, when in conflict the norm is scripture. There are two sources for this type of leadership as they work together in synergy where possible, the two sources are scripture and culture so that the leadership is biblically based first but also relevant enough in that particular culture (Crowther, 2012).

The Concept of Leadership

Leadership is the kind of responsibility, which aims at achieving particular ends, by utilizing available resources human and material to make organization cohesive and coherent. “Leadership is one of the most observed, yet least understood phenomena on earth” (Burn, 1978).

There are different views of leadership in this regard. According to the traditional view, there are certain “traits” and characteristics of leaderships which distinguish leaders from non-leaders. Perhaps, recent research has shifted from traditional trait or personality theory to the situation theory, which says that the kind of situation in which leadership is exercised determine the leadership skills and characteristic.

Boulding (2012) posits that in order to become a good leader, one must have the experience, knowledge, will power, patience, and most importantly the skill to convince others. Abbasialiya (2010) submits that the basis of a good leadership is strong character and selfless devotion to an organization. In his view, leadership in your employee’s eyes is everything that you do, which effect that achievement of objectives and well being of employees and organization. Honorable leaders give much attention, what they are, what they know and what they do for an organization or church. To be trustworthy is important for all kinds of organized human groups, whether these are military, religious, national, state, business or other kinds of organizations. Although basic guidelines and concepts of leadership, proposed different researchers, so far, are equally important for the non-profit making organizations as well. However, the research on leadership in non-profit organizations, specifically is scarce, even though these organizations play a crucial role in the betterment of society and economy as well.

Peter and Linnea (2010) suggested that the skills considered important today include vision and strategic planning, a desire to innovate, a willingness to take considered risks, the ability to create and sustain growth, the ability to delegate and collaborate, excellent communication skills, risk management and crisis intervention skills. Peter and Linnea (2010) concluded by saying that a good leader leads the organization with and understanding of progressing and developing it. Peter, one of Jesus’ 12 disciples, was one of the three who saw Christ’s glory at the transfiguration (Mark 9:1-13); 2 Peter 1:16-18), often the spokesman for the Apostles, preached at Pentecost, and became a pillar of the Jerusalem church. But writing to the elders, he identified himself as a fellow elder, not a superior. He asked them to be shepherds of God’s flock exactly what Jesus had told him to do (John 21:15-17). Peter was taking his own advice as he worked along with the other elders in

caring for God's faithful people. His identification with the elders is a powerful example of church leadership, where authority is based on service, not power (Mark 10:42-45).

Peter describes several characteristics of good leaders on the church:

- (1) They realize they are caring for God's flock, not own.
- (2) They lead out of eagerness to serve, not out of obligation.
- (3) They are concerned for what they can give, not for what they can get:
- (4) They lead by example, not force. He concludes that all of us lead others in some way.

Implications for Nigeria

I have at different points above indicated the implications of Peterine leadership style to Nigerian leaders. Many Nigerian Christians are more than casual readers of the Bible. Many also strongly believe in the authority of the Bible over their life. In fact, many still hold tenaciously to Luther's *Sola Scriptural* (Scripture only) Theology (Adamalekun, 2003) President Goodluck Jonathan promised at his inauguration as president to be a servant leader. But the social context for effective servant leadership is very important.

As Goodluck Jonathan took office as elected president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in May 29, 2011, he gratuitously offered to be a servant leader. This self-imposed leadership style is uncharacteristic of leadership in Nigeria, both in the public and the private sectors. Throughout his campaigns to be president, President Goodluck said or did nothing to suggest that he was going to be different from President Obasanjo or to his late predecessor (Late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua). In his fairy tale nature of campaign promises where he spoke on issue directed at the perceived need and resources of each state. In fact, his campaigns followed the seven-point agenda of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua. In his inaugural speech, people thought that Jonathan will stand out because of all the promises that were made; but was later understood as suggesting that he was only going to be another hand of Esau with the voice of Jacob.

Jonathan lifted up the hope of many Nigerians by giving the analysis of solution to each problem. From all the campaigns and his inaugural speech, which may suggest that he, would be a doer rather than a talker. He will be leader who will do what he preaches, and thus set himself as an example. In addition, he will be a servant leader, that is, will be in service for others. In this way he has anchored his success or failure as president on his leadership style, which he has characterized as servant leadership. A significant contextual implication of the forgoing analysis is that President Goodluck Jonathan is going to carry out his servant leadership on an environment intended with the virus of monarchical as well as slave mentality. But he cannot as it were ignore the context within which he hopes to actualize his dreamed servant leadership, for leadership is a dipolar concept, that is, it involves the leader as well as the led. Therefore, it will be difficult if not impossible for any leader to succeed until the people he/she is to lead are ready.

The potent question really is, how can President Goodluck Jonathan succeed as a servant leader in the Nigerian environment where people are used to worshipping leaders, where people deify leaders and enslave themselves? This implies that President Goodluck Jonathan must be sincere,

then, he is calling on Nigerians for substantial attitudinal change for a servant leadership now? Some people have suggested that what we need now is a leadership by example who is honest, sincere, fair-minded, accountable, and has a good enough sense of justice.

Peter and his colleagues understood leadership as slave service in the Acts of the Apostles chapter six verses one following when they put service of the word to service of the table. The only reason, as suggested by Taiwo (2003) for not taking up the function of serving tables are because they already had other services they were rendering. The servant leadership is not just about being an honest, sincere, fair-minded, hard-working leader, it involves all those but much more. It includes basic relationship between the leader and the led as of equals. This implies a drastic change in our fundamental understanding of human being.

Nigerians behave as if a person is only important to the extent of his/her social status. That false understanding must be reversed. The current environment can hardly produce genuine servant leadership. The fertile context for servant leadership proper is an environment where people see persons in public office not as benefactors but as mere employees of the people who are not greater than Nigerians. Therefore, the beginning point for servant leadership is for the people to have a sense of self-worth, to take their humanity seriously, and for the leader to believe and show through actions that he/she is not a more important human being than his/her messenger.

Thus, our leadership problem must be healed from the root. The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is only the primes interfaces. So president Goodluck Jonathan must believe and show that he is not more important than any Nigerian, and that he is simply lucky to have been chosen from among fellow Nigerians for the purpose of national service if he is to be seen as a servant leader.

Therefore, if Nigerians are re-oriented in this direction, servant leadership will happen naturally. For we need to be developed enough to require servant leadership as at right, and not as a benevolent donation. On this requires social revolution, a change of attitude about our common humanity and about other irresponsible, unpatriotic ways in our social behaviour. On the leadership of the church, it is expected that the qualities which made Jesus a great leader should characterize the lives of the pastors and other levels of church leadership. Unfortunately, church leadership in Nigeria is now informally divided between Bishops or General Overseers, Presidents and Founders and Pastors. The pastors are the ones who are in close touch with the members. They know the sheep and the sheep knows them. The bishops or General Overseers are political potentates who are both secular and religions. They only know the frontline political money bags in the church. They are the ones who frequent the seal of power to tell Mr. President that all is well, when actually the structures are in devastation and shambles. It is even easier for a church member to see the political president than to see this Great man of God. Jesus and the apostles did not do such things. Simplicity and humility was Jesus' Leadership style. Church Leadership in Nigeria is sick. We should reflect the character of the incarnation which is supposed to be an intrinsic virtue for godly living. Sacrifice and altruism were Jesus' leadership lifestyle. Jesus said, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not as with you, rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves" (Luke 22:25-26). An attitudinal change is required, and that further requires social

revolution, not violent, but one that takes place in the hearts and minds of Nigerians President Goodluck may as well begin this revolution by revising certain public-official behaviours that treat Nigerians as second-class citizens. Such as banning the use of sirens by any public officials, including himself, on our roads: it is dehumanizing and a gross abuse of power for anybody, no matter how highly placed to force other road users out of public roads, we are equal of all public roads; many Nigerians have lost their lives and property through this irresponsible behaviour. He can review protocols at official functions; valuable time is spent calling a long list of people for recognition at the beginning of any public gathering. This betrays our Monarchical and slave mentality. The Lukan gospel relates Jesus with the poor (in Nigerian Parlance, the masses) which is an aspect of servant leadership. Although Jesus can be constructed as a servant leader in all the gospels such as eating with the poor and relating with the sinners. These are just a few examples I invite Mr. President Goodluck to add more behavioral patterns that will help him to identify with the average Nigerian that he intends to serve as their number one employee.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing has been an analysis and exploration of 1 Peter 5:2, 3 for the purposes of showing that the text has implications for the Nigerian reader in terms of servant leadership. We have done this in four major steps the first its Christ leadership means, the second is the concept of leadership while the third step is the analysis and interpretation of the text. The last not but the least involved relating the result of step one to the Nigeria society, using the campaign and inauguration speech of President Goodluck is a subject while we have demonstrated the relevance of our chosen biblical text to the Nigerian society. The paper recommends that if the incoming government can adopts the leadership style of late president Umar Musa Yar'dua who believes in service to the nation and to humanity and that strong ethics and high moral standard are essential qualities of a good leader then, there can be servant leader in Nigeria society

REFERENCES

- Abbasialiya, (1978). Leadership, New York, Harper and Row Publishers.
- Adamolekun T. (2004) *leadership in the church: A case study of Emmanuel Oyewole Akingbala of the Baptist church (1908-2000)* NASR, Ikeja.
- Adelakun Ademola (2011, May 26) View Point, Jonathan's race against time in the Punch.
- Adeyemo. T., (2006) Africa Bible Commentary Kenya, world Alive .
- Cheren T. T. (2002) "leadership as Dirine calling" in Hagher Iyorwuese, *Leadership and Governance in Nigeria* (Jos: The Leadership institute Publication series 2002).
- Daro A. O (2004) Church leadership in Nigeria; *Combining Spiritual and organizational Techniques in Religion, Leadership and society*; Focus on Nigeria, NASR, Ikeja.
- Eddison, John (1977) Dictionary of Bible words London. Scripture Omon.
- Ehusani, G.O. (2004). Gospel Reflective for our time Ibadan St. Paul's Press.
- Ibitolu O. J. (2009) Ideology of Petrine leadership in Acts 6:1-7: *its Implications for Nigeria in Biblical studies and leadership in Africa*, NABIS, Ibadan.
- Igbakua I. (2009). Jesus Model Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13; *its leadership implications for Nigeria in Biblical studies and leadership in African*, NABIS, Ibadan.

- Jago A. (2010). *Leadership, Theory, Application & Skill Development*, (4th Ed.). Mason, OH: South Western Cengage Learning.
- Kenneth Boulding (2012). *Church Leadership and the Home*, Columbus, Webmaster.
- Oderinde O.A. (2004) *Reaching out for power: Nigeria women and church leadership in Religion, Leadership and society: Focus on Nigeria*, NASR Ikeja.
- Odumuyiwa, E A (2005) – *God: A Contemporary Discussion*, Ago-Iwoye; NASR.
- Ologe S.A (2000), *leadership in Christian Organization* (Lagos: Amen Press Ltd.
- Peter & Linnea (1994). *Leadership without Easy Answers*. Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press.
- Rabbin (2009). *Leadership and the Church Management*. New York Oxford University Press.
- Rao and Narayama (2001). *Leadership Skills for a Changing World Solving Complex Social Problems*. The Leadership Quarterly, 11 New York, Thomas.
- Renan, H – (2002) *Studies in the Gospel and Acts of the Apostles*, New York: Aspher Publishing House.
- The New English Version of the Bible (1970). Oxford University Press England.
- Treats Cassey, (1989) *church management*, Seattle, Washington, Cassey Treats Ministries.