Character of the Christian Leader

Diocese-Based Leadership Training Program
Mennonite Churches of East Africa (KMC/KMT)

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Theological Education Coordinators, 2013
# Character of the Christian Leader

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Lesson 1: What is Salvation?

The foundation for the Christian leader is to be a Christian. What does it mean to be a Christian? Write what you think makes a person a Christian:

_____________________________________________________________________

1. The Old Testament law required the Jews to bring animal sacrifices for forgiveness of their sin and for reconciliation with their brothers. Jesus said, “I have not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it” (Matthew 5:17). Read Hebrews 9:11-14. How did Jesus fulfill the commandment to bring animal sacrifices?

2. How were animal sacrifices used in your traditional African culture? Find an older person and ask them to describe it to you. How is traditional African sacrifice similar to Jesus’ sacrifice for us?

3. Read Ephesians 2:1-22. Write the following answers in your own words.
   • Our condition was ________________________________ (verses 1-3).
   • The One who acted to save us is ________________ (verses 4-6).
   • Now our condition is ______________________________ (verse 5).
   • How is your salvation important to you> Write 1 benefit of your salvation ________________________________.

4. Read Acts 2:37-41. After Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36), he explained to the people what they must do. Write the words to complete these verses.
   • (v.38) And Peter said to them, “_____________ and be _____________ every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the ______________ of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the ______________ ________________.”
   • (v.41) “And there were _____________ that day about 3,000 souls.”
   • Are all these steps required to be saved? Are there other steps?

5. Read John 3:3-8. What does it mean to be “born again”?

6. Your personal response:
   • Do you believe you are a sinner?
   • Have you confessed and repented of your sin?
   • Have you been baptized with water on confession of your faith?
   • Have you received the Holy Spirit?
   • Are you living a holy life as the Holy Spirit leads you?

Pray for each other; thank God for his salvation through Jesus.
Outline of Ephesians 2:1-22 – Our Salvation

1. And you were dead... (our condition then)
   - In trespasses and sins (1)
   - Following ways of this world, the spirit of disobedience (2)
   - Lived in the passions of the flesh (3)
   - We were children of wrath (3)

2. But God... (who acted to bring our salvation)
   - Rich in mercy (4)
   - Great love (4)
   - By grace (5)

3. Made us alive... (our condition now)
   - Raised with Christ (6)
   - Seated with Christ (6)
   - By grace, through faith (8)
   - Created for good works (10)
   - Members of God’s household (19)

4. Therefore... (results of our salvation)
   - We are reconciled by the blood of Christ (13)
   - Made us one, broken down the wall of hostility (14)
   - Abolished the law of commandments (15)
   - Reconciled to God in one body through the cross (16)
   - We all have access to God through the Holy Spirit (18)
   - No longer strangers and aliens, we are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household (19)
   - Built on the foundation, Christ Jesus the cornerstone (20)
   - Growing together into a holy temple (21)
   - Built together into a dwelling place for God (22)

Other scriptures:

Romans 3:23-25.
   - All have sinned (23)
   - We are justified and redeemed (24)
   - Jesus is our reconciliation (25)

Romans 5:6-11
   - We are reconciled by Jesus’ death (10)
   - We are saved by his life (10)

Galatians 2:20
   - I am crucified with Christ
   - Now Christ lives in me
Lesson 2: Who is a Disciple of Jesus?

Jesus did not only heal people and forgive their sins. He called them to follow him and become his disciples. Read Mark 1:16-20 and Mark 2:13-14.

In the first century, it was common for a Jewish teacher to gather students and teach them the Jewish laws. They were called disciples. Their purpose was to learn from the rabbi, to follow his teaching, and to become like him.

Jesus was called “Rabbi” and invited people to become his disciples. In this lesson, we ask, What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

1. **Question**: Do you think it is possible to be saved and not be his disciple? Be ready to share your answer and your reasons with the study group.

2. **How did Jesus call you?** How has your life changed since Jesus called you?

3. **Disciples follow Jesus’ example and become like him.** Read Mark 8:34-36.
   a. What does Jesus require of his followers?
   b. What is our reward for giving up our life?
   c. Give an example of a way you have “denied yourself and taken up your cross” to follow Jesus.
   d. Does Jesus require this of everyone, or only pastors and bishops?

4. **Disciples believe Jesus’ teachings.** Read Matthew 5:1-16.
   a. Do you think it was easy for the disciples to understand these teachings of Jesus? Which ones do you find difficult to understand?
   b. Jesus’ teachings were often the opposite of the way the world thinks.
      1) Read verse 5. In the way of the world, what must one do to “inherit the earth” (that is, to gain benefits in this life)? What did Jesus teach?
      2) Read verse 7. In the way of the world, what people are shown mercy? What did Jesus teach?
      3) What is one thing you will do to follow Jesus’ teachings in these verses?

5. **Disciples obey Jesus’ commandments.** Read these verses and write the commandment in each one. Can you think of other commandments of Jesus that we should obey?
   b. John 15:4-5
   c. Matthew 28:19-20 (also in Mark 16:15-16)

6. **Hindrances to following Jesus.** Read Mark 10:17-22. What hindered this man from following Jesus? What keeps people from following Jesus today?

7. **Response.** In your own words, describe what it means to follow Jesus today.
Lesson 3: Building our Spirituality.

Spirituality is about our inner life, sometimes called the heart – it is our attitudes, our choices, our relationship to God. If we nurture our spirit, our relationship with God becomes strong. If we neglect our spirit, it becomes weak. Healthy spirituality comes from our relationship with Jesus, when we “walk with Jesus” daily, and it affects the way we live our lives and how we relate to others.

   a. In Jesus’ example, the branch must remain attached to the vine in order to bear fruit. What does it mean to “abide in me, and I in you”? (verses 4-7).
   b. Describe in your own words what our relationship with Jesus should be.

   a. What attitudes should Jesus’ disciples have?
   b. How will these attitudes make us better leaders?
   c. Is there one or two of these attitudes we should practice more in our churches today?

3. Building Our Spirituality. Spiritual strength does not come without effort. Jesus built his spirituality in 3 ways: 1) ministry, 2) fellowship, and 3) prayer. Together these produce stability and strength, like a 3-legged stool. Even Jesus, the Son of God, depended on these to give him spiritual strength and endurance. It is even more important for us to nurture our spirituality. Notice each of these ways.
   • Ministry. Jesus responded to needs in people he met with healing, or encouragement, or teaching. Ministry serves people in need, but the one ministering also receives God’s grace and strength in his own life. How does serving others build you up?
   • Fellowship. Jesus spent much time with his disciples, teaching, discussing, and praying together. How does fellowship with others strengthen your spirit?
   • Prayer. Jesus began his ministry with 40 days alone in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Sometimes Jesus “departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed” (Mark 1:35; Mark 6:46; Luke 5:16; Luke 6:12). How does praying alone strengthen us?

4. Response questions:
   a. Is Jesus’ example of ministry, fellowship, and prayer a good way for us to nurture spirituality? How are these part of your life and ministry?
   b. What should we do to strengthen our spirituality? Discuss with your study group.
Lesson 4: Healthy Spirit or Wounded Spirit?

1. We grow from childhood to adulthood, physically, mentally, and spiritually. God’s plan is that we become mature adults with a healthy spirit, able to respond to all that happens in life with faith, hope, and love. “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

2. Sometimes our spirit becomes wounded because of difficult experiences, especially as children. Instead of faith we live in fear, instead of hope we become discouraged, instead of love we are filled with anger. These hinder our life and relationships. Then we find it difficult to forgive others and also to ask for forgiveness. We respond to experiences in ways that cause conflict and disunity, and causes fear and doubt in others. Read these lists:

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<th>Healthy spirit</th>
<th>Wounded spirit</th>
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<tr>
<td>✓ faith</td>
<td>✓ fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ joy</td>
<td>✓ sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ humility</td>
<td>✓ pride</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ love</td>
<td>✓ anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ service</td>
<td>✓ selfishness</td>
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3. As we see our needs and learn to trust God, our wounded spirit can be healed and we move from fear to faith, from pride to humility, from selfishness to service, etc.

Effective leaders recognize the wounds in their spirit and by God’s grace have found healing. They become people of faith, hope, love, peace, humility, and service.

4. Notice these people in the Bible who found healing for their wounded spirit and they became effective leaders.

   - **Jacob**: his name means “deceiver” and he had many conflicts. His name was changed to Israel (“God’s fighter”) when he met God (Genesis 32:22-32).
   - **Moses**: raised with pride in the house of Pharaoh. Later he learned to depend on God and led Israel 40 years in the desert (Deuteronomy 34:10-12).
   - **Peter**: feared the servant girl at Jesus’ trial, but later preached with boldness (Mark 14:66-71; Acts 2:14). He would not eat with Gentiles, later he learned that God accepts all people (Acts 10:34-35).

5. Steps to develop a healthy spirit:
   a. Be aware of your own heart; decide to seek healing where needed.
   b. Acknowledge your past hurts and talk with a trusted friend about your struggle.
   c. Read the Bible (Psalms 3, 5, 10, etc.) to learn how God views your struggles. King David felt free to bring all his feelings to God and found strength.
   d. Pray that God will bring healing to your heart.
   e. Protect your heart, let your peace depend on God’s love, not on others.

Questions for discussion:

1. Look at the biblical characters described above. What fears or doubts or pride led them to do what they did? What changes do you see in them that show they received healing in their spirit?

2. Think about conflicts you have seen in family and church. What signs to you see that the people involved had a wounded spirit? How can we help people receive life and healing?
Lesson 5: Maturity

What is spiritual maturity?

- Our mind and heart has been changed to love God fully (1 John 4:16-17).
- We give ourselves in service to others (Galatians 5:13).
- The mind of Christ that serves in humility, grace, and holiness (Philippians 2:3-8).
- It is being willing to suffer for the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8).

Because of sin, our minds are darkened, our conscience is dulled, and we follow the desires of the flesh.

Spiritual maturity is hindered by a wounded spirit. We cannot truly love if our heart is filled with fear and pride; we cannot forgive if we are full of bitterness. When our spirit is free, we can provide leadership that encourages maturity in others.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-40).

Reasons for spiritual immaturity:

- Do not understand biblical truth. Hebrews 6:1-3
- Follow the pattern of the world; do not have a “transformed mind” Romans 12:1-2
- Resistance to spiritual truth and the Holy Spirit’s leading
- Bitterness and lack of forgiveness. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3
- Wounded spirit.

Steps to spiritual maturity:

b. Conversion: change of life, new creation – 2 Corinthians 5:17
c. Growth: becoming like Jesus – 2 Corinthians 3:18
d. Suffering: endure testing – James 1:2-3

Jesus is the best example of spiritual maturity. He responded in faith, truth, and love.


Discussion questions:

1. Romans 12:2. What does it mean to be changed by “renewing the mind.”
2. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. How did the church show that they were immature?
3. Read Ephesians 4:11-32. Write 2 lists, one of the signs of spiritual maturity, and one of the signs of a spiritual immaturity.
4. Review the steps to spiritual maturity. Which of these steps to spiritual maturity is lacking in your congregation?
Lesson 6: Character and Leadership

1. Read Matthew 20:25-28. What is biblical leadership?
   a) Describe leadership among “the rulers of the Gentiles.”
   b) Describe leadership among Jesus’ followers – “not so with you.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jesus demonstrates a new kind of leadership:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Leadership is not for privilege and control over others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Leadership is empowering and serving others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Leadership gives room for the Holy Spirit to work in the ones we are leading.</td>
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2. Three reasons why character is important for leadership:
   a) Leaders are responsible for the growth of followers – to advise and to teach the truth (1 Timothy 4:6-11).
   b) Leaders should be an example to followers (1 Timothy 4:12-16).
   c) Good leaders influence followers for good, poor leaders influence for evil.

| Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers (1 Timothy 4:16). |

3. Read each of these scriptures. What are the qualifications for Christian leaders? What words of advice does Paul give to leaders?
   - 1 Timothy 3:1-13
   - 1 Timothy 4:6-16
   - 1 Timothy 6:3-12
   - 2 Timothy 2:22-25
   - Titus 1:6-9

4. Qualifications for Christian leaders are in 3 areas. Which of these is keeping our church leaders from being effective? Write your thoughts in the box below.

   **Sound doctrine**
   - Titus 1:9
   - 1 Timothy 4:6
   - Believe and teach what is in the New Testament

   **The mind of Christ**
   - Philippians 2:5-8
   - Romans 12:2
   - Colossians 3:1-2
   - A mind that is transformed, according to truth, humility, serving, spirituality

   **Godly behaviors**
   - Titus 2:12
   - Act in ways that are honorable and holy as a servant of God

5. Which of these qualifications should be strengthened to make better leaders?
Lesson 7: A Life of Truth and Integrity

You will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free. (John 8:32)
Jesus said to him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

1. Why is truth important in the life of a Christian?
2. Why is truth important in the ministry of a Christian leader?
3. Reasons to live in truth:
   - It follows Jesus’ example
   - It builds trust between us and others
   - It gives guidance that can be trusted
   - It identifies us with God’s people
4. Write what each of these verses says about truth.
   - Matthew 5:33-37 ________________________________
   - John 1:14 ___________________________________
   - John 8:44 __________________
   - Acts 5:1-11 _________________________________
   - Ephesians 4:15-16 _________________________________
   - Ephesians 4:25 ___________________________________
   - Ephesians 4:29 ________________________________
   - Colossians 3:9 _________________________________
   - Titus 2:7-8 ________________________________
5. Read 1 John 1:5-10. Living in truth means we confess our sins. Explain what this means.
6. A life of integrity is based on truth. How do each of these areas of leadership require integrity:
   - Working with money
   - Respect toward leaders
   - Honest meeting reports
   - Honest conversation
   - Dependable in completing assignments and responsibilities
7. In what areas of leadership is lack of integrity the biggest problem?
8. In what area of leadership have you struggled most with truth and integrity?
Lesson 8: Purity and Faithfulness in Marriage

Marriage was God’s plan in creation. God “created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18). Then God gave guidelines for marriage to keep it holy and life-giving.

Sexuality is about being male and female and how we relate to each other. It is a powerful force, because it attracts people to each other, it drives our actions, it brings strength or it causes conflict. Sexuality is not evil, because it is from God, but we may use it for good or evil.

1. Read Genesis 1:28. According to this verse, what is the purpose of marriage?
2. The Bible gives many warnings against the wrong use of sexuality. Read the following scriptures:
   - Romans 1:24-27 Unnatural sexual relations between people.
   - 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. Our body is temple of the Holy Spirit
   - 1 Corinthians 7:1-9. Sexuality is good when used properly.
   - Galatians 5:16-26. Sexual immorality comes from desires of the flesh, self-control is a fruit of the Spirit.
   - Ephesians 5:3-12. Avoid sexual immorality and impurity.
   - Ephesians 5:28-33. Marriage is an example of Christ and the church.
   - Colossians 3:5. “Put to death” sexual immorality and impurity.
   - 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7. Abstain from sexual immorality.
   - 1 Timothy 3:2, 4. Be the “husband of one wife” and “manage his household well.”
   - 1 Timothy 4:12, 16. Be an example in purity; “watch your life.”
3. There are many ideas about marriage in our world that weaken marriage and make it a source of pain. What does our world today say about faithfulness in marriage?
4. A pastor said, “Our church faces two big challenges in this city: adultery and witchcraft.” Do you agree? Are these two problems related?
5. Why are there so many marriage problems in our churches?
   a) Is it lack of Christian commitment?
   b) Is it lack of understanding?
   d) Is it the influence of society?
   e) Is it something else?
6. Read Acts 18:24-27. Aquila and Priscilla were husband and wife and worked as a team. How does a good marriage strengthen a leader’s ministry?
Lesson 9: Humility, Servanthood, Love

Leadership in the Kingdom of God is based on an attitude of humility and love for the people he is leading. The leader reflects God’s character in his leadership, and God’s character is love. Because of love for the people, the leader seeks to serve them.

1. When God called Abraham, he said, “I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2). When God calls us to a leadership position, it is not for the purpose of gaining respect or advantage for ourselves, but to “be a blessing.”

How can you be a blessing to the people you are leading?

2. Service or status?

Read Mark 10:35-45. Two disciples of Jesus, James and John, came to Jesus and requested to be considered for high positions, because they expected Jesus to establish a kingdom. Jesus rebuked them for seeking a position for status, not for service. He gave his own example of loving service even at the cost of his own life, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (verse 45).

What is the difference between leadership in the world’s style and leadership in the Jesus style?

3. Servant leadership.

The Bible commands us to follow Christ’s example of sacrifice and service (Ephesians 5:1-2; Philippians 2:3-8). Jesus became a servant (Philippians 2:7). Jesus’ attitude was humility, obedience, and sacrifice (Philippians 2:8).

Do you think you are a servant-leader? Name some examples of ways you have been a servant leader.

4. Asking forgiveness.

Read Psalm 51:1-10. Leaders are human, all have sinned before God and before people. David, writer of Psalm 51, acknowledged his sin and asked God to forgive him and to cleanse him.

How does asking forgiveness benefit the offender? How does it benefit the one asked to forgive? Is it appropriate for a church leader to ask forgiveness of his people?

5. Love is the more excellent way.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-2. Following a discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul writes that love is more excellent than spiritual gifts and spiritual power. We serve out of love that is patient, kind, not proud, not self-seeking, keeps no record of wrongs, love that protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres (verses 4-7).

Leadership that is kind, patient, and keeps no record of wrongs may bring risks and personal cost to the leader. What are some of those costs? Why is love so important to the task of leadership?
Lesson 10: Obey the Flesh or the Spirit.

“For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it” (Romans 7:19-20)

1. There is a struggle between “the Spirit of Life” and the “law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). The sinful nature began with Adam and Eve’s disobedience in Eden, and has been passed to every person who is born (Romans 5:12). Since then, we are tempted to trust our own wisdom above God’s wisdom, to disobey God’s laws and seek pleasure, and to act in ways that offend God and others. The law of sin leads to death, but the law of the Spirit leads to life (Romans 8:6). It is only through God’s help and power that we can live in the will of God.

2. Character depends on what we set our mind on. Read Romans 8:5-6.
Which mind leads to life? Which mind brings death?

3. Read the following scriptures. What does each verse say about living according to the sinful nature?
   - Galatians 5:17.
   - Romans 13:12-14.
   - 1 Peter 2:11

4. Read the following verses and write the two kinds of behaviors.
   - The acts of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:19-21). “Those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God.”
   - The fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:16,22-25). The way to live a life pleasing to God is to live as we are led by the Holy Spirit – “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

5. Read Romans 8:1-17. According to this scripture, what is the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer?

6. What suggestions do you have to help people live according to the Spirit of God?