

Leadership and Responsibility

By Bob Young

Let's begin with word associations. When I say leadership, you think.... When I say responsibility, you think..... Leadership is essential in every aspect of life—in the home, at the church house, in the world about us. Responsibility is a fact of life. In the church, we need leaders, but we need a certain kind of leaders. We need leaders who will accept responsibility. We need non-leaders who will develop themselves as leaders, and then accept the responsibility that goes with leadership. The order is imperative: develop the skills and attitudes of a leader; then accept the responsibility.

Therefore when we talk of leadership and responsibility, we focus first on leadership and then on responsibility. We want each member of the body to function according to the gifts or skills God has given them, but we are not seeking to encourage people to accept responsibility outside their areas of ability or expertise. We are encouraging people to develop their leadership skills, and then to accept responsibility. We begin by talking about leaders.

One person defined a leader this way. "A leader is someone who knows where he or she is going and can get others to go with them." Let me describe the kind of leaders who can be rated AAA—top quality. First, leaders maintain a clear vision of the goal. Leaders lead "from above" in the sense that they seem to navigate above the fray with the ability to lead without all of the distractions of life. As such, leaders avoid the tendency to become involved in details and micromanagement. As the phrase is used here, leadership from above does not refer to authoritative leadership but to insightful leadership. Second, leaders maintain clear connections with those they lead. Without such connections, leaders cannot influence followers. Leaders know the followers as shepherds know the sheep. The Bible speaks of this as leading "from among". Remember the biblical reference to "the flock which is among you" (Acts 20). Finally, to help others make progress, leaders are equippers (Eph. 4:11-16). Leadership is "from alongside". The modern word which communicates this concept is mentoring.

What a simple picture of leadership! Effective leaders lead from above, from among, and from alongside. Choose leaders who will be above, among, and alongside the followers. Choose leaders who are already above, among, and alongside the followers.