

What About ... *Leading*

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There are three ways to “lead.” Well, I suppose there are many ways to “lead,” but here are three of them. The first two are very common, the third one is rare.

1. Divide and rule
2. Tolerate and follow
3. Unite and shepherd

It’s true the word “lead” is probably not appropriate for all three, but allow me to refer to leadership here in a very general way as **someone who presides over others in some way.**

1. Divide and Rule is done by antagonizing a minority while appealing to the self-interest of a majority. Division is actually a means of so-called leadership. The majority is rewarded in such a way that it forms hatred among the minority. The majority is usually less informed and more apathetic. The minority then forms a strong dislike for the leader, but that is not relevant to his or her leadership since they are the minority. This is common when a new dynamic pastor with a charismatic personality takes over a church and makes changes that irritate the more mature members, but gets lots of people to attend the church who just want to come and be entertained on Sunday morning. As long as they keep coming, the pastor’s rule is secure.

2. Tolerate and Follow is done by overlooking sins that might divide the group, ignoring problems that have to do with principles of virtue, and agreeing to disagree about any difference that cannot be overlooked or ignored, thus declaring either the issue or the relationship to be unimportant. This is the “lick your finger and stick it in the air to see which way the wind is blowing” kind of leadership. It’s the old line, “There they go. I have to catch up with them. I’m their leader.” These are pastors, and “Christian” parents and grandparents who are soft on divorce/remarriage, compromise on homosexuality, and ignore premarital cohabitation.

3. Unite and Shepherd is done by presenting a standard, living by that standard, and teaching the value and virtue of that standard. Have a look at Peter’s idea of leadership in 1 Peter 5:2-3.

...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Peter calls leadership *shepherding*. Notice what Peter says about leadership:

- **Shepherd the flock of God.** Those whom you lead belong to God, not you.
- **Among you** means the believers who happen to be there. They may be your children, grandchildren, disciples or congregation. They are not people who you have set a goal to gather together.
- **Exercising oversight**, seeing what care they need and providing it.
- **Not under compulsion, but voluntarily**, in that it is something you choose to do.
- **According to the will of God.** The word “will” is not here, it’s just *according to God*. It would be better to say, *according to [the character] of God*.
- **And not for sordid gain, but with eagerness**, in that it is never motivated by money, notoriety, influence, or any other worldly gain.
- **Nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge**, better *your allotment* (KJV *God’s heritage*). The point is, don’t lord it over people because those are people God will hold you responsible for.
- **But proving to be examples to the flock**, leadership by example.

Biblical leadership unites people, not by tolerance, but by proclaiming, teaching, applying, overseeing, and being an example of the character of God to the people of God, whom God has placed in your path.

