

**“TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?”: THE YEARNING
FOR EFFECTIVE AND TRUE LEADERSHIP IN
LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL.**

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ABSTRACT

The problem of bad leadership is one that cuts across virtually all nations within the earthly space; and the effect it generates is one that affects the well-being of humanity at large; from economic challenges to security problems, and even to psychological challenges that affect the general well-being of the human person.

However, the problem of man is man, because nothing happens without the involvement and cooperation of man, and if the world is to be a better place where the general well-being of man is being taken care of, competent individuals must be elected. The Scripture which is “basic instruction before leaving earth” presents us with figures of history and models of authentic leadership, particularly our Lord Jesus Christ, the leader per excellence. In it, we are presented with the attributes of an authentic leader. This paper therefore bothers on the ideals of choosing and electing the right leaders in light of the gospel, and provides answer to the prevailing question asked by many today: “to whom shall we go?” This paper by its very nature is political, sociological, philosophical, psychological, and theological.

Keywords: Yearning, Leadership, Gospel, Church, State.

INTRODUCTION

“Truth has been sentenced to death”, and its executioners are those

who failed to tell it. This expression summons us to the court of conscience and leaves us to confront reality as it is. Taking a closer examination at global happenings, various emerging phenomena in all facets of life, bordering issues eating deep into the heart of humanity, and causing her heart to bleed profusely; the multiplicity of evils in all ramifications as a result of the idleness of the heart of many young opulent parading themselves in the skin of desperation in the bid to make it at all cost for which many initiate a lot of unthinkable acts, all of which eternity might not exhaust, leave everyone to wonder rhetorically: “where are we heading to?” Can we claim to be oblivious to the fact that all is not well? Can we deny the fact that the chorus which everyone sings mournfully is “Save us, Lord”? In a situation where the cost of food surpasses the cost of the bride price of many of our parents in those days and even outweighs the monthly earnings of the average masses, is this not worrisome? In a situation where the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, how long shall we be silent? Experiencing countries waging war against themselves, can we say that peace has not been pieced? Where children are now led to the slaughter by their fathers, and elders now negotiate with the adopters of their sons in the market of betrayal for selfish gain, are we to fold our arms, see evil thrive and pretend nothing is wrong?

The circumstances pictured above are indicators of the agony and anguish of the helpless masses crying for help and seeking a savior.

No doubt, the body will ache when the head is bad and the society will never be better when there are no right leaders, and when suffering persists as a result of the failure of leaders to do what is “right and just” in serving those whom they represent, the masses would have no choice than to cry to God their maker saying “Lord shall you watch us while we perish?” (cf. Mk 4:38)

The boat of leadership across the world and particularly in Nigeria is sinking and will need to be salvaged before the nation is drowned in the sea of helplessness as a result of the boat capsizing and as a result of the tide and current of inappropriateness weighing heavily upon us. In this way, any sane mind will be bothered about who will be the “Jesus” to still the storm of failed leadership in our

dear country Nigeria particularly as we are fast approaching the year when leaders will be elected again, and the sleeplessness caused by the situation at hand is the cause of the choiceless vigil and restlessness keeping us awake because our 'house is on fire' and the man whose house is on fire does not sleep.

Stemming from this, this essay bothers on the ideals of choosing and electing the right leaders in light of the gospel where we are confronted with a countless number of individuals, both good and bad, sheep and wolves alike, and other unknown realities which we are confronted with prompting us (the masses) to raise our voice unanimously by asking: "to whom shall we go?"

While basking on the euphoria of the Gospel mandate on Christ's expectation of choosing the right leaders, let us keep wondering: "to whom shall we go?" This quest we hope to attempt to address in this essay.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION/DEFINITION OF TERMS

It is pertinent here to properly delineate the terms that will be used in this work. Such words include yearning, leadership, gospel, church, and state.

Yearning: We ordinarily speak of yearning as a deep desire for something. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines yearning as "a tender or urgent longing". In this work, 'yearning' would mean a profound desire for something, which in this milieu would mean good leadership.

Leadership: Leadership is an ambiguous word with several meanings. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines leadership as "the office or position of a [leader](#), capacity to lead or the act or an instance of [leading](#)". A true leader does more than merely direct others. He must be motivated by the proper factors and have a positive influence on others around him. A leader is someone who can envision how things may be made better and motivates others to work toward that vision. Leaders can endeavor to realize their goals while prioritizing people. This is the sense in which leadership will be used in this work.

Gospel: Gospel has several senses in which it is used. The Merriam-Webster dictionary expresses it in different senses. First, it could

mean “the message concerning Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation”. Again, it could be conceived as “an interpretation of the Christian message”. As used in this write-up, the Gospel does not neglect other books of the scripture as other parts of the scripture are also the word of God.

Church: We ordinarily conceive 'Church' as a building where Christians worship God. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines Church as “a building for public and especially Christian worship”. It could mean a specific Christian denomination with its clergy, structures, and unique teachings. In this work, Church would mean the Roman Catholic Church and its traditions.

State: The word 'state' is a word that is so ambiguous and has multiple meanings. It could mean the unique condition that someone or something is in at a particular time. It could also mean, a country or region seen as an established political community with a single head of state. It is in this latter sense that 'state' will be used in this work.

WHERE DID WE MISS IT? WHAT REALLY WENT WRONG?

Scripturally, it is recorded that man was initially in a state of agreement and friendship with God until he went contrary to the will of God, thereby breaking the divine union between God and man (cf. Gen. 1:26; 2:16-17, 3:1-24). This gives the background to the genesis of how sin began. Thereafter, people began to do things contrary to the will of God and from then on, evil began to multiply.

This was the case with the Roman Empire where there was rampant sexual immorality, multiple marriages, and divorces, child abuse (physical and sexual), over-taxation, and a growing national debt that threatened the empire's solvency and national defense. These and other causes would all become her downfall. This reflects the genesis of the problem of bad leadership and by implication sin in most countries across the world today. Since nothing happens outside of the sovereign will of God (Matt 10:29), the various state of a quagmire, disorderliness, crisis, and ineffective leadership across the world must have been a judgment of God.² The national and civilian population had reached a point that reflected the days of Noah, where all they thought about was sin (Cf. Gen 6:5) and when a nation finally

forsakes God, God will surely forsake them. That is because any nation that exists and operates by indiscriminately breaking (in fact defying) God's Laws are subject to the same fates as the ancient Israelites, the Roman Empire, and any other people who live outside of the will of God.

Politically, most countries thrived in their “states of nature” until they got themselves baptized in the pool of selfishness only to have their offspring starved of abundance. The likes of Adolf Hitler the German dictator, Benito Mussolini of Italy, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, and Sanni Abacha of Nigeria to mention but a few who fell victim to greed, recklessness, and misguided ambitions. Retreating into the darkest corners of their deranged minds, these genocidal tyrants committed deeds that have forever entrenched them as badges of shame on humanity's common conscience. Taking Nigeria as a nation-state for example, where the campaign for election against 2023 is at its peak and boiling at the moment, we see men parading themselves in the regalia of goodwill and capability while their intention is that of reckless abandonment of the poor masses. Hence, we dare to ask again, where did we miss it?

Following the sequence of the progression of the death of true leadership according to the mind of God, and taking our minds back to memory lane, we would see that Adolf Hitler got it wrong when he targeted the wrong people by invading Poland after the French and British had promised to protect it. Benito Mussolini got it wrong when he failed to unite the country while at the same time making disastrous economic policies. Saddam Hussein got it wrong when he wrecked the economy of his own country with reckless, and semi-literate policies whose only effect was to impoverish the nation and expand the wealth of the corrupt wealthy while Sanni Abacha got it wrong when he fashioned for himself a murderous regime; a terrific reign, unbridled despotism and repressive season, until the point where God intervened and he dozed off eternally. But we could sum it up by saying we got it wrong when man decided his intention to “kill”³ God as a result of the doings of selfish leaders; those who embraced greed while neglecting the needs of the poor masses. We got it wrong when we lost the foresight of concern for others.

If all of this could not satisfy the insatiable mind, let everyone

keep searching where we got it wrong, and not until we get to know where we got it wrong, we are never going to make it right, and not until only then can the world become a better place.

LEADERSHIP: ITS MEANING AND TRUE ESSENCE

A person who stands at the head of a group and directs its activities is an example of a leader. There are numerous alternative definitions of leadership, even though there is only one definition of leadership.

This is because leadership is required in a variety of disciplines. To gain an understanding of leadership, one must first separate it from its etymological and definitive contexts.

Etymologically speaking, “leadership” is derived from the word "leader" which is found in the English language. The concept of leadership originates from the root word "to lead," which is a verb that can imply to direct, head, captain, or guide. Beginning with the concept from an etymological standpoint, then leading the work of someone else about how - how to lead others is addressed is presented.

Definitively, the definition of leadership, as articulated by a few distinguished individuals is the ability to morally and intellectually foresee and work toward what is in the best interest of a firm and its employees.”⁴ “Leadership is influence; there is nothing more and nothing less,” says author John C. Maxwell.⁵

Creativity in action is what leadership is all about. It is the skill of being able to look at the here and now in terms of where we want to be in the future while yet having reverence for the past. Respect for the past and the awareness that real progress is achieved by building on already existing capabilities are the cornerstones of leadership.

The ability to lead is in part an ambitious effort, but to succeed, one must have the strength and adaptability to put one's idea into action.

Ability to take action as well as the capacity to collaborate with other people and to follow in the footsteps of a superior individual when necessary makes a leader. Resilience is another quality that leaders need to have to work effectively during both normal and not-so-normal times.

A strong leader needs to be able to think critically, be willing to take risks, and have a clear vision for the future of the organization. A person who is innovative, daring, creative, forward-thinking, open to change, able to learn from failure and successfully overcome it; a person who can get along with others, contribute to the development of teams, and never stops learning; sincere, dependable, competent, supportive, fair-minded, cooperative, respectful, motivational, values-driven, inspiring, resilient, patient, tenacious, credible, emotionally mature; these are just a few of the attributes that describe someone who is a true leader.

Giving team members what they need to be productive is central to the concept of a servant leader, which in turn helps the team achieve its goals. This leader is more of a tool for getting the job done than a driving force behind the transformation. The effects of this type of leadership, which is comparable to democratic leadership, are achieved over a longer period, but with a greater level of employee participation. Leaders need a vision, but great leadership turns that vision into reality.

LEADERSHIP IN LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL, AND THE GOSPEL MANDATE TOWARDS OUR CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

No one who understands truly the mission of Christ and the essence of his life on earth scripturally will doubt that Christ himself is the source and summit of leadership. There would be no personality to be acclaimed as a leader in the whole of the New Testament if Christ is relegated. Aside from Christ, we could see that the teaching of the scripture in terms of leadership is such that is exemplified. Going through the chronicles of the Scripture from the Torah (the law) to the Nevi'im (the prophets), to the Ketuvim (the writings), and down to the New Testament, we would come to terms with the fact if anyone seeks a true definition of leadership, and the qualities of a good leader, he should seek recourse to the Bible and live particularly with the teachings and examples of Christ which is the crux of this work. We shall now analyze the leadership qualities and instructions of some great personalities in the scripture and of course those of Jesus, the greatest leader ever born in this world.

Jesus is the greatest leader who ever lived in this world. He is a leader par excellence. He lived in an era where the terms “psychology” and “human management” were never heard of. Yet, this man from Galilee was able to change the world and the lives of millions of people and left the world after making an indelible mark on it simply because of his leadership qualities. Surprisingly, he still influences the world today. This poor man from Galilee remains the “founder” of the largest movement in the world even after 2000 years of death. He cannot be but a simply exceptional and extraordinary leader.⁶ The four Gospels present the life and teaching of Jesus more than any other books of the Bible. Jesus never gave a lengthy discourse on the theme of “leadership”. Jesus' style of leadership could be traced from his life as well as his teaching. There was consistency between the life and the teaching of Jesus. His life was what he preached and taught and what he preached and taught was his very life. A leader like Jesus should be poor in spirit, meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, pure in heart, peacemaker, and ready to face difficulties and pain for the just and righteous causes (Matt. 5:3-12). On the contrary, like Herod, many of our leaders today take the people for granted, and even go as far as leading them to the slaughter, thus becoming murderers instead of leaders. If that is not true, how would you explain the killing of some youths who came out to express their dissatisfaction with the style of leadership across the country only for them to see their earthly existence being cut short by the so-called “unknown gunmen” at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos, Nigeria, even when it was clear that their killing was orchestrated by the government of the day?

A leader must be empathetic. In Mark's Gospel 6:30-44, it is recorded that Jesus fed five thousand men, not counting women and children. He felt what it means to stay without food. He went as far as providing for them and giving them food in excess.

A leader must be the salt and light of his/her family or community (Matt. 5:13-14). A leader is never to lose his temper and get angry unnecessarily. He asks the leaders never to judge their staff members and those entrusted to their care (Matt. 7:1-5). One's attitude towards leadership and others would undergo drastic change if he/she practices the golden rule of Jesus: “do to others as you would

have them do to you” (Matt. 7:12).

As citizens of a sovereign nation, upholding the law is our top priority. And one way that we accomplish this is through tax payments. It is a directive from Jesus, the Master, and Lord of our lives. Taxes are a necessity for governments everywhere if they are to meet the responsibilities inherent in good governance, including the creation of jobs, the improvement of transportation, the provision of a good education, and a safe and secure living environment for all citizens.

It is true that in Nigeria, the only people who are required to pay taxes are those who are employed in the public sector or the organized private sector, and this is because PAYE requires taxes to be withheld at the point of employment. The majority of people do not pay taxes for the same reason that the

Jews hated doing so: they believe that governments are dishonest, wasteful, and ineffective. However, the word of God does not in any way absolve Christians of their obligation, regardless of the circumstances.

As the world's guiding light, Christians are expected to provide a good example for others to follow (Matthew 5:14). It is incumbent upon us to let our “light so shine before others, that they may see your good deeds, and praise your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Because “we must all come before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,” it is incumbent upon us to guarantee that our works survive the cleansing fire of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 5:10).

Building restrictions are another way we respect the law. Our salt-and-light position is harmed when churches assist others in flouting norms yet complain when punished. We must obey the nation's laws if they do not contradict God's. In a struggle, we must obey God's greater rule since God's appointed political power has limits; “we should obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29). Shiphrah and Puah rejected Pharaoh's order to slaughter newborn Hebrew men (Ex. 1:17). Our leaders and others need our prayers. Seek the peace of the city where I have taken you captives and pray to the Lord for it; in its tranquility, you will enjoy peace (Jer. 29:7).

What matters is the person's controlling authority, not who is in power. As a church, we must pray for the right people to get into leadership and for those in leadership – the president and his staff, Governors and their aides, legislators, elected officials, judges, political appointees, and captains of industry⁷ – that the Spirit of God will touch their hearts and work through them so that we can enjoy a quality of life that produces joy, fulfillment, and overall prosperity.

If we want our prayers to succeed, we cannot criticize our nation. By the blessing of the upright, a city is elevated; by the voice of the wicked, it is ruined (Prov.11:11). You get what you speak is a spiritual rule (Mark 11:23, 24). Our acts after praying are more essential than our prayers, in my opinion. Christians often pray but negate them with bad confessions regarding their nation. James warned against using the same lips to bless and condemn (James 3:10). As Christians, we must bless our country's people, leaders, and future.

Third, spread the gospel. Before His ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples and all Christians. “Go into the world and preach to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not will perish. In my name, they will cast out demons, talk with new tongues, take up serpents, and if they drink anything dangerous, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. After speaking to them, the Lord ascended to heaven and sat at God's right hand. The Lord worked with them and confirmed the word with signs. Amen” (Mark 16:15-20). Evangelism is the church's principal purpose, and we may fulfill it in three ways: God wants “all mankind to be rescued and to know the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Every Christian must preach the gospel. We must utilize all possible means to convey this truth to sinful mankind in workplaces, business, politics, government, entertainment, media, and academia. “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; he was buried, and he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Those who believe this truth obtain salvation and become God's and Christ's heirs (Rom. 8:16-17). Free salvation cost God His son.

Churches need well-defined organizations and programs for worldwide missions and evangelism. A church's sending capacity,

not its sitting capacity, should be measured. God influences the world one person at a time. Transformed hearts and minds enhance transformation, growth, and society. Acts 1:8 states, “Be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, and to the ends of the globe.” Our faith must affect our actions and character or it's in vain. “Preach the gospel always, use words if necessary,” urged a sage.

Apostle Paul urged us to live “known and read by everyone” epistles. (2 Cor. 3:2).

As Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20), we must model Christ so that others perceive Him in us. Christians should live differently from non-Christians. A Christian's inner purity and moral greatness are hallmarks. We are to “be spotless and harmless, the sons of God, without censure, amid a crooked and wicked land” (Phil 2:15). Daniel and Joseph are Christian business models. Indeed, Christians were initially called so because their lifestyles reflected Jesus Christ's (Acts 11:26). As the salt of the soil, we should cleanse, season, and preserve the Earth. Without it, moral and spiritual degeneration ensues.

The tragedy of our day is not that Christians are not everywhere; it is that they are not always what they should be. Unholy churches cannot conquer unholy worlds. God frowns on “forms of godliness without strength” (2 Tim. 3:5). We must not pretend to be God-fearing in public but not in private. As the Lord commanded King Solomon, we must behave uprightly and with integrity (1 Kings 9:4). Whoever has the world's goods, sees his brother in need, and shuts up his compassion from him, how does God's love reside in him? (1 John 3:17) This verse supports Christian charity. In a world of sickness, poverty, misery, and suffering, Christians may show the grace and mercy of Christ. Many of our churches deserve praise for supplementing government efforts by creating hospitals, schools, and food kitchens to feed the needy. I can only urge these churches to keep up the wonderful work and encourage individual Christians to mimic the churches by purposefully helping the poor, widows, and the vulnerable.

The world will witness God's mercy and grace in action through our service to others and society. We must share burdens and do good to others. (Gal. 6:2,8-10). We must hold up the bowed (Psalm

146:7-9) and help the weak (Roman 15:1-3). The wealthiest among us shouldn't rely on their wealth, but on the living God, so they might be rich in good acts. (17-1 Timothy) Christians should love each other. First John 3:18 says to “love in action and truth, not in speech or mouth.” The Christian must know what God expects. Every kingdom lives differently. Jesus Christ taught us to sacrifice, love, compassion, humility, dedication, moderation, faith, and fellowship.

Paul tells the Romans, “Love one another with brotherly affection” (Rom 12:10). The Christian must be ethically responsible to God and others every day. He or she must put God first (Matt 10:37) and submit to God's plan. In Ephesians 4:22-24, we are told to throw off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceptive lusts and put on the new man, which God created in righteousness and true holiness.

Daily self-examination and removal of ungodly objects and acts are required (Eph. 4:25-32; Eph. 5:1-7). Christians obey. Proof of our repentance and trust is following God's will. Prayer, forgiveness, and diligence are our duties. Jesus Christ the righteous is our advocate before God. All Christians must check their faith frequently (2 Cor. 13:5 and Lam. 3:40). We must base our reflection on the gospel to avoid hypocrisy. (Psalm 139:23-24, 19:14).

Christian family responsibility: Marriage covenants need mutual love and respect, and children must obey God and their parents. As Christians, we must engage in actions that strengthen our connection with God. We must account for the abilities, talents, status, and resources God has given us because “a steward must be loyal” (1 Cor. 4:2). God's callings and talents are irrevocable (Rom.11:29).

As God's and man's stewards, we must walk in this reality. We need Jesus' enabling grace. Christian leaders must vote for their leaders. Refusing to vote lets evil actors influence the system. Every Bible-believing Christian should vote.

When we are to vote, long lines and glitches should not dissuade us. Faith-based NGOs should fight for social justice, campaign for the proper candidates, and define national and subnational agendas. Our options and influence as citizens may be restricted, but we cannot stay silent when things go wrong. We must

hold our leaders responsible for God's truth, righteousness, and fairness.

TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

At this critical point, we shall define the one whom we shall run to in three dimensions namely: God, the self, and the right person (leader). First, at a time like this, we are all to turn back to God to guide us, give us a new heart, and since he alone can do all things. This, however, is not to mean that man should leave all he is supposed to do to God because He “might” not do it. We are to play our part by choosing the right leaders, not based on political

party, blood relation, or ideology, but one who would lead us rightly; the “man after God's own heart”; the man who is ready to wash the feet of his followers; who is ready to serve at the table; the man who is ready to have himself nailed for the sake of others so that the wellbeing of the people can resurrect in him; the one who is ready to submit himself at the cross of service, ready to have his ego crucified; the one who will be the Christ in form of a man ready to serve and not be served (Matt. 20:28). Only to such a person shall we go. Not to the Judas in care of the national treasury ready to embezzle and abscond with the public fund. Not to the Judas who will betray the trust that the masses repose in him, and not to the Peter who will deny the people their right for his selfish gain, and not to the Thomas who would doubt being called to serve.

Going further, while we think of going to God, everyone should equally go deep within himself. Man must ensure that his interest is not against the collective benefit of all. Here, the individual goes to the self, and make up their mind not to collect bribe but to rather vote for the right leader. The individual must transcend and have a dialogue both with his creator and himself because the problem of man is man. By doing this, he can choose the right leader.

CONCLUSION

The choice of who leads the people depends on those electing them. When the masses are not rightly guided on how to make the right choices, it falls back on society at large. It is therefore expedient that everyone resorts to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith who is

the model of true and authentic leadership. Also, a man who is the inventor of his problem is the solution to his problem. On this ground, it requires that every individual resort to himself and look inwardly at the need to make the right choices to which the right leaders are voted. When we miss it in any of these three, we miss it in all because all must be integrated and work together. Above all, it is still left for each individual to ask deep down in his heart: “to whom shall I go?” In making a great and healthy society, we must elect the right leaders, and save the future of our nation. Only then, would our yearning for true and effective leadership become a reality.

ENDNOTES

- 1 A personal discussion with Matthew Amosu on “The situation of Nigeria at Large” (21.10.2022)
- 2 <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2016/08/16/what-happened-to-nations-under-corrupt-or-bad-leadership-in-the-bible/> (accessed on 15.10.2022)
- 3 The death of God here is as a result of the deterioration of sound morality by man. Theologically, man cannot kill God because God is omnipotent. By saying man killed God, we figuratively mean that man did what was/is against the will of God.
- 4 Laurie Mullins, *Essentials of Organisational Behaviour*, (USA: Financial Times/Prentice Hall, 2008), p. 8
- 5 John Maxwell, *Leadership 101*, (Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 2002), p. 17.
- 6 Arul Jesu Robin, *Leadership in the Bible: The Paradigms of Moses and Jesus*, Article, August 2020
- 7 Ifeanyi Okowa, *The Christian and responsibility*, in The Guardian Newspaper Daily, 07 March, 2022.